



GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Selection process for expert contributions in
Blockchain and DLT standardisation

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1 INTRODUCTION

This document contains the full set of information on the selection process of experts in blockchain's standardisation, launched by the project 'Empowering European Experts' leadership in Blockchain Standardisation' (hereafter 'BlockStand'), that is funded by the European Union (EU)'s Digital Europe Programme (DIGITAL) under Grant Agreement N° 101102757.

Interested experts are invited to review all documents related to the selection process before submitting their application. All of this information can also be found on BlockStand's official website at: <https://blockstand.eu/experts-selection/>

The Coordinator of the BlockStand project is responsible for the selection and management of the contributions made by standardisation experts, in accordance with the terms of the Grant Agreement and the Consortium Agreement.

1.1 Background information on BlockStand

BlockStand was launched on the 1st of May 2023 and, over its duration, seeks to maximise the impact of the European Union's standardisation strategy through the contributions of the European experts, and will support the European industry leadership in standardisation of Blockchain and distributed ledger technologies (DLTs).

1.1.1 The main objectives

BlockStand aims to support and increase participation amongst European experts in Blockchain and DLT standardisation activities, with a focus on international leadership, encapsulating EU values and digital sovereignty in the process.

The Blockstand Standardisation Facility, an online blockchain community comprised of stakeholders, including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), European blockchain services infrastructure (EBSI) and Research and Innovation (R&I) communities is established. It shall engage in continuous collaboration and exchange of ideas to identify areas where the expert contributions feed in the three objectives of the project, which are:

- Implementation of the Rolling Plan chapter on Blockchain and contribution to future editions
- Reinforcement of the links with EBSI and the European Blockchain Partnership (EBP)
- Support the participation of European experts and increasing European experts' involvement in international standardisation organisations.

The Blockchain community should work in a circular way, where the core services of the facility will enforce each of the above objectives to feed in the other two objectives and vice-versa. As such, BlockStand will:

1. advance the EU industrial, especially SME-led, leadership in blockchain/DLT development, as well as within the sectors benefitting the most from blockchain technologies (supply chain management, logistics, etc.).
2. promote EU values by ensuring that the European Commission (EC), as well as other high-level stakeholders, are highly engaged with BlockStand.eu and strategically drive its implementation, including its alignment with EU's key priorities and values.
3. Enhance EU strategic sovereignty by promoting the leadership of its standardisation experts and supporting the EC's policies specifically related to standardisation (contributions to the Computers and information technology (ICT) Rolling Plan on standardisation).

4. Promoting sustainability & resilience by ensuring that expert activities cover the EU Green Deal's priorities and sustainability targets.

1.1.2 The participation of European experts in standardisation activities

An integral part of BlockStand's outputs is related to the selection and provision of European expert contributions to standards for Blockchain and DLT technologies. The selection process, as described in the later sections, is based on the soundness of their proposed standardisation activities, technical competence and merit.

The BlockStand project will contribute to and enable the selected experts to participate in European and international standardisation bodies and activities, while promoting the European Union's values and leadership in Blockchain and DLT standardisation.

1.1.3 EU Rolling Plan for ICT Standardisation and expert contributions

The BlockStand project establishes a two-way communication process with the Rolling Plan. On one hand, the project will support the implementation of the actions specified in the Blockchain chapter of the Rolling Plan as standardisation priorities. Proposals submitted by experts will need to consider the implementation of one of the Rolling Plan priorities within the Technical Committees (TCs) and Working Groups (WGs), in which said experts intend to carry out their proposals. On the other hand, the identified gaps in blockchain standardisation will be formulated as input for the following year's edition of the Rolling Plan.

1.2 BlockStand's Executive Management Board and Technical Coordination Board

BlockStand does not only enable European leadership in global blockchain standardisation, but it also ensures that internationally used blockchain/DLT standards positively reflect EU values and the needs of European stakeholders (incl. SMEs, research community, public bodies). As such, it contributes to Europe's strategic autonomy and competitiveness of European industry in the international blockchain market, thus supporting the achievement of the key objectives of the Digital Europe Programme.

The process will be supported by two main bodies. The **Executive Management Board** will set standardisation priorities based on European standardisation priorities and will review the final lists of selected experts, while the **Technical Coordination Board** will provide coordination and mutual learning opportunities to the experts, as well as support consortium's effort to monitor experts' progress.

1.2.2 The Role of the Executive Management Board

The Executive Management Board (EMB) of the project will ensure that the high-level stakeholders are closely engaged with BlockStand and strategically advise its implementation, including its alignment with EU's key political priorities and values.

Composed of representatives from the EC, EBP / EBSI, EU Blockchain Observatory and Forum, key EU industry associations and relevant EU Projects, the EMB will provide policy guidance for the project to support definition of the main priorities for blockchain standardisation. It will also issue a final approval for the lists of selected experts.

Those selected experts who demonstrate standardisation leadership (are the convenors and/or Chairs of technical Working Groups) will be invited to participate in the EMB meetings as well (except for those regarding the decisions over the selection of experts) and serve as a link between the Technical Coordination Board and the EMB.

1.2.3 The role of the Technical Coordination Board

The Technical Coordination Board (TCB), composed of the selected experts, will serve as a place for coordination and alignment among the experts, where they can discuss their technical contributions and priorities, based on:

1. the European Commission's policy objectives,
2. the Annual Working Program for European Standardisation, the Rolling Plan on ICT Standardisation
3. the mapping of the needs of EBSI/EBP, SMEs, EU, and national projects, carried out by the BlockStand consortium.

The Technical Board will also serve as a channel of communication and engagement among the selected technical experts, supporting their leadership and exchange of practices, as well as a point of communication with the BlockStand consortium, allowing consortium to pinpoint the best practices and ensure early identification of any potential risks.

Participation in the TCB is compulsory for all selected experts.

Liaison with the EMB and its priorities will be ensured by admitting leading technical experts (the convenors and/or Chairs of technical Working Groups) to the EMB, and through the guidance of consortium partners.

2 CALL CONDITIONS AND PROCEDURAL INFORMATION

2.1 General Information

The project supports participation of European standardisation experts through the management of an open and transparent selection process, whereby the contributions to European (or international) standardisation are proposed by the experts engaged in the project.

The selection of expert contributions has been launched on the 3rd of August 2023 and will remain active until the final cut-off on the 15th of February 2025. The application form for the selection process, together with all supporting documents, is available in the dedicated section on the BlockStand [website](#).

Expert contributions (deliverables) can vary from a technical report to a research study, a new work item, active participation of a TC, or any related standardisation activity that meets the evaluation criteria (provided below).

The project aims to engage with 30-40 experts and 100 expert contributions (deliverables).

Experts are invited to propose either short or long-term contributions, defined as following:

- short-term contribution – defined as one-time deliverables, which can be accomplished within limited time (max 3 months), and have to result in one concrete output (such as one report regarding inputs to TC/WG work, one blog post explaining TC/WG standardisation work, etc.);
- long-term contributions – defined as contributions which require a longer-term engagement (for maximum up to 12 months), whereby a continuous process and/or follow-up is needed, and which should result in 2 to 3 overall contributions (deliverables).

For each deliverable, the expert will be provided a lump-sum of 4000 Euro/contribution.

Total BlockStand budget allocated to support expert standardisation activities is 400.000 Euro.

2.1.1 Principles of expert engagement

BlockStand aims at supporting and increasing participation of European experts in Blockchain and DLT standardisation activities, with a focus on international leadership, driving EU values and digital sovereignty in the process.

Submitted proposals of standardisation activities are expected to be aligned with EU values and policy priorities, as well as the European Commission's standardisation Strategy. During the evaluation and selection process, the EMB has the responsibility ensuring this alignment. The list of standardisation priorities will be introduced after the 15th of September and will be regularly updated on BlockStand's website.

2.1.2 Means of submission

The online submission form will be the singular entry point for the experts to participate in the selection process by submitting their proposals. The online form is hosted on the GDPR-compliant platform, developed by the European DIGITAL SME Alliance, BlockStand's Coordinator.

The online submission form, as well as the entire documentation with all relevant Annexes, is accessible on BlockStand website here: <https://blockstand.eu/experts-selection/>

2.1.3 Language

English is the official language of BlockStand throughout the entire expert selection and contribution implementation process, as well as subsequent interaction among the experts and between the experts and BlockStand consortium (incl. all official documentation and reports requested). Any submission done in any other language will not be considered and documents produced by the experts must also be in English to be considered eligible.

2.1.4 Document format

Any documents that may be requested or submitted in any of the selection phases or after must be submitted electronically according to the requested format without restrictions to printing.

2.1.5 Origin of the funds

The selected experts will sign an ad hoc Service Contract with the BlockStand Coordinator. The Service Contract will be sent to the experts whose proposals were selected.

The funds allocated for expert standardisation activities will come directly from the funds of the BlockStand Project and the Coordinator is managing them according to the Grant Agreement N° 101102757 signed with the European Commission.

2.1.6 Budget and maximum contributions

The total allocated budget within BlockStand project for expert standardisation activities in Blockchain and DLT is 400.000 Euro. The project aims to engage with around 30-40 experts for an intended number of 100 expert contributions (deliverables).

2.1.7 Use of the financial contributions

Each beneficiary commits to a proper declaration of payments needed during the application process, for the purposes of carrying out their proposed activities in compliance with the defined and expected deliverables.

2.1.8 Number of proposals per Applicant

The continuous selection process of expert's contributions does not envision an upper limit for submissions. Each expert is free to submit any number of submissions that shall be relevant to the scope of the selection process or improve upon proposals that were unsuccessful.

Nonetheless, each individual expert will still be allowed to receive payments a for a maximum of 3 contributions, receiving for each of them a lump-sum of 4000 Euro.

2.1.9 No double-funding

For the proposed contributions, the applying experts must not receive or have received any EU (or national) financial support, including but not limited to financial contributions provided by the SEEBLOCKS, StandICT2026 projects, Small Business Standards' expert funding activities, etc.

3 OPEN CALL INFORMATION AND RULES

3.1. Definition of experts and eligibility criteria

Applying experts are standardisation specialists in Blockchain and DLT technologies, defined as professionals with proven expertise and experience in the field. The latter may be attested through previous contributions to standards developments, participation in various Standards Development Organisations (SDOs) TCs and WGs, etc. in the Blockchain and DLT area.

In a nutshell, the applying experts shall satisfy the following criteria:

- be individuals or natural persons residing in European Member States and are affiliated to entities established (or having significant business interests) in the EU Member States;
- Have profound knowledge in Blockchain and DLT standardisation activities;
- Have experience regarding developments of standards, e.g., in SDOs, in reputable European or international organisations and Standardisation communities;
- Are not already receiving financial support for the same proposed activities;

3.2 Experts selection mechanism

Experts may submit their proposals from the 3rd of August 2023. The overview of the proposal selection process can be found in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The selection process.



3.2.1 Timeline for the submission of proposals

Proposals for expert contributions may be submitted from the 3rd of August 2023 to the 15th of February 2025 on the dedicated online submission form. As explained in detail in article 2.1.8, there is not upper limit on the number of possible submissions thorough the selection process.

All the documents relevant to the submission of proposals can be found on BlockStand's [website](#).

The submission portal is open for a continuous rolling-on submission, with the cut-off dates on:

- 15th September 2023;
- 15th November 2023;
- 15th January 2024;
- 15th March 2024;
- 15th June 2024;
- 15th August 2024;
- 15th October 2024;
- 15th December 2024;
- 15th February 2025.

The selection committee, composed from the consortium partners, will ensure that only highest-evaluated contribution proposals are selected, so that more experts can apply throughout the extended time-period, and more opportunities remain open until the final cut-off date.

3.2.2 Online submission form

The online submission form will be the singular entry point for the experts to participate in the selection process by submitting their contribution proposals. The online form is hosted on the GDPR-compliant platform, developed by the European DIGITAL SME Alliance, BlockStand's Coordinator.

The online submission form, as well as the entire documentation is accessible through BlockStand's [website](#).

The Template for Applications may facilitate the preparation of the information requested by the form. Please be aware that only applications submitted through the online submission form will be considered and, thus, evaluated.

Submissions can be done at any time between the 3rd of August 2023 and the 15th of February 2025 but will be evaluated only at the time of the cut-off dates (as listed above).

3.2.3 The online submission platform and data collection

The online submission platform is hosted on the platform of the European DIGITAL SME Alliance (<https://www.digitalsme.eu/>). The latter is based on WordPress and employs the [Ninja Form](#) plugin for collecting experts' submissions.

User data filled in the form and collected from the registration goes directly to DIGITAL SME's servers hosted by [NextCloud](#), and does not anyhow pass through Ninja Forms. The website files and the database are kept on a European server, its location is in Amsterdam, and the data handling procedures are fully GDPR compliant. You may also find here DIGITAL SME's [privacy policy](#).

3.2.4 Supporting documents

The selection process will be supported through the following documents:

- Guidelines for Applicants, this document;
- Declaration of Honor;
- Service Contract, including the financial identification form. The document will be sent directly to the selected experts;
- Template for Applications;
- Expert Contribution Report Template. The document will be sent directly to the selected experts;
- Frequently Asked Questions & Answers (FAQs). The FAQs will be regularly updated on BlockStand's [website](#).

Please download and read carefully all the relevant files before submitting your proposals.

3.3 Requirements for expert contributions

3.3.1 Types of standardisation activities offered by experts

Several types of expert's activities can fall under the scope of BlockStand. These contributions include (but are not limited to):

- activities performed through the expert's direct participation in a technical committee / working group / other internal grouping within the chosen SDO (these are the responsibilities associated directly to being a chair, convener, rapporteur, or member of a related group), such as proposing or work on a new work item, regular interventions in group's meeting, etc.
- performing relevant research / developing a technical report or other similar documents, directly supporting the expert's work on a specific standard (or standardisation item);
- other activities linked to blockchain / DLT standardisation and promoting Europe's leadership on these standards. Examples of such activities could be:
 - a blogpost explaining standardisation work in a specific technical committee / Working Group;
 - guidelines promoting the developed standard and explaining its implementation;
 - organisation of an event with standardisation experts to promote key technical messages and approaches towards a specific standard, etc.

3.3.2 Deliverables linked to experts' standardisation contributions

Each expert contribution has to be linked to a concrete deliverable, which would prove the work carried out and would allow its evaluation. It can be a concrete document or report, TC / WG agenda and meeting minutes reflecting the expert's contribution, etc.

It is the expert's duty to define what concrete outputs (deliverables) it will provide to support its contribution. Such deliverable will have to be submitted together with Expert Contribution Report.

3.3.3 Expert participation in Technical Coordination Board

All selected experts will be invited to participate in the Technical Coordination Board, which is meant to facilitate communication and collaboration among the selected experts, discuss their standardisation work and contributions, help them to understand political priorities and positioning of their technical work, etc.

Based on their availability, experts can choose to participate in one or more meetings of the Technical Coordination Board, as well as provide written electronic communication (through email exchange and / or Blockchain Standardisation Community Tool) regarding their ideas and suggestions on the proposed Agenda Points.

Experts are highly recommended but not required to participate in all the meetings of the TCB.

More information about the TCB can be found above, in a section 1.2.3.

3.3.4 Expert contribution to BlockStand communication and dissemination activities

Experts are strongly encouraged but not required to:

- contribute to BlockStand's communication activities, either by promoting their engagement with the project, its main results, etc. within their personal networks and communication channels of their choice;
- participate in BlockStand's events (webinars, workshops) and share their success stories;
- contribute to BlockStand's success stories development on blockchain standardisation leadership;
- otherwise promote the project.

Experts who have kindly carried out any communication and dissemination activities, will be asked about it in their Expert Contribution Report.

3.3.5. Reporting Obligation

All experts are obliged to provide the final report linked to their work carried out. The acceptance of their final Expert Contribution Report is directly linked to the payment.

More information about the reporting can be found in a section 3.5 below.

3.4 Evaluation and selection of expert contributions

The selection procedure is developed to be approved by the project consortium, whereby the first step ensures the overall eligibility of the proposed expert contribution, while the second step provides the evaluation and scoring based on the provided evaluation criteria. Detailed information on the main evaluation criteria for expert contributions can be found below.

In addition to the two-step process, the high-ranking selected experts will be approved by the EMB.

3.4.1 Eligibility

As a first step, the project consortium will verify the overall eligibility of the proposal, based on the following checklist:

- The submitted proposal and supporting documents (if any) are submitted in English
- The submitted proposal and supporting documents (if any) are clear and legible;

- The submitted proposal is submitted in the time of the call opening between the 3rd of August 2023 and the 15th of February 2025;
- The submitting expert fulfils all the expert eligibility requirements (as indicated in Table 1);
- The submitted proposal is not funded elsewhere through any other national or European funding mechanisms.

3.4.2 Evaluation, scoring process and criteria

Evaluation of the submitted contributions will be carried out by 2 consortium representatives (the coordinator and one of the partners), and the average of a full score of the two representatives will be assigned to the submitted contribution.

The evaluation will be based, and full score assigned, on the following criteria and scores defined below in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Evaluation and scoring process, Step 1.

Eligibility (All three criteria MUST be satisfied)	Excellence & Implementation (Max points 6; threshold: 4)	Impact (Max points 6; threshold: 4)
The applying expert represents / is affiliated with a European body (European SME, big company, research institution, etc.) No more than 3 contributions from the same expert have been accepted The expert confirms that the same contribution is not presented as an output for EU-funding elsewhere (e.g., it is not an expert's deliverable for SEEBLOCKS, StandICT, SBS, etc.)	Applying expert's experience/knowledge of the subject Applying expert's experience with standardization processes Timeline for the proposed contribution is feasible	The proposed contribution addresses listed priorities or provides clear evidence for the unlisted priority (in the latter case – The Executive Management Board ranks this aspect) The proposed contribution has wider impact on blockchain or its use cases' development The proposed contribution has a potential for follow-up activities / further use of it

Table 2. Evaluation and scoring process, Step 2.

Based on the achievement of the below prioritisation criteria (given between 1 and 3 points for criteria I-V and up to 5 points for criteria VI), the amount of the points will be summed up with the points received in STEP 2, and the experts will be prioritised.	
I. Variety of addressed priorities	Is the contribution addressing one of the priorities where a few (or none) contributions have been made so far?

II. Participation in diverse SDOs / prioritisation of international SDOs	Is the contribution addressing standards / technical committees where little (or none) work has been done so far by the project experts? Is the suggested contribution linked to work being done at the international or European SDO?
III. Representation of the target groups	Is the proposing expert helping to achieve the balance in expert representation (in terms of experts coming from SMEs / large enterprises / research communities / European NGOs)?
IV. Gender balance and expert diversity	Is the proposing expert contributing to ensuring the gender balance of the supported experts? Is the expert representing an unrepresented (or underrepresented) age group?
V. Environmental impact	Is the proposed contribution addressing environmental sustainability? What will be the impact of the proposed contribution / its outcome on the circularity and greening of the economy?
VI. Expert leadership/ participation of new experts	Is the proposing expert aiming to be in a leadership position? Is the proposing expert a new unexperienced expert willing to get engaged in standardisation and grow to fill leadership positions in the future?

3.4.3 Redress procedure

Throughout the expert's selection procedure, experts have the right to appeal the consortium's decisions. Initiating the redress procedure is possible within 10 working days after having received a negative evaluation of the contributions' proposal.

The request for appeal must be sent by email to BlockStand support contact (blockstand@digitalsme.eu). The email must contain the following subject: *Expert Application XXX (application number) – Appeal*. The option to request a Read Receipt must be enabled when sending the email.

Furthermore, the email must contain the expert application number, clear arguments as to why the experts disagrees with the Consortium's evaluation and evidence (if any) to substantiate the arguments.

If all the previous conditions are met, the Consortium shall evaluate the appeal and take a decision within 15 working days. Representatives from all the Consortium Partners shall be involved in the final decision and the latter will be also communicated to the EMB.

3.5 Reporting and Payments

3.5.1 Activities reporting and engagement with the BlockStand consortium

Experts are obliged to provide an Expert Contribution Report for each planned contribution, as outlined in the Service Contract. In cases where experts are selected for one short-term contribution, one Expert Contribution Report is required. In cases where experts are selected for long-term contributions (2 to 3 deliverables), the number of the required Expert Contribution Reports corresponds to each deliverable (2 to 3 Reports).

The template for the Expert Contribution Report is available [here](#).

In addition, as part of their reporting and engagement requirements, experts must engage with the TCB, by either participating in its meetings, or actively contributing to the TCB discussions

via electronic means (community forum, mailing list, etc.) in the event that participating in meetings is not feasible.

In cases where experts proposed contributions resulting in a tangible output (e.g., blogpost), it must be provided together with the Expert Contribution Report and all Intellectual Property Rights are transferred to BlockStand consortium, with an appropriate mention of its author (selected expert).

3.5.2 Review and evaluation of expert contributions

Experts are required to provide the Expert Contribution Report together with any other supporting outputs (if needed), at the deadline foreseen in the Service Contract. Upon receipt of the Expert Contribution Report, the BlockStand consortium commits to review the Report within 15 working days.

In order to receive the payment, the Expert Contribution Report has to be accepted and evaluated positively by the BlockStand consortium based on the following criteria:

- The Expert Contribution Report is provided in English and written in a clear and legible manner;
- Based on the information provided in the Expert Contribution Report, the expert has fulfilled their contribution as defined in the Service Contract;
- Based on the information provided in the Expert Contribution Report, the contribution has achieved the expected impact, as defined in the Service Contract.

3.5.3 Payments

The payment made to the expert depends on the positive evaluation of its provided contribution, as defined in the Service Contract signed with the expert.

As soon as the positive evaluation is received by the expert, the expert will be invited to issue an invoice for the Service (expert contribution) provided.

The payment must be made no later than 10 working days after the reception of the Invoice.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES OF CONSORTIA MEMBERS

4.1 Conflict of interest

The experts selected by BlockStand shall take all the necessary measures to prevent any situations where the impartial and objective implementation of their activities is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, national or political affinities, family or emotional ties or any interest that could potentially fall under the scope of a 'conflict of interest'.

Should any of the aforementioned situations arise or are likely to lead to a conflict of interest, the experts shall formally notify BlockStand's coordinator without delay and act upon rectifying the issue. BlockStand's coordinator will verify that the necessary steps have been taken and may require additional measures to correct the situation and impose specific deadlines.

If the conflict of interest is not resolved or the actions taken to rectify are considered insufficient, the service contract may be automatically terminated.

4.2 Confidentiality and privacy

Any personal and non-personal information, as well as any information linked to the project will remain confidential and will only be shared:

- With BlockStand consortium Partners ([European DIGITAL SME Alliance](#), [Small Business Standards](#), [International Association for Trusted Blockchain](#) and [UNINFO Associazione](#)) and with the EMB for evaluation purposes;
- if requested, with the European Commission and its agencies, as part of the commitments under Grant Agreement N° 101102757;
- if needed, with other similar initiatives supporting expert contributions in standardisation, and especially the [SEEBLOCK](#) consortium in order to ensure that no double-funding occurs;
- if requested, with the appointed auditors of the project, as per grant Agreement N° 101102757.

Contributing experts (names, pictures, affiliations and their participation in technical work) will also be made publicly available on BlockStand's website.

All other information will remain confidential and will not be shared, except with the parties listed above.

Any deliverables and contributions produced by experts through the implementation of the contract may be made public by the consortium at any time, always attributing it to the expert in consideration.

4.3 Intellectual property rights (IPR)

All Intellectual Property Rights related to the proposed expert contributions are transferred to the BlockStand consortium, with an appropriate mention of its author (the selected expert). Whereas proposed contribution results in a tangible output (e.g., blogpost), it must be provided together with the Expert Contribution Report.

DISCLAIMER

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