Submission Guidelines for FIRE-RES Open Innovation Challenge

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

Extreme Wildfire Events (EWE) are becoming a major environmental, economic, and social threat worldwide.

As the limits of fire suppression-centred strategies become evident, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers increasingly recognise the need to develop novel approaches that shift emphasis to the root causes and impacts of EWE, moving towards preventive landscape and community management for greater resilience.

The strategic objective of FIRE-RES is to provide the EU with the capacity to avoid collapsing in front of EWE projected to increase under a harsher climate. The project's general objective is to boost this socio-technological transition by integrating environmental, climate, health, safety and security, cultural and socio-economic aspects within a stream of innovations that encapsulates the demonstration and deployment of proactive governance processes, change of forest management practices, large-scale and community-based risk assessments, awareness and preparedness, models, methods, technologies and decision support systems to implement a holistic and integrated fire management strategy to efficiently and effectively address EWE.

One key avenue FIRE-RES promotes in pushing for newer and better solutions is to develop and deploy a Call for innovative solutions to our stakeholders' challenges.

The present document contains the Guidelines of said Open Innovation Challenge, concerning the deployment of this activity and giving clear guidance for those involved.

2 Open Innovation Challenge

The FIRE-RES Open Innovation Challenge aims to enhance the ability of the FIRE-RES project to provide newer and better solutions in response to the stakeholders' challenges. The ability to share these challenges with a worldwide audience of possible solution providers and to leverage their innovativeness is expected to provide a wider and richer scope of innovative solutions.

2.1 The Overall Challenge: Extreme Wildfires

In recent years, Europe has experienced a significant increase in the frequency and intensity of wildfires. These extreme wildfires have resulted in devastating consequences, including loss of life, destruction of natural habitats, damage to infrastructure, and the release of harmful emissions impacting air quality.

We are calling upon innovators, entrepreneurs, technologists, researchers, businesses of all sizes, experts, and all forward-thinking minds in the field to step up and submit cutting-edge solutions addressing the challenges experienced by different stakeholders coping with the risks of extreme wildfires.

The specific challenges we have identified are organised under the following themes:

- Risk Communication and Awareness
- Engagement and Empowerment
- Training and Education
- Management Before, During and After Extreme Wildfire Events
- Monitoring
- Forecasting and Decision Support
- Policy and Governance

    Discover the challenges and see how your solution fits in!

2.2 What type of solutions are we looking for?

We are looking for innovative solutions in all development stages – from early ideas, methods, prototypes to close-to-market or market-ready services and products (from here on summarised as "solutions") that can help solve our FIRE-RES Open Innovation Challenges. The solutions may address any stage of wildfire management: prevention and preparedness, detection and response, restoration and adaptation. We welcome all kinds of solutions, for instance technological, social, or business model related; products, services, platforms, processes, procedures, best practice, etc.

Successful applicants with early-stage solutions, such as ideas, will be supported to develop their solutions, while those with later-stage solutions, such as prototypes, close-to-market, or market-ready solutions will be supported to demonstrate, pilot and upscale their solutions.

We are not looking for proposals for research papers or research projects as we aim to support targeted activities to develop, demonstrate, pilot and upscale concrete solutions.

2.3 Who are the challenge owners?

FIRE-RES tests, deploys, and implements innovations in 11 [Living Labs](). These are geographical areas, such as sub-national regions and countries (mostly in Europe), in which FIRE-RES collaborates with wildfire stakeholders to demonstrate and deploy innovations to overcome wildfire problems. The local and regional stakeholders that we collaborate with include the public sector, civil protection, landowners, scientific communities, private companies, and citizen associations.

FIRE-RES organised workshops in the Living Labs to understand which are the major challenges of the local stakeholders. Through this bottom-up approach, 17 challenges in 7 challenge themes were defined. Each challenge includes a section "Voice of the Living Lab(s)" to represent the specific context, conditions, and needs of the Living Labs with regards to the challenges.

2.4 Why Participate?

The FIRE-RES Open Innovation Challenge offers an unprecedented opportunity to make a lasting impact on wildfire prevention and preparedness, detection and response, restoration and adaptation. By participating in the FIRE-RES Open Innovation Challenge, you will have the opportunity to:

- Make a Difference: Submit solutions that save lives, protect communities, and safeguard our environment.

- Access Tailored Support: Selected solutions are eligible for economic and in-kind support and mentorship to develop and upscale the solutions.

- Pitch and upscale: Get access to contacts and guidance from key actors and experts across Europe and South America. Present your solution to a wider audience through FIRE-RES events and publications.

- Get Feasibility Insights: Understand the fitness, market readiness, and feasibility of your solution by demonstrating and testing in real life conditions.

- Expand Professional Network: Meet like-minded professionals, researchers, and organisations working together to combat wildfire challenges.

- Be Recognised: Gain visibility and prestige as a FIRE-RES Open Innovation Challenge winner.

2.5 Acceleration Support typologies

Depending on the maturity of the solutions, the Open Innovation Challenge offers different types of Acceleration Support to the successful applicants according to the support deemed most fruitful for their project:

- Mentorship support program, in-house training with a hands-on approach for concept validation and business model development.

- Financial support for solution validation, piloting and demonstration activities. These will be based on Activity Plans developed during the FIRE-RES Open Innovation Challenge process and contractually agreed between the FIRE-RES consortium and the respective applicant.

  A maximum of **€168,000** in total are available as support for selected solutions.

  These will be allocated in the form of:

- Pilot support of up to €16,000 per solution
- Demonstration support of up to €5,000 per solution

3 Eligibility Criteria

3.1 Applicants

Participation is possible for individuals, teams, and legal entities.

3.2 Languages

English is the official language for this Open Innovation Challenge. Submissions done in any other language will be disregarded and not evaluated.

3.3 Declarations

- The applicant is over 18 years old and empowered to represent and commit to the team or the legal entity according to the relevant law.

- The applicant is not aware of any conflict of interests; see section 3.3 for additional information. If the applicant becomes aware of conflict of interest during the process, it will notify the organisers of the Open Innovation Challenge in writing at oic@fire-res.eu. All cases of conflict of interest will be assessed case by case by the FIRE-RES Consortium Members in charge of the organisation of the Open Innovation Challenge. In particular, FIRE-RES Consortium partners are not eligible for financial support (pilot support and demonstration support). A conflict of interest may lead to the application being discarded.;

- The applicant has no convictions for fraudulent behaviour, other financial irregularities, unethical or illegal business practices;

- The applicant has a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion;

- The applicant is not under liquidation or an enterprise under difficulty according to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18.;

- The applicant has not been declared bankrupt or has initiated bankruptcy procedures;

- The applicant is not excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law or by a decision of both national or EU authorities;

- The solution proposed by the applicant is based on the original works, and going forward, any foreseen developments are free from third-party rights, or they are clearly stated.

4 Application

This section addresses the submission procedures for a successful application, the deadline policy, and the support available to applicants.

4.1 Application Process

The Open Innovation Challenge information is available on the FIRE-RES website https://fire-res.eu/open-innovation-challenge/, where the challenges are presented, and an Application form is available and accessible on the F6S platform https://www.f6s.com/fire-res-open-innovation-challenge-2023/apply.

The recommended procedure is:

- Applicants should access the FIRE-RES website to apply: **https://fire-res.eu/open-innovation-challenge/**

- Read the materials and the challenges available. Select the challenges to which you wish to propose a solution.

- On the website, click on the "Submit your application" button, which will take you to the F6S platform link: **https://www.f6s.com/fire-res-open-innovation-challenge-2023/apply**. Applicants are required to register a profile at FS6 to be able to submit a application. F6S is the largest global startup community with over 4 million members; Benefits for members include access to funding, grants, partnerships, pilot contracts, etc.

- Participants are requested to read and follow the instructions in the form carefully. Please note that only applications submitted in English will be considered in the selection process.

- Applicants are requested to answer all mandatory questions (with no exceptions).

- Questions can be answered in any order. Entries and any changes made to them will be automatically saved to an 'in-progress' version until the application is submitted.

- Once the application is complete, click the Submit button to send off the application.

- Only applications submitted through the F6S platform will be accepted.

- Evaluators will only consider the documentation included in the F6S application form.

- The information provided should be up-to-date, accurate, and complete and should allow the assessment of the application.

Documents required in subsequent phases will be submitted via a dedicated channel, which will be indicated during the evaluation and execution phases.

4.2 Multiple Submissions

Multiple applications can be accepted per individual, team or legal entity. If you wish to submit more than one solution, please contact the challenge organisers on oic@fire-res.eu.

4.3 Deadlines

The deadlines for the Open Innovation Challenge are defined and published on the FIRE-RES Open Innovation Challenge webpage: https://fire-res.eu/open-innovation-challenge/. The application deadline can be extended if it is considered necessary for the success of the FIRE-RES Open Innovation Challenge.

It is strongly recommended not to wait until the last minute to submit the application. Failure of the application to arrive in time for any reason, including communication delays, automatically leads to rejection of the submission. The time of receipt of the message as recorded by the submission system will be definitive.

4.4 Data Protection and GDPR Compliance

In FIRE-RES, human participants will be involved in interviews, workshops and other activities that may generate sensitive data. Hence, FIRE-RES entails a series of ethical and data protection principles that govern the overall implementation of the project activities. The project will adopt data protection by design and default approach concerning the GDPR.

FIRE-RES will always ask for informed consent in all activities involving external human participants.

This is in line with the project Data Management Plan (DMP). INESC TEC will act as the Data Management Plan manager with the overall responsibility of ensuring that all data will follow GDPR. The Data Protection Officer (DPO) of FIRE-RES will ensure that personal data is accurate and up to date while ensuring its integrity and confidentiality.

4.5 Confidential Information

Any information regarding the application will be treated in a strictly confidential manner. However, there will be no confidentiality obligation by any recipient for information which:

- Is publicly available before the time of its disclosure to the accelerator or becomes publicly available thereafter through no wrongful act of the recipient, or

- Was known to the recipient before the date of disclosure or becomes known to the recipient thereafter from a third party having an apparent bona fide right to disclose the information, or

- Is disclosed by the recipient in accordance with the applicant's approval, or

- Is disclosed by the applicant or any member of the applicant team without restriction on further disclosure, or is independently developed by a recipient; or

- The recipient is obligated to disclose to comply with applicable laws or regulations or with a court or administrative order.

4.6 Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)

Applicants declare that each solution presented is an original work and in no way violates, in whole or in part, the intellectual or industrial property rights of others and

releases the FIRE-RES Consortium from any and all responsibility, liability, or request for compensation for damages that any third party should make.

Applicants acknowledge and agree that the FIRE-RES Consortium or other participants or third parties may have developed or commissioned ideas, works or results similar to the solution described in the application or may develop something similar in the future.

4.7 Application support

The Open Innovation Challenge will provide the following support mechanisms:

- **Helpdesk**: applicants can ask questions via email [oic@fire-res.eu]. Please consider that your question can be published as a FAQ unless you mark it as confidential.

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**: a list of FAQs will be published and updated during the application period. Applicants should carefully read the FAQs before applying or submitting any questions to the helpdesk.

Additionally, if you experience any problem with the application submission system, you should reach F6S by e-mail through: support@f6s.com, cc'ing the FIRE-RES Helpdesk oic@fire-res.eu, and explain your situation.

4.8 Open Innovation Challenge - Application documents

4.8.1 Application F6S form

The Open Innovation Challenge Application form is provided through the F6S platform.

The application fields are the following:

TEAM

-Write a short paragraph for each of the team members, highlighting how their previous experiences and skills are relevant to the proposed solution.
 	
-Are you incorporated as a company?
 	
    • If yes, what is the name of the company?
 	
    • Where is/are the company location(s)?

SOLUTION
-Name: Provide a title for the solution you are proposing. -Subtitle: Provide a descriptive sentence about the solution to complement the name and provide further insight on the solution. -Describe the solution: Provide an extended description of the solution being proposed. -What is the Value Proposition of the solution: Explain the value created for the user of your solution. -Novelty of the solution: Describe state of the art and existing solutions, highlighting the key differentiation of the solution you propose.

-Impact of the solution: Describe the impact of the solution according to the three parameters: economic, social, and environmental.
-Fit the challenge: Indicate how the solution addresses the requirements of the challenge.
-Business Model: Explain the business model for this solution, including identification of key factors influencing the adoption of the solution.
-Validation / Demonstration: Provide a short description of how this solution could be demonstrated (prototype, mock-up, pilot activity, etc.) in the context of the challenge.

DECLARATIONS

- The applicant is not aware of any conflict of interests; see section 3.3 for additional information. If the applicant becomes aware of conflict of interest during the process, it will notify the organisers of the Open Innovation Challenge in writing at oic@fire-res.eu. All cases of conflict of interest will be assessed case by case by the FIRE-RES Consortium Members in charge of the organisation of the Open Innovation Challenge. In particular, FIRE-RES Consortium partners are not eligible for financial support (pilot support and demonstration support). A conflict of interest may lead to the application being discarded.;

- The applicant has no convictions for fraudulent behaviour, other financial irregularities, unethical or illegal business practices;

- The applicant has a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion;

- The applicant is not under liquidation or an enterprise under difficulty according to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18.;

- The applicant has not been declared bankrupt or has initiated bankruptcy procedures;

- The applicant is not excluded from the possibility of obtaining EU funding under the provisions of both national and EU law or by a decision of both national or EU authorities;

- The solution proposed by the applicant is based on the original works, and going forward, any foreseen developments are free from third-party rights, or they are clearly stated.

OPTIONAL

-Roadmap: Give a concise overview of the potential development roadmap (timeline identifying key steps and milestones) for the timeframe covered by the Open Innovation Challenge (12-18 months).

-Case studies: Describe prior validation example(s) and/or provide a case study of the solution application to similar or identical problems (if available).

-Additional support material: Provide any additional support files and/or documentation. (i.e., a Product, Service and/or Technology brochure, videos or case studies, a Pitch Deck, …) -CVs of the team members: You can submit up-to-date CVs of the team members.
OTHERS
-Why do you want to participate in the FIRE-RES Open Innovation Challenge? -How did you hear about the FIRE-RES Open Innovation Challenge?

4.8.2 Activity Plan

Pre-selected applications will be invited to submit an Activity Plan for pilot and demonstration support (more information in section 5 Evaluation). Instructions will be provided in the invitation email. The expected primary fields are:

- Concept - Solution description
- Pilot or Demonstration Overview
    - Implementation in the Living Lab(s)
    - Methodology
    - Validation scenarios
    - Pilot or Demonstration requirements
    - Resources requirements
    - Timeline
    - Budget

5 Evaluation

5.1 Evaluation Process

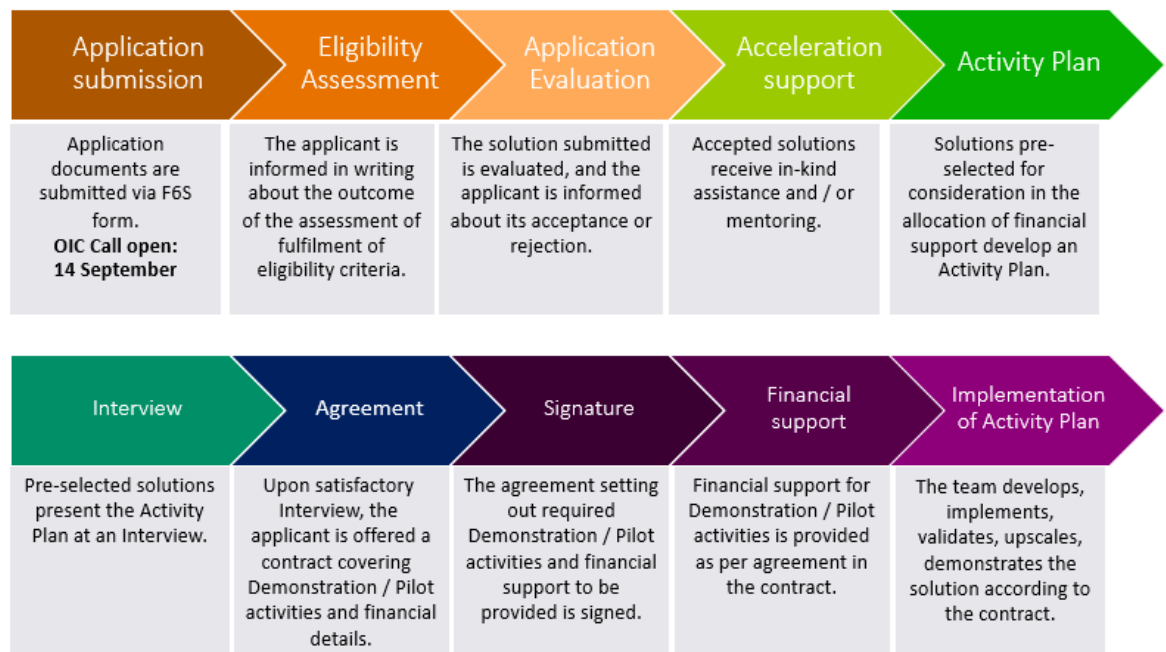The evaluation process for the Open Innovation Challenge is shown in the following figure:

Figure 1 - Evaluation process

Each assessment stage will have a set of criteria to access the next stage. The following paragraphs provide a detailed set of procedures and criteria at the time of evaluating and awarding the acceleration support and the financial support.

- **Application submission** - via the Application form available at the F6S platform.

- **Eligibility Assessment** - An eligibility check is conducted according to the eligibility criteria defined in section 3. The results of this process will be communicated by email.

- **Application Evaluation** - Eligible applications will be evaluated following the evaluation criteria described in section 5.2. The panel of evaluators will be composed of representatives of FIRE-RES consortium members (from the Challenge originating Living Labs to the Open Innovation Challenge organisers or other relevant individuals, i.e.: Innovation Actions leaders and experts). The results of this process will be communicated by email and published on the website as a List of Solutions Accepted for Acceleration Support.

- **Activity Plan** – Applications pre-selected for Pilot and Demonstration Support will be invited to submit an Activity Plan. Instructions will be provided in the invitation email.

- **Interview** - Pre-selected applications submitting the Pilot and Demonstration Support Activity Plan will be invited for an interview. The panel of evaluators will be composed of representatives of the Open Innovation Challenge organisers, the Living Labs, and other relevant members of the FIRE-RES consortium. The results of this process will be communicated by email and a list of solutions that progress to Demonstration / Pilot activities will be published on the website.

The output of the evaluation process will be published on the FIRE-RES website:

- List of Solutions Accepted for Acceleration Support.
- List of Solutions that progress to Demonstration / Pilot activities.

5.2 Evaluation Criteria

5.2.1 Eligibility Assessment

Only eligible applications are considered for evaluation; therefore, the initial assessment to be conducted is one of eligibility. The criteria for this process are indicated in the table below.

Table 1 - Criteria for the Assessment of Eligibility

Criteria	Description	Scoring
Eligibility requirements	Are the eligibility requirements (section 3) fulfilled?	No- Not eligible Yes- Eligible
Declarations	Are the declarations signed and submitted?	No- Not eligible Yes- Eligible

5.2.2 Application Evaluation

The Application Evaluation aims to understand the solution and determine its ability to answer the problems and needs presented in the challenge.

This assessment is conducted by a panel of experts from the Living Labs, the FIRE-RES consortium and the Open Innovation Challenge organisers.

The criteria for Application Evaluation process are indicated in the table below.

Table 2 - Criteria for Application Evaluation

Criteria	Description
Clarity of the solution	Is the solution clear, well explained, and structured? Does it address all key concerns and provides enough understanding of its workings and outputs?
Value Proposition	Is the Value Proposition well described? Is the added value of the solution clearly identified?
Innovation	Is the proposed solution significantly different and better than currently existing and available ones?
Solution-Challenge Fit	Does the proposed solution match the problem's needs? Are the stakeholders adequately served to answer the problem?

Adequacy of Business Model	Is the Business Model proposed fully explained, logical, operationally reasonable and value generating to all stakeholders?
Level of expected impact	Does the proposed solution have a better impact than the solutions in the market?
Feasibility of validation / demonstration	Does the procedure proposed provide a reasonable demonstration of the expected results in the use cases associated to the problem?

The output of this assessment is a List of Applicants Accepted for Acceleration Support and a pre-selection of candidates for Financial Support for Pilot and Demonstration activities. These will receive an invitation to submit an Activity Plan for demonstrating their solution.

5.2.3 Activity Plan Assessment

The Activity Plan Assessment aims to evaluate the feasibility of the proposed activity plans, to understand solutions' resource requirements for validation, and, together with the interviews in the next and final phase of the process, to enable the consortium to prioritise solutions for Financial Support with reference to both.

This assessment is conducted by a panel of experts from the Living Labs, the FIRE-RES consortium and the Open Innovation Challenge organisers.

Utilising the scoring scale presented above, the criteria for this process are indicated in the table below.

Table 3 - Criteria for Activity Plan Assessment

Criteria	Description
Quality of the application	Is the plan clear, comprehensive, and well-structured in terms of activities and resources?
Value for the money	Is there a clear understanding of the expected impact of the grant in the solution development?
Demonstrability	Is the value of the proposed solution demonstrable to the key stakeholders with the proposed plan?
Feasibility of the plan	Is the solution implementable as described in the plan with the resources estimated and available?

The pre-selected candidates for Financial Support for Pilot and Demonstration activities that submit an Activity Plan for demonstrating their solution will be invited for an Interview.

5.2.4 Interview

The Interview aims to understand better the solution (concept, development and implementation), determine the fitness of the people involved, and detect any misunderstanding or error in either information provided or interpretation, and rectify them. Additionally, it is an opportunity to discuss and refine the proposed Activity Plan.

This assessment is conducted by a panel of experts from the Living Labs, the FIRE-RES consortium and the Open Innovation Challenge organisers.

This assessment is expected to identify the most suitable candidates for Pilot and Demonstration Support.

The criteria for this process are indicated in the table below.

Table 4 - Criteria for Interview

Criteria	Description
Team Quality	Do the team members have the background and skills to support their solution? Have the participants described appropriately their previous experience? Have they successfully addressed similar challenges?
Solution Comprehension	Does what the review panel understand of the solution match the team discussion? If there were any deviations from the understanding based on the submitted information, have they been clarified and rectified?
Activity Plan Comprehension	Does what the review panel understand of the Activity Plan match the team discussion? Have any deviations from the understanding based on the submitted information been clarified and rectified?
Feasibility Assessment	Does the team have a clear view of the next steps, particularly regarding the pilot or demonstration process? Does the team have resources for the implementation phase?

5.2.5 Ranked List for Financial Demonstration and Pilot Support.

The result of the Activity Plan and Interview evaluation is a ranked list of pre-selected applications. These will be considered for Financial Support (Pilot and Demonstration Support; section 2.5) enabling them to implement the Pilot / Demonstration activities agreed based on their Activity Plan and Interview. The ranking reflects their order of priority in being considered for the Pilot or Demonstration support of the Open Innovation Challenge.

The criteria feeding into this ranked list are indicated in the table below.

Table 5 - Criteria for the Ranked List

Criteria	Description
1. Quality of the Activity Plan	See section 5.2.3
2 Quality of the Interview	See section 5.2.4

6 POINTS OF CONTACT

The OIC points of contact available to the applicant are:

- **Open Innovation Challenge info at:**

  https://fire-res.eu/open-innovation-challenge/

- **Apply via:**

  https://www.f6s.com/fire-res-open-innovation-challenge-2023/apply

- **Frequently Asked Questions:**

  https://fire-res.eu/faq-2/

- **OIC Helpdesk:** oic@fire-res.eu

- **F6S support team contact:** support@f6s.com