

## Invitation to Apply to ESA BIC Norway

Reference: ESA BIC Norway Open Call – Issue F, 30/01/2026

Thank you for your interest in ESA BIC Norway.

The European Space Agency (ESA) together with its Member States supports entrepreneurs with the ambition to exploit space technology or utilise space systems in non-space markets, or become suppliers to the space sector, e.g. by exploiting non-space technology in the space market.

Together with its local partners, ESA manages a network of Business Incubation Centres (ESA BICs) across Europe. In Norway, Kjeller Innovasjon is responsible for managing ESA BIC Norway. The locations where start-ups can be incubated are:

Location A – Kjeller Innovasjon (Lillestrøm)  
Location B – StartupLab (Oslo)  
Location C – StartupLab (Bergen)  
Location D – Fremtidens Industri (Trondheim)  
Location E – KPB (Bodø)  
Location F – NorInnova (Tromsø)

ESA BIC Norway offers a comprehensive package of support to start-ups selected for incubation, including office accommodation, incentive funding, technical support, business coaching, and legal/IPR advice to the start-ups selected for incubation.

ESA BIC Norway hereby invites you to submit your application for business incubation. This document provides an introduction to the application and evaluation process and contains references to the templates that should be used when applying.

Please contact ESA BIC Norway for any further questions.

Yours sincerely,  
Jo Bjørnstad  
Manager ESA BIC Norway  
ESA BIC Norway

## Introduction

The purpose of this Open Call for ESA BIC Norway is to inform about the opportunity for space-related start-ups to become incubated in ESA BIC Norway and to provide the material and guidance needed to apply for incubation.

Selection and evaluation of applications are scheduled periodically, see [esabic.no](http://esabic.no) for details.

The Call is permanently open, has no closing date for the submission of applications unless the ESA BIC Norway has indicated otherwise.

## Who can apply?

In general, any space-related start-ups in Norway not older than five years, or natural persons with the intention to set up a space-related start-up, are welcome to apply for incubation.

However, some further criteria apply. These can be found in the Cover Letter Template of the application documents. In particular, note the following:

- The application needs to have a valid *space connection*. In general terms this means that it must be evident that “space” (space technology or a space-based service such as satellite communication, navigation or earth observation) is actually needed. Alternatively, it must be evident that the proposed technology or service fulfils a need in a space context. It is strongly recommended that ideas related to performing activities or using technology in space are verified by a third party before applying. Please contact the ESA BIC for further guidance.
- Applicants need to run their start-up at their own risk. In practice this means that more than half of the shares must be owned by the entrepreneur(s) that apply to the ESA BIC.
- In case the application is done by natural persons, these need a working permit in Norway valid for at least the expected duration of the incubation. Also, the process of setting up a company must have been started. The application shall include details about the status, the intended legal structure, and the shares distribution. An incubation contract can only be signed with a legal entity.

## How to apply

Please make sure you have received the following documents, which are part of the Open Call documentation:

- Cover Letter including Requirement Checklists
- Business Plan
- Incubation Proposal
- Draft Incubation Contract
- Draft Rental Agreements (Upon request)
- Addendum 1 to Incubation Proposal – hours and rates (if ESA incentives are used for salaries to employees (only non-shareholders are accepted) (Upon request)

Make sure to fill in all required sections in the application templates and pay particular attention to the following:

- Instructions inside the documents ([highlighted in blue in each template](#)) shall be followed in order to fulfil all pre-conditions of the Open Call and for the application to be accepted.
- Please read the Draft Incubation Contract carefully. The Cover Letter must include a clear, explicit and unambiguous statement declaring that the applicant has read, understood and accepted the terms and conditions contained in the contractual documentation (this is part of the Cover Letter template). Modifications or amendments to the Incubation Contract may only be done in exceptional cases. Please contact the local ESA BIC Manager for guidance.
- Make sure the Cover Letter and the Requirement Checklists are signed by either the majority shareholder or by shareholders with a combined ownership in excess of 50%.
- The incubation proposal should include details on how the incentive funding is meant to be spent. Note that, as a general rule, the incentive funding has a ceiling of 60.000,- EUR and shall be used for purposes linked to the objectives of the incubation. The incentive is provided in two equal parts, one from ESA and one from a local co-funding partner. The ESA part of the incentive can generally only be spent in Norway. Exceptions can be made, within

defined limits and within ESA member states, Associate Members and European Cooperating States. Please see the Draft Incubation Contract for details and [www.esabic.no](http://www.esabic.no) FAQ

- To qualify for the local part of the incentive, a separate application procedure needs to be followed:
  - Applicants must secure local co-funding of €30 000,- or higher by applying for and being awarded grants (Startup grant 2 or STUD-ENT or another grant scheme approved by ESA BIC Norway) from Innovation Norway (preferred), (Qualification, Verification, Innovation Project or another grant scheme approved by ESA BIC Norway) from The Research Council of Norway or (Innovasjonstilskudd) from the Norwegian Space Agency (reserve). Conditions are listed on their respective websites.
  - Applicants should always try to secure necessary co-funding from Innovation Norway first.
  - Applications to Innovation Norway and The Research Council of Norway can be submitted any time of the year. Official statement of obtaining the local co-funding should be included in the application or sent to ESA BIC NO by the open call cut-off date at latest. Please note that time from application to decision can vary depending on type of grant scheme, ESA BIC NO recommends applying local co-funding minimum 4-6 weeks ahead of cut-off date. Please consult your local contacts as time can vary for different regions in Norway
  - Applications to Norwegian Space Agency can only be submitted in Q4, within an announced date by NoSA, and hence ahead of the ESA BIC Norway cut-off date in Q1 each year. A decision is usually given within January the following year.
  - Applicants must include a confirmation as an appendix to the cover letter showing that the applicant has obtained the local co-funding.
- The usage of the local part of the incentive is subject to any requirements of the local incentive partners.
- **Note that at the time of evaluation of the application to the ESA BIC, a confirmation of availability of the local incentive is a strict requirement. Without such a confirmation, the application to the ESA BIC will be rejected.**
- Incubation in ESA BIC Norway may be requested for a maximum of 24 months.

Please submit the application documents in electronic form (pdf, maximum three files, one for each required document) to the following e-mail address: [post@esabic.no](mailto:post@esabic.no) with subject “ESA BIC Norway Open Call”.

ESA BIC Norway will verify the identity of applicants. You are requested to send digital copies of a passport etc. in a separate file together with your application.

Any questions related to submission of proposals should be sent to the same e-mail address: [post@esabic.no](mailto:post@esabic.no).

For startups selected during TEB in March 2026

ESA BIC Norway, Norwegian Space Agency, and ESA are exploring a potential increase of the ESA incentive. However, this increase is **currently not yet in place** and will only take effect once ESA and Kjeller Innovasjon complete their internal processes and sign a **Contract Change Notice (CCN)**.

If approved, startups selected during **TEB in March 2026** may get the opportunity to apply for a higher amount of incentives through an amended contract (CCN), which will require submission of **additional work packages** aligned with the increased support. All potential changes and updates in the incubation proposal and suggested additional work packages must be endorsed by **ESA BIC Norway**.

Until the above mentioned agreement is contractually finalised, the **current incentive level remains valid**.

## The evaluation procedure

The evaluation of all received applications is managed locally by ESA BIC Norway and follows common ESA BIC procedures.

Once a published submission deadline has passed, ESA BIC Norway first assess the formal aspects of applications received before the submission deadline. If a non-compliance of a minor nature is found, the applicant may be asked to address this in an updated proposal within 48 hours. If the proposal is found non-admissible, the applicant will be informed and the reason will be explained. In such a case an applicant is eligible to submit a revised proposal at a later date.

If the application is compliant with the formal requirements, applicants will be invited to hold a presentation to the ESA BIC Norway evaluation board. The evaluation will typically take place a few weeks after the submission deadline. The evaluation board consists of representatives of ESA BIC Norway, ESA, Norwegian Space Agency, Innovation Norway and other experts. There will also be an opportunity for the evaluation board to ask questions to the applicant.

The application and the presentation will be marked against the criteria in Table 1, taking weighting factors into account.

Criteria	Weighting factor
Background and Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Experience and team composition</li><li>• Support entities</li><li>• Vision</li></ul>	25%
Technology/Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Space Connection</li><li>• Technical feasibility of the product/service to be developed</li><li>• Production development strategy</li><li>• Intellectual Property strategy</li></ul>	20%
Value proposition & Market <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Value proposition</li><li>• Market</li><li>• Competition</li></ul>	20%
Business Modelling and Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revenue model</li><li>• Finance</li><li>• Risk</li></ul>	15%
Activity proposal <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality of the application</li></ul>	20%

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Milestones/Cost-planning</li><li>• Work break-down</li><li>• Management</li><li>• ESA BIC investment opportunity</li></ul>	
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Table 1: ESA BIC evaluation criteria and weighting factors.

All applicants will be notified in writing about the outcome of the evaluation. The applicant may require, within 10 calendar days from the receipt of the notification, an oral debriefing explaining the reason why the application was successful or not.

ESA BIC Norway will enter into contract negotiations with successful applicants, taking the comments of the evaluation board into account. ESA BIC Norway has the right *not* to place a contract if, after three months after the notification to a successful applicant, no contract still has been signed, and this is because of a reason for which the applicant can be held accountable.

Additionally, ESA BIC Norway has the right not to place a contract in case the (intended) legal entity presented in the application is different from the actual established and registered legal entity.

Furthermore, we kindly ask you to pay attention to the following:

- Please note that applications will be treated as confidential. However, the applicant's idea may through this application fall into the public domain (e.g. if local laws require so). Therefore, we strongly recommend that the applicant discusses the protection of his/her idea with a dedicated expert in this field prior to application, and – if relevant – takes appropriate steps to protect the idea (e.g. by applying for a patent).
- As far as allowed by law, any title held by the applicant to his/her idea shall remain vested in him/her. An application to ESA BIC Norway will not result in the acquisition of any title whatsoever to the idea. *However, ESA retains a right to use the Intellectual Property in specific cases, generally related to publicity and promotion. Please read the detailed conditions described under the section "Use of Intellectual Property Rights" in the Draft Incubation Contract.*
- At the end of incubation the ESA BIC will request one or several deliverables. The purpose of these are both to verify the correct use of the incentive and for promotional purposes. The application should specify suitable deliverables.
- Please don't apply to several ESA BICs at the same time. Please wait for one application to be evaluated and only if this is not successful, you may apply again to the same or another ESA BIC, taking any feedback into account.
- No expenses incurred in either stage of the application procedure will be reimbursed to the applicant by ESA BIC Norway, ESA and/or any third party.
- This Open Call does not impose any obligation upon ESA BIC Norway to enter into negotiations with any applicant.