

Project acronym: TCLF SkillBridge
Project number: SI2.912307
Project title: Support to Organisations for Actions in the
Context of the EU Textiles, Clothing, Leather, and
Footwear Pact For Skills

D2.1 TCLF SkillBridge

Call for Services

Guidelines and Criteria

Document

Single Market Programme

Deliverable Due Date: 31 August 2025

AUTHOR

EURATEX

CONTRIBUTORS

CEC, COTANCE

Dissemination level: **PU – Public**

1. Background

The **TCLF SkillBridge project**, funded under the EU Single Market Programme (SMP), is designed to strengthen the Textiles, Clothing, Leather and Footwear (TCLF) sectors by supporting the implementation of the EU Pact for Skills. A key component of the project is the activation of **Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs)** across Europe, bringing together local stakeholders to jointly address skills and education challenges.

Through mapping activities and dedicated workshops, TCLF SkillBridge has identified the regions and sectors where RSPs are most relevant, and has worked with stakeholders to start shaping their governance, stakeholder base, and initial action plans. These preparatory steps ensure that each RSP has a clear framework and is ready to move from planning towards implementation.

The present call for services builds directly on this process. It provides the next step in procuring services from TCLF SkillBridge RSPs with the resources they need to translate their strategies into practical actions that respond to the skills needs of SMEs and contribute to the long-term objectives of the Pact for Skills.

2. Purpose of the call

The aim of this call is to operationalise the Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) established under the TCLF SkillBridge project by procuring services from them. Through this process, regional actors will be engaged as subcontractors to design and deliver tailor-made services for SMEs in their region, directly addressing the specific skills needs of the TCLF sectors covered by the respective RSP.

The focus is on strengthening the role of RSPs as drivers of skills development in their territories. The services funded should enable RSPs to:

- train and upskill the workforce of local SMEs,
- pilot and implement concrete actions that respond to the skills challenges identified in their regional work programmes, and
- lay the foundations for long-term cooperation and sustainability within the partnerships.

The services to be procured must be implemented within the framework of a TCLF Regional Skills Partnership established under the SkillBridge project and must address the sectors identified for that region. The award and contracting process will be carried out in line with Article 6.2.B of the grant agreement, ensuring best value for money, equal treatment, and absence of conflict of interest. In addition, tenderers must have already participated in the TCLF SkillBridge workshops and must have submitted a **draft Work Programme** (including governance structure, list of stakeholders, coordinator/contact point, and an agreed action plan). This requirement ensures that the call procures services from stakeholders who are formally engaged in building their regional skills partnerships. The work programme template is available in the [Regional Skills Partnership Establishment Toolkit](#).

In line with the commitments of the EU Pact for Skills, the services to be procured under this call will prioritise SMEs and may include, among others:

- **Apprenticeship programmes** providing on-the-job and hands-on training.
- **Generational knowledge transfer** through coaching and mentorship schemes, enabling experienced or retiring employees to pass on expertise and good business practices to the next generation.
- **Development of guidelines and case studies** to capture and share effective practices across the TCLF ecosystem.
- **Sustainability plans** to help SMEs maintain and expand skills-related activities beyond the project (e.g. continuous learning programmes, use of digital tools, or partnerships with local educational institutions).
- **Funding guidance** equipping SMEs with knowledge on local, national, or international funding opportunities to sustain training and mentoring.
- **Tailored training and mentorship programmes** responding to the specific needs of SMEs in each region.

Through these services, the call aims to address immediate skills gaps while at the same time enabling RSPs to evolve into **self-sustaining networks** that contribute to the long-term implementation of the EU TCLF Pact for Skills at local level.

3. Budget and payments

- **Total budget: €500 000** will be available for contracting services. The objective is to award **≥10 contracts**, led by selected subcontractors, each receiving up to **€50 000**. This is a maximum, and smaller budgets are acceptable when justified.
- **Instalments:** Contracts will receive an **initial instalment of 40%** of the total contract value upon contract signature. The remaining amount will be paid upon successful delivery of the services and approval of final report and submission of a complete Work Programme signed by all stakeholders of the respective RSP.

4. Indicative timeline

Milestone	Indicative period	Notes
Launch of the call	23 September 2025	Publication of guidelines and opening of applications.
Application deadline	23 November 2025	Minimum six weeks for applicants.
Evaluation and awarding	By 19 December 2025	Notification of selected projects.
Contracting & 1st instalment	By 31 January 2026	Contracts signed; initial payment issued.
Implementation period	Feb 2026 – Dec 2026	Services delivered according to project plan.
Final reporting & payment	Jan 2027	Submission of final service reports and final payment.

Milestone	Indicative period	Notes
Services monitoring report	Feb 2027 (M36)	Consolidated report by the project consortium on all funded services.

Tenderers should note that these dates are indicative and may be adjusted to align with procurement procedures or holiday periods.

5. Scope of services

Proposals must address one or more of the following areas, tailored to the needs of **SMEs in the TCLF sectors** within the applicant region. Services should build on the regional work programme and complement existing initiatives, avoiding duplication.

Skills development and training for SMEs

- Apprenticeship programmes providing on-the-job and hands-on training, co-designed with employers and VET providers to ensure direct relevance to company needs.
- Mentorship and coaching schemes, including intergenerational knowledge transfer, where experienced or retiring professionals guide SME staff in technical expertise, craftsmanship, business practices and career development.
- Tailored training programmes that respond to specific skills gaps identified by the RSP in areas such as sustainability, circularity, quality management and digitalisation.

Knowledge and tools for SMEs

- Development of guidelines and case studies capturing effective training and knowledge-transfer practices, enabling replication by other companies.
- Funding guidance to equip SMEs with the knowledge and tools to identify and secure regional, national or EU support for skills development (e.g. coaching on grant applications, eligibility, and partnerships).
- Sustainability plans integrated into each service, outlining how SMEs can continue activities beyond the project (e.g. continuous learning programmes, digital tools, partnerships with local educational institutions, or integration into regional skills strategies).

The Services beneficiaries under this call are exclusively SMEs. Tenderers should refer to the [European Commission's official definition of SMEs](#).

6. Selection of SMEs for support

The services funded under this call are aimed exclusively at SMEs in the TCLF sectors that are part of, or connected to, the **TCLF SkillBridge Regional Skills Partnerships**.

To ensure open, transparent and well-publicised selection of SMEs receiving services, tenderers must describe how they will organise the process. This process should:

- Be led and coordinated by the RSP submitting the tender.
- Be widely promoted within the region through relevant sectoral channels (e.g. trade associations, chambers of commerce, SME networks, social media, regional newsletters).

- Clearly define the eligibility requirements for SMEs and the type of support offered.
- Apply non-discriminatory selection criteria and document the assessment of each expression of interest.
- Provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants to ensure transparency and trust.

7. Eligibility criteria

To ensure alignment with the EU TCLF Pact for Skills and effective governance, tenders must meet the following conditions:

Eligible applicants

Only applicants representing **Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) established under the TCLF SkillBridge project** are eligible.

The following RSPs/sectors are within the scope of this call:

- **Belgium:** Flanders – TCLF
- **France:** Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes – Textiles & Clothing
- **France:** Nouvelle-Aquitaine – TCLF
- **Germany:** Baden-Württemberg – TCLF
- **Greece:** Attica – TCLF
- **Italy:** Campania – TCLF
- **Italy:** Emilia-Romagna – TCLF
- **Italy:** Piemonte – TCLF
- **Italy:** Toscana – TCLF
- **Poland:** Łódzkie – TCLF
- **Portugal:** Centro – TCLF
- **Spain:** Cataluña – Textiles & Clothing
- **Spain:** Comunitat Valenciana – Textiles & Clothing

Within these regions, eligibility is limited to RSPs that:

- have participated in and completed the first TCLF SkillBridge workshops, and
- have submitted a draft **Work Programme** (including governance structure, list of stakeholders, designated coordinator/contact point, and action plan).

Lead applicant

- Must be a legal entity (e.g. VET provider, cluster organisation, regional development agency, chamber of commerce, industry association or university) acting on behalf of the RSP.
- If selected, this entity will sign the subcontract agreement with the TCLF SkillBridge consortium.

Consortium partners

- The proposal may involve training providers, clusters, trade unions, large companies, employment services, public authorities and other stakeholders.
- One legal entity must act as the lead tenderer and sign the subcontract if selected.

Registration to the TCLF Skills Alliance

- The lead tenderer must be a signatory of the Alliance.
- Other consortium members are strongly encouraged to join.

Eligible activities and costs

- Activities must directly support the **skills development of SMEs** in the TCLF sectors, in line with the services described in Section 5.
- The budget may cover all necessary expenses for project implementation, including expertise, travel, accommodation and eligible overheads.
- All costs must be directly linked to service delivery, actual, reasonable, and properly justified. Subcontracts must follow best-value-for-money principles and comply with national procurement rules.

Target (final) beneficiaries

- SMEs in the TCLF sectors within the applicant region.

8. Application and submission procedure

Applicants must submit:

- **Template 1 – Tender submission form** (provided in the Annex) containing general information, a description of the proposed service and activities, target beneficiaries, price (including all costs), timeline and SME selection process. Applicants must fill in all sections of this template.

Submission method

- Tenders must be submitted via email to pfs@euratex.eu. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered. Applicants are encouraged to begin the submission process early and to avoid last-minute applications.

9. Evaluation and selection process

The evaluation will be conducted in two stages:

1. **Eligibility and administrative check:** Ensuring that the application is complete, applicants meet the eligibility criteria, and there are no conflicts of interest.
2. **Quality assessment:** All submitted proposals will first undergo an internal assessment by the TCLF SkillBridge consortium to verify compliance with the eligibility criteria and the completeness of the application. Tenders that pass this stage will then be subject to a quality assessment carried out with the involvement of external experts to ensure impartiality and avoid bias. Proposals will be scored against the criteria set out below, with the **final score calculated as the average of the evaluators' assessments**. A minimum score per criterion and an overall threshold will apply.

Evaluation criteria and weighting

Criterion	Description	Weight
Expected impact	The extent to which the tender contributes to the objectives of the TCLF Pact for Skills and strengthens SME competitiveness in the region. Assessment will focus on the relevance of the proposed services to the RSP's identified needs and the expected benefits for SMEs in terms of skills, employability, innovation and sustainability.	0–10 points
Implementation capacity	The ability of the tenderer(s) to deliver the proposed services. Assessment will consider the feasibility of the work plan, the experience and expertise of the team, the adequacy of resources, and the realism of the budget, including respect for best-value-for-money and procurement rules.	0–5 points
Quality of the proposal	The overall quality of the tender as a project plan. Assessment will consider the internal coherence of objectives, activities and outputs, the robustness of the proposed methodology, and the appropriateness of monitoring and evaluation arrangements.	0–5 points

Tenders will be evaluated on a maximum total of **20 points**. To be considered for funding, tenders must achieve an overall minimum score of **12 points**. In addition, tenders must obtain at least half of the maximum points available under each evaluation criterion.

Selection and contracting

Projects will be ranked according to their final scores. The TCLF SkillBridge partners may decide to award fewer or more contracts depending on the overall quality of the proposals received and the budget available. In making the final selection, attention will also be given to ensuring an appropriate geographical and sectoral balance, so that the tenderers projects reflect the diversity of the TCLF ecosystem.

Tenderers selected for award will be notified and invited to enter into a subcontract agreement with the TCLF SkillBridge consortium.

10. Reporting and monitoring

Successful applicants will be required to:

- **Submit an interim progress report** (mid-term), providing an overview of activities implemented, participants engaged, any deviations from the work plan, and expenditure incurred to date.

- **Deliver a final report** by January 2027, presenting a comprehensive account of results achieved, outputs delivered, outcomes observed, lessons learned, and sustainability measures adopted. The report must include supporting evidence such as participant lists, training materials, pictures/ short videos, financial statements and case studies.
- Engage in **regular coordination and monitoring activities** with the TCLF SkillBridge partners during the implementation phase (e.g. calls, written updates, or other agreed formats) to review progress and address any issues in a timely manner.

Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may lead to suspension of payments or recovery of funds already disbursed.

11. Ethical, legal and financial requirements

Tenderers must ensure that their offer and all subsequent activities respect the following requirements:

- **Conflict of interest:** Any potential conflicts of interest must be declared at the application stage.
- **Public procurement and state aid rules:** Selected tenderers, acting as subcontractors under the TCLF SkillBridge project, must comply with the applicable national procurement rules when contracting goods or services such as trainers, consultants or logistics providers. All costs must follow best-value-for-money principles, be transparent, and reflect market rates.
- **Data protection:** All personal data collected during the subcontract must be handled in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Tenderers should describe how they will ensure secure processing and storage of participant data.
- **Non-discrimination:** Services procured under this call must be accessible to all eligible participants, regardless of gender, age, disability, ethnic origin or socioeconomic status. Proposals should also consider measures to overcome barriers faced by underrepresented groups.
- **Environmental responsibility:** Service providers are encouraged to reduce the environmental footprint of their activities by, for example, choosing local venues, limiting unnecessary travel, and applying eco-design principles in training where feasible.

Addendum I – Clarification on Regional Eligibility and Joint Proposals

Published 9 October 2025

Following questions received from stakeholders, the TCLF SkillBridge consortium provides the following clarification regarding the geographical scope and eligibility of joint proposals under this Call for Services.

While the call limits eligibility to entities based in the regions listed in Section 7 (“Eligibility criteria”), the funding authority has confirmed that exceptions are possible under specific conditions:

- The lead tenderer (main applicant) must be legally established in one of the regions covered by the TCLF SkillBridge project.
- The activities proposed must be aligned with the TCLF sectors and companies identified in that region’s RSP work programme.
- Additional partners from outside the eligible region may participate in a proposal if their involvement contributes to the objectives of the TCLF SkillBridge and benefits companies within the eligible region (for example, if local service providers cannot fully meet the needs of SMEs).

This flexibility aims to ensure that regional partnerships can deliver high-quality services while maintaining a clear regional focus and avoiding overlap with other EU or national funding initiatives.



12. Annexes

Template 1: Tender submission form

Applicants must use this template to describe the service proposal they wish to implement. **All sections are mandatory.** Proposals that are incomplete or not aligned with the eligibility criteria will not be considered.

1. Applicant Information

Field	Details
Applicant region	
Lead organisation	
Contact person	
Email & phone	

☐ We confirm that the applicant is part of a **Regional Skills Partnership (RSP) established under the TCLF SkillBridge project** and that a **draft Work Programme is in place**. The Work Programme is attached to this proposal.

2. Proposal Details

Title of service proposal	
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Full description of service/action (2–3 pages):

Describe the service you propose to deliver, including objectives, main activities, methods and how these respond to the skills needs of SMEs in your region.

Description

3. Alignment with the Pact for Skills and RSP Work Programme

Explain how the proposed service(s) addresses the skills gaps identified in your RSP work programme, and contributes to the EU Pact for Skills priorities (e.g. apprenticeships, generational knowledge transfer, digital and green transition, sustainability).

Explanation

4. Partners Involved

List all organisations involved in delivering the service and briefly describe their roles.

Organisation	Role in service delivery

5. Target Beneficiaries

Identify the SMEs that will benefit and the expected outreach.

Sector(s) (T/C/L/F)	Number of SMEs supported	Expected number of SME employees trained/mentored

SME selection process:

Describe how SMEs will be identified and selected (e.g. call for expressions of interest, criteria, timeline). The process must be transparent, non-discriminatory, and coordinated within the RSP.

Description

6. Duration

Start month	
End month	

7. Outputs and Outcomes

List the expected tangible outputs (e.g. apprentices trained, guidelines produced) and expected outcomes (e.g. improved SME digital skills, adoption of sustainable practices). Indicate how success will be measured.

Expected outputs (tangible)	Expected outcomes (impact)	How success will be measured

9. Budget (EUR)

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



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Provide a fixed price offer including all costs..

Category	Estimated amount (€)	Notes / breakdown
Training / coaching delivery		
Coordination / management		
Travel & subsistence		
Other (logistics, equipment, promotional material, etc.)		
Total requested		

☐ I declare that, as subcontractor under the TCLF SkillBridge project, the proposed budget and any further procurement of goods or services will follow best-value-for-money principles and comply with applicable national procurement rules.

By submitting this application, the undersigned confirms that:

- the information provided in this proposal is accurate and complete to the best of their knowledge;
- the proposal complies with the eligibility criteria of the Call for Services;
- the applicant agrees to the reporting, monitoring and procurement requirements set out in the Call.

Name of authorised representative

Position / role

Organisation

Date

Signature