

Interreg North-West Europe

Blockstart

European Regional Development Fund

Guidelines for applicants

Blockstart Support Programme

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1. General principles

These guidelines explain how SMEs from the sectors health, food, supply chain and logistics who have specific business challenges that might be solved with blockchain technology and located in one of the Blockstart regions (see [section 3](#)) can apply for the Blockstart support programme.

If you need additional information or you plan to apply: please get directly in touch with our contact point: blockstart@oostnl.nl.

2. Background and structure of the support programme

Why Blockchain?

1. Blockchain is valuable in low-trust environments, where participants can't trade directly or lack an intermediary.
2. Blockchain makes use of immutable data structures
3. Blockchain can verify all transactions and data entirely contained on and native to the Blockchain

Some examples of blockchain:

- Blockchain makes transparency within a chain possible, so traceability can be assured throughout the chain.
- Blockchain can also reduce the need for paper-based documents (change it into digitized ones)
- In combination with IoT (sensors) it can bring real-time information into immutable data linked to the product.
- You can safely share critical information.

Blockstart is a European project that connects nine partners in six countries across Europe. Blockstart focuses on businesses active in the fields of health, logistics and agrofood, enabling them to use blockchain to increase security and efficiency in their work when it comes to data protection, tracking and invoicing.

The partners will guide and coach SMEs through blockchain technology. For more information, please check the Blockstart Interreg website <https://www.nweurope.eu/projects/project-search/blockstart/>.

Blockstart is co-funded by the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) within the INTERREG VB North West Europe programme.

3. Regions

The applicant must be located in one of these regions:

- Belgium: Wallonia and Brussels
- France: Île de France and Pas-de-Calais
- Germany: Baden-Württemberg*
- The Netherlands: Gelderland, Limburg and Overijssel
- United Kingdom: South East England

*Parts of Baden-Württemberg, covering the region between Stuttgart, Tübingen, Reutlingen and Neckar-Alb

4. Structure

Blockstart offers support to SMEs over a maximum of one year.

SMEs can receive support in the fields of:

- Understand the Blockchain technology, discover how Blockchain can innovate their processes and data handling and learn which Blockchain solutions can be implemented in their business.
- Evaluate what stage of development your business is in. Identify how to use blockchain to grow and overcome business challenges. Develop tools and techniques to improve sales and revenues.
- Test how to implement a blockchain solution. Demonstrate the value of blockchain in solving business challenges.

All support we offer is tailor-made per organisation. If the application is accepted for support, the applicant will decide in close cooperation with the regional partner what support fits best. Therefore, the consortium offers an overview with training, workshops, experts etc.

After the coaching programme, the SMEs will have increased their awareness and understanding of blockchain potential for their business.

For the purpose of state aid calculations, the support in this phase has been estimated at a maximum value of € 7.500. The applicant receives this in kind, not in cash.

4.1 Final outcome for SMEs

After the successful participation in the training phase, SMEs will have an insight in opportunities of blockchain technology for their specific business case which might lead to increase of turnover and jobs. Besides, they will be part of an ecosystem, consisting of companies, experts, solution providers and network organisations working on blockchain technology.

5. Eligibility criteria and selection criteria

5.1 Eligibility criteria

To apply for the Blockstart training programme, the applicant must comply with the following criteria:

1. The applicant is an SME, complying with the European SME definition: less than 250 employees and an annual turn-over less than € 50 million, or less than 250 employees and an annual balance less than € 43 million. You can find the full definition [here](#). The SME must not have received state aid above the “de minimis” ceiling and must be at a level allowing it to participate in the support programme.
2. The SME must not be in receivership or under liquidation at the time of receiving Blockstart support.
3. The SME’s core business focuses on the health, agrofood, logistics or supply chain sector.
4. The SME is located in one of the North West Europe regions shown in [section 3](#).

What we further expect from our participants:

Successful applicants can receive personalised support and training completely free of charge, and thus get the unique opportunity to increase their awareness and understanding of blockchain potential for their business. In turn, we expect the following commitment:

1) Dedication and time – be seriously willing to adopt a new technology!

By participating in the Blockstart programme, you declare that you will find sufficient time to go through the training programme. Please only apply if you are seriously interested in the adoption of a new technology.

2) Participants must be willing to travel to one of the Blockstart activities in a partner country if necessary

3) Public relations I – allow us to communicate the Blockstart results to the world!

This refers to communication material from Blockstart events (photos, videos, interview etc.) and summary reports of project activities and results, both needed for promoting Blockstart and reporting to the Interreg NWE funding programme. Naturally, no technical content or confidential information will ever be shared externally (see also confidentiality statement in [section 11](#)).

4) Public Relations II – Inform your network about your participation in Blockstart!

Please use your own means of communication (website, newsletters etc.), too.

5) Reporting duties – help us with your personal insights!

The funding programme asks us to regularly report on project progress, success and impacts. We will come back to you to tell us more about your case or ask for feedback.

5.2 Selection criteria

Based on the answers that the SME provides in the application form, the regional Blockstart partners will evaluate and rate the application following standardised selection criteria:

Criterion	Maximum points
The applicant is willing to invest time for participating workshop/training and travel	10
Collaboration with other companies to enhance innovation?	10
Are you willing to collaborate with an organisation that is in a different country? Do you have the capability of collaborating internationally?	10
Impact of the support for the company	10
Expectations of the training programme	10
TOTAL	50

The minimum score for an SME to be accepted in the Blockstart support programme is 30.

The Blockstart contact point might get in contact with the applicant SMEs to clarify questions in the selection process.

6. How and when to apply

SMEs may apply for the Blockstart support programme at any time on the [website](#). Applicants will receive an email to confirm their submission of the application form within two working days. Applications will be evaluated by at least three partners. The results of the evaluations will be sent out to all project partners. Once a month, project partners have a telephone call where the applications are accepted or rejected as a result of the evaluation. The applicant will be informed by the lead partner about the results.

Telephone calls are planned by the project management.

To apply, the SME must fill in the online application [form](#) **AND** then will be asked to send a [De Minimis self-declaration form](#) to the Blockstart contact point.

Forms shall be completed in English.

The complete application comprises the following documents:

- [Application form](#)
- [De Minimis self-declaration form](#).

As soon as the application is granted, the SME will receive a confirmation letter. Besides that, the SME, the external expert (if involved) and the Blockstart consortium partner will sign an agreement on the activities (training, workshops etc.), expected results, time schedule and individual input.

7. Value of Blockstart support services

The support received through the Blockstart project will be deemed as state aid relevant. To comply with state aid regulation, the support will be given under a De Minimis scheme (see [section 10](#)).

The value of the support received will be calculated on the base of the following rates:

Training phase: The support has been estimated at a maximum value of €7,500 depending on which activities the SME picks in the syllabus.

A part of these costs can be spent on travel and accommodation costs. These will be paid by the regional partners. Whether an SME can claim these costs or not will depend on the appointments made between the SME and the regional partner before the start of the activities.

The maximum amount of the travel costs: 500 euro per trip. The maximum amount of trips: two.

Categories of eligible costs:

- Public transport fares (plane, train, buses) in economy class or equivalent
- Car:
 - Car rental (including fuel);
 - Kilometrage/mileage: only if expenses are reimbursed to the car owner by his/her employer and at the employer's rate (and upon evidence of reimbursement by the employer).
 - Parking costs
- Accommodation costs: hotel (incl. breakfast), other accommodation upon regular invoice.

As the Blockstart programme is funded with public money, expenses need to be reasonable.

Not eligible: Subsistence/food and drink (except when it is included in an accommodation invoice).

Reimbursement will be done only after submission of complete evidence of travel and associated costs. This means that the person who travels must keep all evidence documents, such as tickets/boarding passes, hotel invoices etc. Costs without supporting evidence cannot be reimbursed. Advance payments cannot be made.

8. Reporting

After the completion of the support programme, participants will have to fill in a reporting form that shall be filled in and completed not later than 1 month after receipt. The reporting form is a necessary tool to get feedback and improve the services offered and report project results to the funding programme.

9. Solution development & testing programme

If the entrepreneur knows what the impact of blockchain technology can be for its company, he/she can apply for the solution development & testing programme. In this programme, a transnational consortium of SMEs (within in the health, logistics or agrofood sector), providers of blockchain

technology and external experts. The consortium will co-develop, demonstrate and test blockchain solutions in real-life settings.

10. State Aid

The value of the support provided to the SME complies with the State Aid rules under the De Minimis exemption detailed in EC Regulation 1407/2013.

Under the De Minimis exemption scheme, an SME can receive up to €200,000 of State Aid per member state in a rolling three-year period (the current financial year and the two previous financial years). At the time of applying, the SME must provide a [De Minimis self-declaration](#) to its regional Blockstart partner.

This self-declaration must be manually signed by a duly authorized person from the SME and sent by e-mail together with the application to the regional Blockstart partner.

11. Confidentiality

The Blockstart project follows the General Data Protection Regulation, for the document: follow [this link](#). In addition, all information given by the applicant SME to Blockstart partners is deemed confidential and will not be disseminated without prior consent of the SME. For communication purposes, the Blockstart partners may write and disseminate publicity articles related to the actions funded by vouchers. These articles will not contain any confidential information.