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Nordic Innovation Centre

Call for proposals:

Engaging SMEs in the development of standards



- How do we raise knowledge on standardisation among SMEs?
- How could standardisation processes be improved to make them more accessible to SMEs?

What can we do to increase SMEs' involvement in standardisation processes?

Nordic Innovation Centre invites Nordic companies, trade organisations, standardisation organisations, research institutes and others to participate in a call for proposals on how to engage SMEs in standardisation. The purpose of this call is to implement concrete actions on how to increase engagement in standardisation among SMEs. The call amounts to 15 million NOK

Why is this important

Complying with standards is a highly effective way to show your customers that you deliver the highest level of quality. It is an important reputation enhancement tool for a business committed to achieving excellence. Standards are developed in consensus based processes where parties with an interest in the standard develop and define the standard together. Given the major importance of standards in the daily business life, the low participation among SMEs in the development of standards is alarming.

Focus of this call

This call for proposal intends to address these issues by seeking answers to the following two questions:

How do we raise knowledge on standardisation among SMEs?

The general knowledge of standardisation must increase. An important brick in this work is to strengthen the acknowledgement of the importance of standardisation among universities, industry organisations and other industry related bodies. There is also a need for more innovative communication tools in order to connect with the industry in a broader manner.

How could standardisation processes be improved to make them more accessible to SMEs?

A majority of SMEs lack the resources needed to engage in standardisation. For this reason, there is a need to innovate in the process and make it more accessible to companies.

“Standardisation is an important tool in order to expand and open up new markets for small and medium sized enterprises”

We would specifically encourage proposals that focus on:

- European/International perspective
- The service sector
- Environmental technology

Examples of relevant projects:

- Developing new and better information systems and communication tools that could reach out to SMEs
- Improving the position of standardisation in SME training/education
- Raise knowledge of standardisation among service industry organisations/ environmental technology industry
- Raising knowledge of standardisation as a strategic tool for image building
- Evaluating the potential of increased service standardisation within a specific sector
- Raising knowledge of standardisation as a strategic tool to build consumer trust
- Creating methods for evaluating standardisation projects and their involvement on SMEs

- Creating methods based on best practice on how to increase awareness of standardisation
- Addressing barriers for and potential of increased standardisation within Clean Technology
- Raising awareness and knowledge among the financiers of SMEs such as venture capitalist, business angles, banks and government sponsored loan programmes
- Creating new standardisation forums and networks that would defend the SME interests in standardisation

(Please note that this list is only indicative.)





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For more information about the program, please contact:

Johan Englund (Senior advisor)
(+47) 93 82 45 53
j.englund@nordicinnovation.net

Who can apply?

Organisations that can stimulate the interest of SMEs to engage in standardisation development.

We are particularly looking for consortiums of three or more stakeholders, with the objective of participating in a common activity or pooling their resources for achieving common goals.

Basic requirements for all projects:

- the project must include partners from at least three (ideally, all five) Nordic countries. (Projects participants from outside the Nordic regions are welcomed but cannot be funded by NICE)
- the project should be at least 50% self-financed, either in the form of working hours or direct funding
- the project should have a life span of 1-2 years

The deadline for submitting proposals is 26th October 2010.

Nordic Innovation Centre (NICE) is an institution under the Nordic Council of Ministers facilitating sustainable growth in the Nordic economies. Our mission is to stimulate innovation in all sectors and to enhance the free movement of goods, services and capital through Nordic cooperation.

Nordic Innovation Centre,
Stensberggata 25,
NO-0170 Oslo, Norway
Phone: (+47) 47 61 44 00
www.nordicinnovation.net