

The CERN BIC Network: updated criteria for becoming a Business Incubation Centre (BIC) of CERN technologies

Approved by the ED on the 26th of November 2019

Introduction:

The first BIC of CERN technologies was set up in collaboration with STFC (UK) in 2012. Following this initiative, several BICs were established in other Member States. As some BICs (or ‘nodes’) have been more successful than others, it is important to make sure that the existing BICs produce satisfactory results before expanding to new ones.

The strategy for the network as discussed and agreed with the nodes is to become a “network of excellence” where all the BICs have at least one or two new incubatees per year. Increasing the number of nodes is not the primary target of the network, instead the aim is to have a steady inflow of new incubatees in each node.

To reach this target, we propose to update the criteria serving as minimum requirements for joining the BIC network, as well as requirements for remaining a node of the network.

Joining the CERN BIC Network:

Existing incubators in the Member or Associate Member States are potential partners to become new nodes of the network. CERN aims to have only one partner per country. In case of multiple candidates, the selected partner can also be an organisation, which would coordinate a group of national incubators, acting as intermediary between CERN and the incubators.

When considering who is the right partner for a new BIC of CERN technologies, a set of minimum requirements should be met:

1. The BIC candidate – or, in case of a national network of incubators, the incubators coordinated by the BIC candidate - should be an incubator park with excellent facilities and service infrastructure, and space to host 2-3 new companies a year;
2. Provision of quality infrastructure services at reasonable/preferential prices;
3. Provision of business advice/coaching services by high-level experienced staff, either from the incubator or collaborators;
4. Record of accomplishment of successful incubatees in the recent past; the business model and details of the 5-10 most recently incubated startups will be assessed;
5. Funds to finance at least two companies a year of the order of 40K euros per company. Each company shall receive the 40K over the incubation period (if the incubation period is longer than 1 year the company does not receive more than 40K in total). Some of the funding could be in equipment or services but no more than 25%;
6. A person of good technical understanding and background that is dedicated to scouting opportunities (minimum time 30% FTE). This person’s profile and main responsibilities shall be:
 - a. Sufficient technical background to have a high-level understanding of the CERN technologies;
 - b. Proactive and well networked with business/start-up world and academia;
 - c. Good communicator. Responsive towards the expressions of interest and towards CERN KT;

- d. Ready to liaise with the country's entrepreneurial community through chambers of commerce and similar organisations;
- e. Organise regular meetings/presentations (2-3 a year) with Industry and the start-up community in order to scout for applications that could use CERN technologies or expertise;
- 7. Links to the local/national Business community and to Academia;
- 8. Motivation to work with CERN and incentives to dedicate resources to making the BIC successful.

The conformity with the above criteria will be validated during a visit to the premises of the BIC candidate to get to know the potential of the BIC better.

When a partner is found that meets the above criteria, after due diligence by the CERN Knowledge Transfer group, and once the Council delegates have agreed to the choice, the BIC candidate becomes a BIC and enters a trial period of 2 years.

The trial period starts from the date of the BIC agreement signature between CERN and the selected partner. Once the BIC is selected and before the BIC agreement is signed, the BIC should make all the preparatory work (such as preparing a website and start the organization of the calls for project) so that the process of selecting incubatees can be started soon after the signature.

During the trial period, the trial BIC get the same benefits as the other nodes of the network. There will be a mid-term review after one year to assess performance.

At the end of the 2-year trial period, the Business Incubation Centre can continue as an official BIC of CERN technologies provided that:

- 1. the BIC has brought at least 15 valid expressions of interest into the pipeline within the 2-year period. Valid expressions of interest are those where CERN KT has found a meaningful match to a CERN technology;
- 2. representatives from the BIC have attended the BIC network meetings;
- 3. the BIC has incubated at least 2 companies during the trial period.

Conditions to remain a node of the CERN BIC network:

Once the BIC successfully completes the 2-year trial period, in order to ensure that the BICs of CERN technologies keep the level of excellence expected from them, their performance will be reviewed at the end of a 4-year period. In addition to making sure that the incubator still complies with the original criteria set for becoming a BIC, the following criteria should be assessed at the end of the 4 years:

- 1. the BIC has brought at least 30 valid expressions of interest into the pipeline within the 4-year period. Valid expressions of interest are those where CERN KT has found a meaningful match to a CERN technology;
- 2. representatives from the BIC have attended the network meetings;
- 3. during the 4-year contract, the BIC has incubated at least 4 companies.

Guidelines for CERN support for BICs in Member and Associate Member States:

The following guidelines set out the support that can be provided by CERN to Member and Associate Member States hosting BICs:

1. Incubatees are entitled to 40 hours of consultancy¹ from CERN experts over the incubation period. For BICs in CERN Member States, this consultancy is financed by CERN, whereas for BICs in Associate Member States it will be paid by the BIC.
2. BIC Network Meetings are held in CERN Member States.
3. BIC Screening week: The KT group organises a Technology Screening week (based on the concept of the NTNU Screening week) and each BIC will be eligible to send a team of participants. Due to limited hosting space (maximum 8 teams of 5 people each), teams from BICs in Member States will be prioritised, and teams from BICs in Associate Member States will be admitted to the extent possible.
4. For BICs in Associate Member States, the maximum number of incubates that can be supported by CERN over the 4-year period is 8.

Terminology and acronyms:

BIC: Business Incubation Centre of CERN Technologies.

BIC candidate: an existing incubator or national organisation coordinating a group of national incubators interested in becoming an official BIC.

Node: a BIC or a national organisation coordinating a group of national incubators acting as intermediary between CERN and the incubators.

CERN Network of Excellence: The network of Business Incubation Centres of CERN technologies, constituted of BICs.

Trial BIC: A BIC still in the 2-year trial period.

Full BIC: A BIC which has successfully passed the 2-year trial period.

NTNU: Norwegian University of Science and Technology (<https://www.ntnu.edu/>). NTNU has an excellent School of Entrepreneurship, and every year the KT Group hosts the students at CERN for the Technology Screening Week.

¹ The consultancy will be done at CERN or by email/phone/videoconference. In case it is needed that CERN personnel travels to deliver the consultancy, travel costs will be covered by the BICs or the incubatees.