



SYNAPSE
— IDEATHON —



A I O N
S Y N A P S E
— F O U N D A T I O N —

TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)

SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0

Call for Applications No. 001-2026

Technical, Legal and Operational Framework of the Micro-Grants Programme for Research, Science, Technology and Innovation with Social Impact in Latin America and the Caribbean

AION Synapse Foundation

Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC)

Dubai, United Arab Emirates



AION
SYNAPSE
— FOUNDATION —

AION Synapse Foundation believes that scientific knowledge constitutes a global public good and that research, responsible innovation, and international cooperation are fundamental pillars for addressing the challenges of the twenty-first century. Through the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 programme, the Foundation reaffirms its commitment to strengthening scientific capacities in Latin America and the Caribbean, promoting ethical, open, collaborative research oriented towards social impact.

Ethical Research

Open Science

Collaboration

Social Impact



SYNAPSE
— IDEATHON —

Programme Technical Summary

Item	Information
Programme name	SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0
Call number	Call No. 001-2026
Convening organisation	AION Synapse Foundation
Institutional jurisdiction	Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), Dubai, United Arab Emirates
Instrument type	Competitive micro-grants for research, science, technology and innovation with social impact
Eligible region	Latin America and the Caribbean
Applicant profile	Master's students, doctoral students, researchers, academic researchers, and researchers affiliated with or endorsed by universities, research centres or research institutes
Maximum number of funded projects	Up to five (5) projects
Maximum amount per project	Up to USD 1,000.00
Implementation period	Four (4) weeks
Technical and administrative closure	Five (5) calendar days for submission of reports and supporting documentation, plus administrative review in accordance with the official timetable
Accepted languages	Spanish, English and Portuguese
Application method	Single submission by electronic mail to grants@aionsynapse.org
Official information channel	Official Landing Page of SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 and institutional website of AION Synapse Foundation
Opening date	20 July 2026, 08:00 a.m. Dubai time (GST)
Closing date	20 August 2026, 11:59 p.m. Dubai time (GST)
Publication of results	5 September 2026

SECTION I. GENERAL PROVISIONS



Article 1. Purpose of the Call

This call for applications governs the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 - Call No. 001-2026, an initiative of the AION Synapse Foundation aimed at strengthening scientific research, technological development, innovation, and the generation of knowledge with social impact in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The programme's purpose is to support the development of innovative projects through the allocation of competitive micro-grants, directed at master's and doctoral students, researchers, lecturers, and early-career researchers affiliated with universities, research centres, or legally constituted academic institutions.

The call seeks to promote scientific, technological, and social solutions that address regional challenges, fostering academic excellence, international cooperation, responsible innovation, knowledge transfer, and the strengthening of research capacities across the region.

Participation in this call shall be governed by the provisions set out in these Terms of Reference (ToR) and in the official documents that supplement them.

Article 2. Definitions

For the purposes of interpretation and application of these Terms of Reference, the following terms shall have the meanings set out below:

AION Synapse Foundation

A not-for-profit foundation constituted in the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), United Arab Emirates, responsible for the organisation, administration and financing of the present call for applications.

SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0

A micro-grants programme designed to support research, innovation and technological development projects with social impact in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Call for Applications

The competitive process through which AION Synapse Foundation selects the projects to be awarded micro-grants under the present Terms of Reference (ToR).

Micro-grant

A non-reimbursable financial award granted by AION Synapse Foundation for the implementation of selected projects, in accordance with the conditions established in the present Terms of Reference (ToR) and the Grant Agreement.

Article 2. Definitions (continued)

Principal Investigator

The person responsible for submitting the proposal, coordinating the execution of the project, and acting as the official point of contact with AION Synapse Foundation.

Research Team

The group of persons participating in the development of the project under the coordination of the Principal Investigator.

Host Institution

A university, research centre, scientific institute, or other legally constituted academic institution that provides institutional support to the Principal Investigator.

Project

A technical proposal submitted by the Principal Investigator in order to apply for a micro-grant within the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0.

Applicant

A Principal Investigator who submits a proposal within the framework of the present call for applications.

Beneficiary

A Principal Investigator whose proposal has been selected and who has signed the corresponding Grant Agreement with AION Synapse Foundation.

Article 2. Definitions (continued)

Evaluation Committee

An independent group of experts appointed by AION Synapse Foundation to carry out the technical evaluation of proposals.

Grant Agreement

The legal document by means of which the award of the micro-grant is formalised and the rights and obligations of the parties are established.

Official Landing Page

The official webpage of the call, from which the Terms of Reference (ToR), the Official Applicant Guide, the official forms, the timetable, the frequently asked questions (FAQ), official communications, and all other documents relating to the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 shall be published.

Official Documentation

The body of documents published by AION Synapse Foundation that govern the call and form an integral part of these Terms of Reference (ToR).

Eligible Expenditure

Expenditure authorised for the execution of the project, in accordance with the conditions set out in these Terms of Reference (ToR), the Official Budget Form, and the Grant Agreement.

Article 3. Legal Framework and Jurisdiction

AION Synapse Foundation is a non-profit entity incorporated under the legal framework of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), United Arab Emirates, dedicated to the advancement of research, innovation, knowledge generation and the development of solutions with social impact.

These Terms of Reference (ToR) shall be governed by:

O1	O2
The regulations applicable to foundations and non-profit entities of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC).	The legislation in force regarding the protection of personal data within the DIFC.
O3	O4
The international principles of scientific research, responsible innovation, international cooperation, open science and academic integrity.	The principles of transparency, equal opportunities, objectivity, ethics, good governance and accountability.

Participation in this call for proposals implies the express and unconditional acceptance of these Terms of Reference (ToR), the evaluation criteria and the decisions adopted by AION Synapse Foundation within the scope of its competencies.

Any dispute relating to the interpretation, application or execution of these Terms of Reference (ToR) shall be resolved in accordance with the applicable legislation of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) and the dispute resolution mechanisms provided for by that jurisdiction.

Article 4. Guiding Principles of the Programme

The SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 programme is founded upon the following principles:



Scientific Excellence

Promotion of proposals with high methodological rigour, technical quality, and potential for knowledge generation.



Responsible Innovation

Development of scientific and technological solutions grounded in ethical principles, sustainability, and collective benefit.



Social and Territorial Impact

Priority given to projects that contribute to addressing social, environmental, scientific, or community challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean.



Scientific Integrity

Commitment to academic honesty, transparency, reproducibility of research, and good scientific practice.



Inclusion, Diversity, and Equality

Promotion of participation from researchers across different disciplines, countries, institutions, and contexts, ensuring objective and non-discriminatory selection processes.



Open Science

Promotion of the responsible dissemination of research findings, respecting intellectual property and confidentiality where applicable.

Article 4. Guiding Principles (continued)



Regional and International Cooperation

Strengthening academic, scientific, and technological networks between institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean and other international innovation ecosystems.



Transparency and Accountability

Application of clear, verifiable, and documented procedures throughout all stages of the call for proposals.



Sustainability and Scalability

Appraisal of projects with the potential for continuity, growth, replicability, and the generation of long-term impact.

Article 5. Scope of the Call for Proposals

This call for proposals corresponds to the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 programme - Call No. 001-2026, directed exclusively to natural persons affiliated with universities, research centres or academic institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean who meet the requirements established in these Terms of Reference.

5

Projects funded

Up to five (5) selected projects

\$1K

Per project

Up to USD 1,000 per selected project

4

Weeks of execution

Maximum implementation period for
the project

Participation in this call for proposals is competitive in nature and does not confer any entitlement to receive funding solely by virtue of submitting a proposal.

AION Synapse Foundation reserves the right to award a lesser number of grants where the proposals received do not meet the scientific, technical, ethical or administrative standards established in these Terms of Reference.

Article 6. Official Documents of the Call for Applications

The following official documents form an integral part of these Terms of Reference (ToR):

<u>O1</u>	<u>O2</u>	<u>O3</u>
Terms of Reference (ToR).	Official Applicant's Guide.	Official Application Form.
<u>O4</u>	<u>O5</u>	<u>O6</u>
Official Budget Form.	Grant Agreement Template.	Final Technical Report Template.
<u>O7</u>	<u>O8</u>	<u>O9</u>
Final Financial Report Template.	Personal Data Protection Policy.	Intellectual Property and Open Science Policy.
<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), when officially published.	Any communiqué, clarification, addendum, or official document issued by AION Synapse Foundation during the course of the call for applications.	

All official documents will be available for consultation and download on the Official Landing Page of the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 and on the institutional website of AION Synapse Foundation.

In the event of any discrepancy between the official documents, these Terms of Reference (ToR) shall prevail, unless an express provision is issued by AION Synapse Foundation by means of an addendum or official communiqué.

SECTION II. ELIGIBILITY AND PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS



Article 7. Eligibility of the Principal Investigator

Only natural persons who satisfy all of the following requirements in their entirety may participate in this call for proposals:

O1	O2	O3
Be aged eighteen (18) years or over at the time of submitting the application.	Be an active student on a master's or doctoral programme, a researcher in training, a postdoctoral researcher, a university lecturer with research activity, or a researcher affiliated with a recognised research centre, institute, or group.	Be formally affiliated with, or have the backing of, a university, higher education institution, or research centre or institute that is legally constituted.
O4	O5	O6
Submit a single proposal as Principal Investigator during the present call for proposals.	Possess the capacity to execute the project, administer the micro-grant, and fulfil the obligations set out in these Terms of Reference (ToR).	Submit the proposal in one of the official languages of the call for proposals: Spanish, Portuguese, or English.
O7		
Accept these Terms of Reference (ToR) and all other official documents of the call for proposals in their entirety.		

Legal persons, companies, foundations, non-governmental organisations, public or private entities, associations, corporations, or any other organisation may not act as Principal Investigator; such bodies may only participate as affiliated institutions or supporting entities where applicable.

Ineligibility to Participate

The following persons shall not be eligible to participate as Principal Investigator in the present call for proposals if they find themselves in any of the following situations:

a)

Being a member of the Board of Directors, governing bodies, advisory committees, or any other directorial body of AION Synapse Foundation.

b)

Being an employee, executive, legal representative, contractor, or consultant of AION Synapse Foundation who participates, has participated, or may participate in the planning, administration, coordination, evaluation, supervision, or monitoring of the present call for proposals.

c)

Forming part of the Evaluation Committee designated for the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 - Call No. 001-2026.

d)

Having participated in the drafting of the present Terms of Reference, the official application forms, the evaluation matrix, or any other instrument forming part of the selection process, where such participation may compromise the principles of equality, objectivity, or impartiality.

Ineligibility to Participate (continued)

e)

Having a real, potential or perceived conflict of interest with any member of the Evaluation Committee, AION Synapse Foundation staff, or any person involved in the process of evaluation, selection, award or monitoring of the call.

f)

Having been sanctioned by a final administrative, disciplinary or judicial decision for scientific fraud, plagiarism, document falsification, fabrication or manipulation of research data, corruption, misappropriation of public or private resources allocated to research, or any other conduct that compromises scientific or academic integrity, whilst such sanction remains in force.

g)

Submitting more than one proposal as Principal Investigator in the present call, without prejudice to the possibility of participating as a member of a Research Team in other proposals, provided that this is compatible with the proper execution of the projects and does not give rise to conflicts of interest.

h)

Submitting false, inaccurate, altered, incomplete or misleading information during any stage of the application, evaluation, execution or closure process of the call.

i)

Being disqualified from entering into contracts, receiving grants or participating in research funding programmes pursuant to applicable legislation or by decision of a competent authority.

j)

Failing to meet any of the eligibility requirements set out in these Terms of Reference.

The existence of any of the circumstances described above shall result in the rejection of the application or, where detected subsequently, in exclusion from the evaluation process, revocation of the grant or termination of the Grant Agreement, as applicable, without prejudice to any other administrative or legal actions that may be appropriate.

AION Synapse Foundation may verify, at any point during the process, compliance with the eligibility and ineligibility conditions established in these Terms of Reference, and may request such information or documentation as it deems necessary for that purpose.

A ground of ineligibility may be declared before, during or after the evaluation process and, indeed, following the award of the grant, where the facts giving rise to it come to the knowledge of AION Synapse Foundation after the submission of the application.

The omission, concealment or false declaration of any circumstance constituting a ground of ineligibility shall be considered a serious breach and shall entitle AION Synapse Foundation to adopt the measures provided for in these Terms of Reference, including revocation of the grant, a request for the reimbursement of disbursed funds, and the disqualification of the responsible party from participating in future calls promoted by the Foundation.

Article 8. Affiliated Institutions

Every proposal must be supported by an academic or scientific institution that accredits the affiliation of the Principal Investigator.

The following shall be accepted as Affiliated Institutions:

Universities

Public or private universities that are legally recognised.

Higher Education

Institutions of higher education.

Research Centres

Research centres and institutes.

Postgraduate

Postgraduate schools and university laboratories.

Innovation

Centres of scientific or technological innovation.

Other Institutions

Other academic or scientific institutions whose nature is compatible with the objectives of the present call for proposals.

The Affiliated Institution shall be required to issue an Institutional Letter of Support in accordance with the format established by AION Synapse Foundation.

The Letter of Support must certify, as a minimum:

- The academic or scientific affiliation of the Principal Investigator.
- The institution's awareness of the submission of the proposal.
- The institutional support for the execution of the project in the event that it is selected.

The Affiliated Institution shall not acquire the status of beneficiary of the grant, nor shall it assume any financial obligations towards AION Synapse Foundation, save those expressly established in the Grant Agreement where applicable.

Article 9. Research Team

Proposals may be submitted individually or with a Research Team.

Where a Research Team exists, the following provisions shall be observed:

O1	O2	O3
The Principal Investigator shall be the sole official representative of the project before AION Synapse Foundation.	All members must be fully identified in the Official Application Form.	The team may comprise researchers, postgraduate students, lecturers, professionals, or specialists whose competencies are relevant to the execution of the project.
O4	O5	
The formation of multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and international teams shall be encouraged, as well as the equitable participation of women and men.	The incorporation, substitution, or withdrawal of team members following the award of the grant may only be carried out with the prior written authorisation of AION Synapse Foundation.	

The participation of external collaborators shall not imply any contractual relationship with AION Synapse Foundation.

Article 10. Project Requirements

Projects submitted must fulfil the following requirements:

01	02
Be aligned with at least one of the thematic areas defined by the call for proposals.	Contribute to the generation of knowledge, scientific innovation, technological development, or innovation with social impact.
03	04
Be developed wholly or partially in Latin America and the Caribbean, or generate direct benefits for the region.	Present a technically sound methodology, clearly defined objectives, and verifiable results.
05	06
Demonstrate technical, scientific, operational, and financial viability within the established implementation period.	Have a maximum duration of four (4) weeks, calculated from the start date established in the Grant Agreement.
07	08
Request a micro-grant of up to USD 1,000 (one thousand United States dollars).	Be submitted in Spanish, Portuguese, or English.
09	10
Identify its contribution to one or more Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).	Comply with the principles of ethics, scientific integrity, responsible research, personal data protection, and respect for intellectual property.

Eligible Thematic Areas

The eligible thematic areas include, amongst others:

Artificial Intelligence and Data Science

Emerging Technologies

Health and Life Sciences

Education and Educational Innovation

Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change

Agriculture and Food Systems

Social Innovation

Human Rights

Territorial Development

Public Policy

Digital Transformation

Science, Technology and Innovation for Development

Article 11. Non-Eligible Projects

The following proposals shall not be eligible for funding:

a) Projects submitted by legal persons, companies, non-governmental organisations, foundations, associations, corporations or public or private entities as direct applicants.	b) Projects whose primary purpose is commercial, business-related or profit-driven.	c) Consultancies, technical assistance or the provision of professional services.
d) Academic events, congresses, seminars, symposia or conferences whose principal aim is the organisation of the event itself.	e) Applications intended exclusively for travel, academic mobility, participation in congresses or representation expenses.	f) Projects intended solely for the purchase of equipment, furniture, infrastructure or assets without a clear research or innovation component.
g) Projects already completed or executed prior to the award of the grant.	h) Projects that have received full funding for the same activities from another entity.	i-n) Activities of a political, electoral, partisan, proselytising, religious or confessional nature. Projects that promote discrimination, violence, hate speech or the violation of human rights. Projects that fail to comply with applicable ethical, scientific or legal principles. Proposals that do not correspond to research, technological development or innovation activities. Projects that do not fulfil any of the requirements set out in these Terms of Reference (ToR).

The submission of a non-eligible project shall result in a declaration of inadmissibility and its exclusion from the evaluation process.

SECTION III. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS



Article 12. Official Application Documentation

All proposals must be submitted using exclusively the official documents published by AION Synapse Foundation for the present call for applications.

The official documentation will be available for download on the Official Landing Page of the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 and will include, as a minimum:

O1	O2	O3
Terms of Reference (ToR).	Official Applicant Guide.	Official Application Form.
O4	O5	O6
Official Budget Form.	Template for the Institutional Endorsement Letter.	Template for the Grant Agreement.
O7	O8	O9
Final Technical Report Template.	Final Financial Report Template.	Any other official document published by AION Synapse Foundation for the administration of the call for applications.

Only the official forms and documents published by AION Synapse Foundation will be considered valid. Modified, altered, or non-standard formats that deviate from those established by the Foundation will not be accepted.

Article 13. Required Documentation

Applications must include, as a minimum, the following documentation:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Application Form
Fully completed Official Application Form. |
| 2 | Budget
Official Budget Form. |
| 3 | Curriculum Vitae
Summarised Curriculum Vitae of the Principal Investigator (maximum three pages). |
| 4 | Letter of Endorsement
Institutional Letter of Endorsement duly signed by the Affiliated Institution. |
| 5 | Identity Document
Copy of the valid identity document or passport of the Principal Investigator. |
| 6 | Other Documents
Any other mandatory document established in these Terms of Reference (ToR) or in the official forms. |

All documentation must be submitted in full, legible, current and in the formats established by AION Synapse Foundation.

Article 14. Method of Submission of Applications

Applications must be submitted exclusively via the Official Electronic Form available on the Official Landing Page of the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0.

The form will allow applicants to register the details of the Principal Investigator and to attach individually the mandatory documents established in these Terms of Reference.

 Applications submitted by electronic mail, cloud storage services, external links, messaging applications, social media platforms, or any means other than the Official Electronic Form shall not be considered valid.

The address grants@aionsynapse.org shall be used exclusively for enquiries and technical support, unless AION Synapse Foundation expressly enables an alternative channel through an official communiqué on grounds of technological contingency.

Article 15. Preparation and Submission of the Application Package

All required documentation must be compiled into a single compressed file in ZIP format, which must be uploaded in the field entitled "Application Package" on the Official Electronic Form available on the Official Landing Page of SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0.

The ZIP file must not exceed a maximum size of fifteen megabytes –15 MB– and must include all of the following documents:

O1	O2
Official Application Form, fully completed and submitted in PDF format.	Official Budget Form, fully completed using the official template and saved in Excel .xlsx format.
O3	O4
Curriculum vitae of the Principal Investigator, up to date, with a maximum length of three pages and submitted in PDF format.	Institutional Endorsement Letter, issued and duly signed by the Affiliated Institution, submitted in PDF format.
O5	O6
Copy of the current identity document or passport of the Principal Investigator, complete and legible, submitted in PDF format.	Optional technical annexes, where necessary to facilitate understanding of the proposal, submitted in PDF, JPG or PNG format.

The technical description of the project, including its background, justification, objectives, methodology, activities, expected results, impact and any other components requested, must be incorporated into the Official Application Form. It will not be necessary to submit an independent technical proposal, unless AION Synapse Foundation expressly publishes an additional template.

The application package must be named using the following structure:

```
SYNAPSE_001-2026_SURNAME_FIRSTNAME.zip
```

Files compressed with password protection, incomplete packages, damaged or illegible documents, executable files, formats other than those specified, documents uploaded individually outside the ZIP package, and links to external storage services will not be accepted.

The Principal Investigator shall be responsible for verifying that the package includes all mandatory documents, that these correspond to their final versions, and that the file has been uploaded correctly prior to the official closing date and time.

Article 16. Submission Rules and Technical Requirements

The Principal Investigator must complete all mandatory fields of the Official Electronic Form and upload the complete application package in ZIP format, in accordance with the provisions set out in the preceding article.

The application must be submitted before the official closing date and time established in the Official Schedule. To determine whether a submission has been made in a timely manner, reference shall be made to the date and time automatically recorded by the platform, in accordance with the official time of Dubai – Gulf Standard Time, GST, UTC+4 –.

It shall be the sole responsibility of the Principal Investigator to:

O1	O2
Verify that the information registered in the Official Electronic Form is complete, accurate, and truthful.	Confirm that the ZIP file includes the entirety of the mandatory documents.
O3	O4
Ensure that all files are legible, complete, correspond to their final versions, and are in the prescribed formats.	Confirm that the application package does not exceed the maximum permitted size of fifteen megabytes – 15 MB –.
O5	O6
Use a valid, active, and regularly monitored electronic mail address.	Complete the submission process correctly and retain the electronic confirmation generated by the platform.

Documents submitted independently, files intended to partially supplement a previous application, external links, files hosted on cloud storage services, and documentation sent by electronic mail, instant messaging, social media, or any means other than the Official Electronic Form shall not be accepted.

Whilst the call remains open, the Principal Investigator may replace a previously submitted application by submitting a new Official Electronic Form and uploading a complete ZIP package containing the entirety of the required documentation.

The new application shall replace the previous one in its entirety. For the purposes of admissibility and evaluation, only the last complete application registered before the official closing date and time shall be deemed valid.

Applications that are incomplete, submitted after the deadline, presented through unauthorised channels, or that fail to meet the established technical requirements shall be subject to the grounds for inadmissibility set out in these Terms of Reference.

Article 17. Confirmation of Receipt and Official Communications

Once the Official Electronic Form has been correctly completed and the application package uploaded, AION Synapse Foundation will generate an electronic confirmation of receipt, indicating the date and time of submission and the reference code assigned to the application.

The confirmation of receipt shall solely attest that the documentation was received by the platform. It shall not imply the admission, eligibility, acceptance, favourable evaluation, or selection of the proposal.

All official communications relating to the present call for applications shall be conducted exclusively through the following channels:



Official Landing Page

The Official Landing Page of SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 shall serve as the primary channel for the publication of information, documents, communiqués, clarifications, addenda, and results.



Institutional Website

The institutional website of AION Synapse Foundation shall be used for the publication of official communiqués and documents relating to the call for applications.



Official Email Address

The email address `grants@aionsynapse.org` shall be used for technical enquiries, platform-related support, and direct communications with applicants.

AION Synapse Foundation will not address enquiries relating to the interpretation of the Terms of Reference, the evaluation criteria, the prior eligibility of proposals, the advance review of projects, or technical recommendations regarding their content.

Enquiries relating to technical issues concerning access, uploading, or receipt of documentation must be submitted with the following subject line:

TECHNICAL ENQUIRY – SYNAPSE IDEATHON 1.0

SECTION IV. EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF PROPOSALS



Article 18. Admissibility Review

Once the official period for receipt of applications has concluded, AION Synapse Foundation shall conduct an admissibility review in order to verify compliance with the requirements set out in these Terms of Reference.

During this stage, the following shall be verified:

O1

Compliance with the eligibility requirements of the Principal Investigator.

O2

The validity of the Affiliated Institution.

O3

The submission of all mandatory documentation in its entirety.

O4

Compliance with the submission conditions established in the call for proposals.

O5

The use of the official forms.

O6

Compliance with the technical and administrative requirements set out in these Terms of Reference.

Only applications declared admissible shall proceed to the technical evaluation stage.

Article 19. Grounds for Inadmissibility

The following applications shall be declared inadmissible:

a)

Those that do not fulfil the eligibility requirements established in these Terms of Reference.

b)

Those submitted by legal entities as principal applicants.

c)

Those that do not have the support of an eligible Host Institution.

d)

Those that do not include the entirety of the mandatory documentation.

e)

Those submitted after the official closing date and time of the call.

f)

Those containing documentation that is illegible, incomplete, or altered.

g)

Those containing false, inconsistent, or misleading information.

h)

Those that fail to comply with any of the provisions set out in these Terms of Reference.

Applications declared inadmissible shall not proceed to the technical evaluation stage.

Article 20. Evaluation Committee

Admitted proposals shall be evaluated by an independent Evaluation Committee appointed by AION Synapse Foundation.

The Committee shall be composed of national and international specialists with recognised academic, scientific, or professional standing in areas related to research, innovation, technology, sustainable development, international cooperation, and other disciplines linked to the objectives of the call.

Independence

Members of the Committee shall act with independence, objectivity, impartiality, and confidentiality throughout the entire evaluation process.

Declaration

Prior to commencing their duties, members shall be required to sign a Declaration of Confidentiality and Absence of Conflicts of Interest.

Abstention

Where a real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest exists with respect to a given proposal, the evaluator shall be required to abstain from participating in its review.

Confidentiality

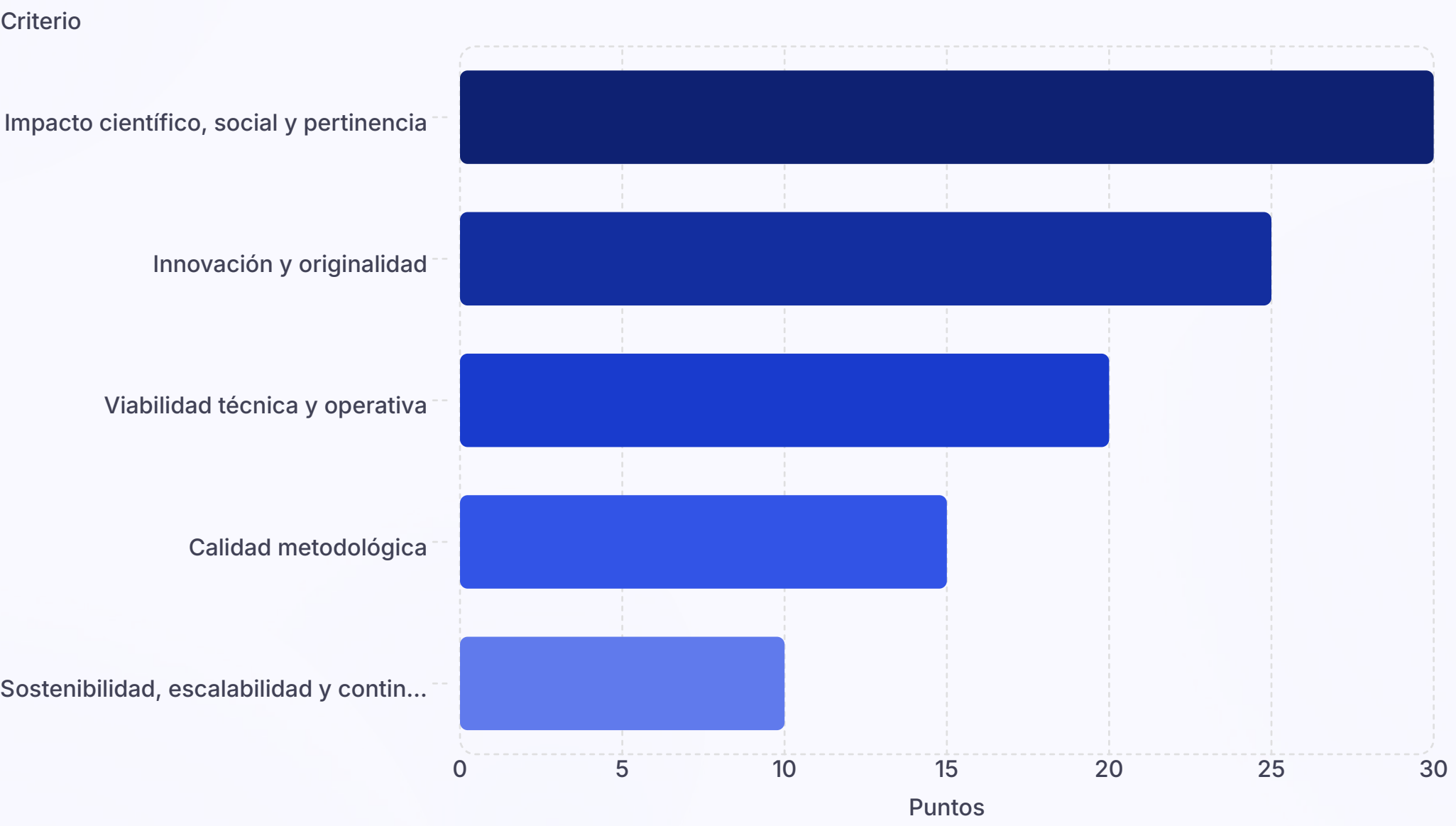
The identities of the members of the Evaluation Committee may be kept confidential before, during, and after the evaluation process.

Article 21. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals shall be evaluated using an official evaluation matrix with a maximum of one hundred (100) points.

The general evaluation criteria shall be as follows:

Criterion	Maximum Score
Scientific and social impact and relevance	30 points
Innovation and originality	25 points
Technical and operational viability	20 points
Methodological quality	15 points
Potential for sustainability, scalability and continuity	10 points
TOTAL	100 points



Only proposals that achieve a minimum score of seventy (70) points out of one hundred (100) may be considered for funding.

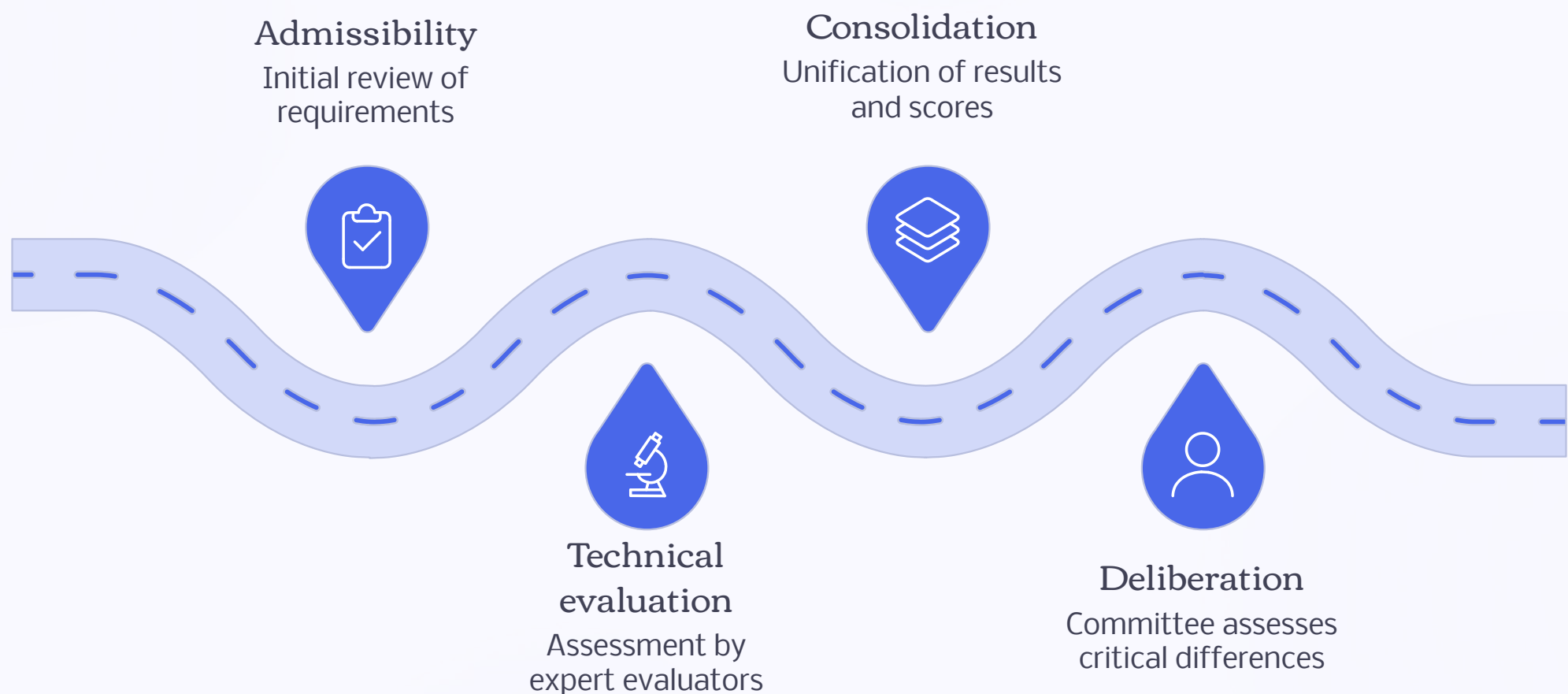
Attaining the minimum score does not guarantee the award of a micro-grant.

Article 22. Evaluation Process

Admitted proposals shall be evaluated individually and independently by at least two (2) members of the Evaluation Committee.

Where a significant difference exists between the scores awarded, AION Synapse Foundation may designate a third evaluator to provide an additional assessment.

The evaluation shall comprise the following stages:



The consolidation of results shall comprise the integration of the scores awarded by the evaluators, the resolution of significant differences where applicable, the preparation of the technical ranking of proposals, and the formulation of the Evaluation Committee's recommendation for consideration by AION Synapse Foundation.

The Committee's deliberations shall be treated as strictly confidential.

Article 23. Project Selection

AION Synapse Foundation will select up to five (5) projects to receive a micro-grant of up to USD 1,000 (one thousand United States dollars) each.

The final selection will take into consideration:

O1	O2	O3
The score obtained during the technical evaluation.	The scientific quality of the proposal.	Its potential for impact.
O4	O5	O6
The technical and financial viability.	The thematic balance of the call for proposals.	The geographical diversity of the selected proposals.
O7		
The availability of budgetary resources.		

AION Synapse Foundation may award a lesser number of grants where the proposals received do not meet the established quality standards.

Likewise, it may constitute a Reserve List to cover any eventual withdrawals, renunciations, or disqualifications.

Article 24. Publication of Results

The official results shall be published on the date established in the call schedule through the Official Landing Page of the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 and the institutional website of AION Synapse Foundation.

Additionally, all applicants shall be notified via the e-mail address registered in the Official Application Form.

The official publication may include:

a) Application code

b) Project title

c) Name of the Principal Investigator

d) Affiliated Institution

e) Country

f) Application status

The decisions adopted by AION Synapse Foundation shall be final and shall not be subject to appeals, complaints, or challenges relating to the technical assessment or the selection of proposals, without prejudice to the Foundation's authority to correct, on its own initiative, any material, arithmetical, or identification errors where appropriate.

Selected applicants shall subsequently receive instructions regarding the signing of the Grant Agreement, the formal acceptance of the grant, and the commencement of the project in accordance with the official call schedule.

SECTION V. FORMALISATION, EXECUTION AND MONITORING



Article 25. Formalisation of the Grant

The award of the micro-grant shall be conditional upon formal acceptance by the Principal Investigator and the execution of the corresponding Grant Agreement with AION Synapse Foundation.

The signing of the Agreement constitutes the indispensable requirement for the commencement of the project and for the disbursement of the approved funds.

The Agreement shall establish, as a minimum:

<u>O1</u>	<u>O2</u>	<u>O3</u>
The object of the grant.	The approved amount.	The execution timetable.
<u>O4</u>	<u>O5</u>	<u>O6</u>
The obligations of the parties.	The conditions for the disbursement of funds.	The monitoring and closure mechanisms.
<u>O7</u>		
The provisions regarding intellectual property, confidentiality and data protection.		

Article 26. Disbursement of the Micro-Grant

Once the Grant Agreement has been signed and the required administrative documentation has been verified, AION Synapse Foundation shall disburse the micro-grant in accordance with the procedure established in the Agreement.

Each project may receive funding of up to USD 1,000 (one thousand United States dollars).

The disbursement shall be made by bank transfer to the Principal Investigator or to the mechanism authorised by AION Synapse Foundation.

The funds must be used exclusively for the activities approved within the project.

AION Synapse Foundation's disbursement obligation shall be deemed fulfilled once the transfer has been duly instructed to the authorised payment mechanism, using the bank details provided by the Principal Investigator. Any delay, rejection, return or failure to credit funds arising from incorrect, incomplete or outdated information provided by the beneficiary shall be the beneficiary's sole responsibility, without prejudice to any steps the Foundation may take to facilitate the correct receipt of the funds.

Legal nature of the micro-grant

The micro-grant awarded by AION Synapse Foundation constitutes a competitive economic contribution intended exclusively to fund, in whole or in part, the execution of the approved project in accordance with these Terms of Reference and the corresponding Grant Agreement.

The award of the micro-grant does not constitute, nor may it be interpreted as:

- a)

An employment relationship between AION Synapse Foundation and the Principal Investigator, the members of the Research Team, the Host Institution, or any third party connected to the project.
- b)

A contract for the provision of services, consultancy, mandate, representation, partnership, association, or any other contractual relationship distinct from the Grant Agreement.
- c)

An academic scholarship, personal study grant, remuneration, salary, fee, or compensation for professional services.
- d)

An investment, equity participation, or corporate financing mechanism.
- e)

A commitment to future funding, automatic renewal, or continuity of financial support by AION Synapse Foundation.

The micro-grant must be used exclusively for the activities, outputs, and results approved for the project, in accordance with the authorised budget and the conditions established in the Grant Agreement.

The Principal Investigator shall be solely responsible for the technical, scientific, administrative, financial, and ethical execution of the project, as well as for compliance with the obligations arising from these Terms of Reference.

The Host Institution shall act solely as an academic or scientific support entity and shall not, by virtue of that role alone, acquire any economic rights against AION Synapse Foundation, nor assume any obligations other than those it expressly accepts in the Grant Agreement, where applicable.

Participation in this call shall not confer upon applicants, beneficiaries, or participating institutions any acquired right in respect of future calls, grants, programmes, or funding mechanisms promoted by AION Synapse Foundation.

The micro-grant is awarded under the principle of competitive, merit-based funding. Accordingly, AION Synapse Foundation shall not direct, scientifically supervise, or assume responsibility for research results, conclusions, publications, technological developments, or any other output arising from the project, all of which shall be the sole responsibility of the Principal Investigator and, where applicable, of the Host Institution.

Article 27. Project Execution

Projects must be carried out in accordance with the approved proposal and the timetable established in the Grant Agreement.

The maximum duration of execution shall be four (4) weeks, calculated from the official start date.

During the execution period, the Principal Investigator shall be responsible for:

O1	O2
Coordinating the development of the project.	Administering the received resources appropriately.
O3	O4
Carrying out the planned activities.	Adhering to the approved timetable.
O5	O6
Maintaining the technical and financial documentation of the project.	Ensuring compliance with ethical standards and principles of scientific integrity.

No substantial modifications to the project may be made without the prior written authorisation of AION Synapse Foundation.

Article 28. Technical and Administrative Monitoring

AION Synapse Foundation may carry out monitoring activities during the execution of the project in order to verify compliance with the objectives, the correct utilisation of resources, and the progress of activities.

For this purpose, it may request:

- a) Additional information
- b) Technical evidence
- c) Virtual monitoring meetings
- d) Financial documentation
- e) Any other necessary information

Beneficiaries shall cooperate with monitoring processes and provide the required information in a timely manner.

Project Risk Management

The Principal Investigator shall be responsible for identifying, preventing, and managing in a timely manner any risks that may affect the development, execution, or fulfilment of the project's objectives.

During the execution of the project, reasonable measures shall be adopted to prevent technical, scientific, operational, administrative, financial, ethical, legal, or any other risks that may compromise the adequate development of the funded activities.

When a situation arises that may significantly affect the schedule, budget, methodology, expected results, or viability of the project, the Principal Investigator shall communicate this in writing to AION Synapse Foundation within five (5) calendar days of becoming aware of it, indicating:

O1	O2
A description of the risk or incident.	The possible consequences for the project.
O3	O4
The measures adopted to mitigate its effects.	The corrective or preventive actions proposed, where applicable.

The communication of a risk shall not, in itself, imply any modification to the project or the Grant Agreement. Any adjustment to the scope, schedule, or budget must be authorised in writing in advance by AION Synapse Foundation, in accordance with the procedures established in these Terms of Reference.

Upon receipt of the communication, AION Synapse Foundation shall evaluate the information submitted and may request clarifications, issue technical or administrative recommendations, or authorise, where appropriate, the adjustments necessary to ensure the adequate execution of the project, in accordance with these Terms of Reference and the Grant Agreement.

AION Synapse Foundation may issue recommendations, request additional information, or establish monitoring measures where it considers that a risk may compromise the adequate development of the project or the correct use of the micro-grant.

The adequate management and communication of risks shall be regarded as good project administration practice and shall not constitute a breach where the beneficiary has acted with diligence, good faith, and transparency.

The deliberate omission of information regarding material risks, or the adoption of decisions that unjustifiably compromise the execution of the project, may be considered a breach of the obligations established in these Terms of Reference.

Article 29. Final Report and Project Closure

Within five (5) calendar days following the end of the execution period, the Principal Investigator shall submit to grants@aionsynapse.org, in a single email, the entirety of the project closure documentation.

The documentation shall include, as a minimum:

O1	O2
Final Technical Report using the official template.	Final Financial Report.
O3	O4
Detailed breakdown of expenditure incurred.	Corresponding financial supporting documentation.
O5	O6
Technical evidence of project execution.	Any other documentation stipulated in the Grant Agreement.

Documents submitted independently or supplementary information provided in subsequent emails shall not be accepted, unless expressly requested by AION Synapse Foundation.

Article 30. Final Review and Administrative Closure

Upon receipt of the closure documentation, AION Synapse Foundation shall have the period established in the Official Convocation Timetable to verify compliance with the obligations set out in the Grant Agreement, to request such clarifications as may be appropriate, and to issue, where applicable, the Certificate of Compliance and Project Closure.

During this period, the Foundation may request clarifications relating exclusively to the documentation submitted, without this implying the incorporation of new documents, technical modifications to the project, or changes to the execution carried out.

Once the review has been completed and compliance with the beneficiary's obligations has been verified, AION Synapse Foundation shall issue the corresponding Certificate of Compliance and Project Closure, thereby concluding the project's participation in SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0.

Failure to comply with the obligations established in these Terms of Reference or in the Grant Agreement may give rise to the revocation of the grant, the request for total or partial reimbursement of the funds awarded, exclusion from future convocations, and such further administrative or legal actions as may be appropriate.

SECTION VI. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF THE GRANT



Article 31. Administration of the Micro-Grant

The administration of micro-grant resources shall be carried out in accordance with the approved budget, the Grant Agreement, and these Terms of Reference (ToR), ensuring their exclusive use for the fulfilment of the objectives, activities, and results set out in the funded project.

The Principal Investigator shall be responsible for the proper administrative and financial management of the resources, as well as for the safekeeping of supporting documentation evidencing their correct utilisation, without prejudice to the other obligations established in the Grant Agreement and in these Terms of Reference (ToR).

All expenditure shall be incurred during the official project implementation period and shall correspond directly to the items approved by AION Synapse Foundation.

The resources may not be used for purposes other than those authorised by AION Synapse Foundation.

Article 32. Eligible Expenditure

The following items, amongst others, directly related to the execution of the project may be financed:

a)

Materials and supplies necessary for the development of the research.

b)

Software licences, digital platforms or technological services indispensable for the execution of the project.

c)

Specialised services or technical assistance required for specific project activities.

d)

Activities relating to the collection, processing and analysis of data.

e)

Materials for prototypes, pilot trials or experimental validations.

f)

Fieldwork activities directly related to the research.

g)

Translation services, scientific editing or technical review of outputs derived from the project.

h)

Other expenditure previously justified and approved by AION Synapse Foundation that is indispensable for achieving the objectives of the project.

All expenditure must be duly supported by invoices, receipts or equivalent documents in accordance with applicable regulations.

Article 33. Ineligible Expenditure

The following, amongst others, may not be financed from the micro-grant:

a)

Permanent salaries or ordinary remuneration of the Principal Investigator or the Host Institution.

b)

Purchase of immovable property or vehicles.

c)

Personal or representation expenses.

d)

Payment of debts, taxes, fines, or penalties.

e)

Financial charges, bank interest, or late payment fees.

f)

Political, electoral, religious, or proselytising activities.

g)

Donations, subsidies, or transfers to third parties.

h)

Purchase of equipment whose acquisition is not fully justified for the execution of the project.

i)

Expenditure incurred prior to the signing of the Grant Agreement or after the official close of the project.

j)

Any other expenditure that is not directly related to the execution of the approved project.

Articles 34-36. Supporting Documents, Reimbursement and Audit

Article 34. Financial Supporting Documents

The Principal Investigator shall retain all documentation supporting the utilisation of the resources granted during the period of execution and closure of the project.

The financial supporting documents shall correspond to the expenditure included in the Final Financial Report and may be requested by AION Synapse Foundation during the processes of monitoring, review or audit.

The absence of sufficient supporting documents may result in the non-acceptance of the corresponding expenditure.

Article 35. Reimbursement of Resources

AION Synapse Foundation may request the total or partial reimbursement of the micro-grant where any of the following circumstances is verified:

O1	O2	O3
Utilisation of resources for purposes other than those approved.	Submission of false or falsified financial information.	Serious breach of the obligations established in these Terms of Reference (ToR) or in the Grant Agreement.
O4	O5	
Total or partial non-execution of the project without justification accepted by AION Synapse Foundation.	Inability to verify the appropriate utilisation of the resources granted.	

The reimbursement procedure shall be established in the Grant Agreement and shall respect the right of the beneficiary to submit any clarifications and documentation they consider pertinent prior to the adoption of a final decision.

Article 36. Audit and Financial Verification

AION Synapse Foundation may carry out administrative, technical or financial reviews at any stage of the project and up to the definitive closure of the call.

For these purposes, the Principal Investigator shall facilitate access to documentation related to the technical and financial execution of the project, as well as respond to requests for information submitted by the Foundation within the established timeframes.

Unjustified refusal to cooperate with the verification processes may constitute a breach of the obligations arising from the grant and give rise to the measures set out in these Terms of Reference (ToR) and in the Grant Agreement.

SECTION VII. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY, OPEN SCIENCE AND DISSEMINATION



Article 37. Ownership of Intellectual Property

Intellectual property rights over the results, methodologies, publications, software, databases, prototypes, models, designs, works, technological developments and all other outputs generated during the execution of the project shall belong to the Principal Investigator and, where applicable, to the Affiliated Institution, in accordance with applicable legislation and the corresponding institutional policies.

Participation in this call for applications shall not imply the automatic assignment of intellectual property rights in favour of AION Synapse Foundation.

Article 38. Institutional Licence of Use

The beneficiaries shall grant AION Synapse Foundation a free-of-charge, non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free licence to use, reproduce, communicate, publish and disseminate general information about the funded projects exclusively for academic, scientific, institutional, educational, transparency, accountability and future call-promotion purposes.

This authorisation shall not imply the transfer of ownership of intellectual property rights, nor shall it permit the commercial exploitation of the results by the Foundation.

The licence provided for in this article shall not cover confidential information, personal data, trade secrets, results protected by undisclosed intellectual property rights, or any other information whose publication is restricted by applicable legislation, by the Grant Agreement, or by confidentiality agreements signed by the parties.

Article 39. Open Science and Dissemination of Knowledge

AION Synapse Foundation shall promote the responsible dissemination of knowledge generated through funded projects, fostering the principles of open science, scientific collaboration, access to knowledge and the transfer of results.

Where the nature of the project permits, the publication of the following shall be encouraged:

a) Scientific articles

b) Technical documents

c) Educational materials

d) Software

e) Databases

f) Methodological protocols

g) Manuals and tools

The dissemination of results must at all times respect intellectual property rights, confidentiality, the protection of personal data, and any legal or contractual restrictions that may be applicable.

Article 4O. Institutional Recognition

Every scientific publication, academic presentation, thesis, technical report, article, audiovisual material, conference, technological product or any other result derived from the project must expressly acknowledge the support received by means of the following acknowledgement:

"This project was funded by AION Synapse Foundation through the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 programme - Call No. 001-2026."

Where technically possible, the institutional logotype of AION Synapse Foundation must also be incorporated in accordance with the current Visual Identity Manual.

Use of the Brand, Name and Institutional Identity of AION Synapse Foundation

The name, institutional denomination, logotype, visual identity, distinctive signs and any other element of intellectual property or corporate identity of AION Synapse Foundation are for the exclusive use of the Foundation and are protected by the applicable regulations governing intellectual property and industrial property.

The award of a micro-grant within the framework of SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 does not confer upon the Principal Investigator, the Research Team, the Host Institution or any third parties authorisation to act on behalf of AION Synapse Foundation, nor to use its name or institutional identity for purposes other than those expressly provided for in these Terms of Reference.

Accordingly:

- a)

The use of the name, logotype or visual identity of AION Synapse Foundation shall be permitted solely to identify that the project received funding through SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0, in accordance with the conditions established in these Terms of Reference (ToR) and in the Foundation's Visual Identity Manual.
- b)

The name, logotype or institutional identity of AION Synapse Foundation may not be used to promote products, services, commercial activities, political campaigns, religious initiatives or any activity unrelated to the funded project.
- c)

It may not be stated or implied that AION Synapse Foundation endorses, certifies, scientifically supports or shares the opinions, conclusions or results of the project beyond the financial support granted through the micro-grant.
- d)

Any public use of the institutional logotype must comply with the graphic and visual identity specifications established by AION Synapse Foundation.
- e)

Any institutional use other than that provided for in these Terms of Reference (ToR) shall require prior written authorisation from AION Synapse Foundation.

The unauthorised use of the name, logotype or institutional identity of AION Synapse Foundation may result in the revocation of the grant, the demand for the immediate cessation of such use, and the pursuit of such administrative or legal actions as may be appropriate to protect the Foundation's rights.

Article 4l. Publications and Scientific Dissemination

Beneficiaries shall retain full academic freedom to publish, present or disseminate the results obtained during the execution of the project.

AION Synapse Foundation may request copies of publications, scientific outputs or technological developments derived from funded projects for the purposes of monitoring, impact evaluation, institutional records and scientific dissemination.

Beneficiaries shall authorise the Foundation to include general information about the project in institutional reports, publications, websites, records, academic activities and dissemination materials, whilst respecting at all times any confidential information and intellectual property rights.

4l.1 Policy on Scientific Publications and Dissemination of Results

AION Synapse Foundation promotes the responsible dissemination of knowledge generated through funded projects, encouraging the publication of scientific, technological and innovation results in academic, scientific and professional media of recognised prestige.

Beneficiaries shall retain full academic freedom to publish, present or disseminate the results derived from the project, in compliance with the obligations established in these Terms of Reference and in the Grant Agreement.

Where the results of the project give rise to scientific publications, articles, book chapters, conference papers, theses, software, datasets, prototypes, technical manuals, methodologies or other academic outputs, it is recommended that:

O1	O2
They are published, preferably, under open access principles, where this is compatible with the nature of the project and with the protection of intellectual property.	Internationally recognised persistent identifiers are used, such as DOI (Digital Object Identifier), ORCID or other applicable standards, where appropriate.
O3	O4
They are deposited, where possible, in institutional, thematic or open access repositories that guarantee their preservation, traceability and public consultation.	The citations, bibliographic references and ethical standards required by the international scientific community are incorporated.

Every publication derived from the project shall expressly acknowledge the support received through the following acknowledgement or an equivalent statement:

"This project was funded by AION Synapse Foundation through the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 programme - Call No. 001-2026."

Where technically possible, beneficiaries shall submit to AION Synapse Foundation a copy of the publications, scientific outputs or technological developments derived from the project, with a view to contributing to the measurement of the programme's impact, the preparation of institutional reports and the dissemination of the results of the call.

The publication of results must not infringe intellectual property rights, confidentiality agreements, personal data protection regulations or any other applicable legal or contractual restrictions.

Participation in this call does not grant AION Synapse Foundation any co-authorship rights over publications derived from the project, unless expressly agreed in writing between the parties.

SECTION VIII. ETHICS, TRANSPARENCY AND COMPLIANCE

Article 42. Principles of Ethics and Integrity

All persons participating in the present call shall act in accordance with the principles of scientific integrity, academic honesty, objectivity, transparency, responsibility, good faith and respect for applicable regulations.

Applicants, beneficiaries, members of the Evaluation Committee and all other participants shall carry out their functions with independence, impartiality and respect for the highest national and international ethical standards.

Article 43. Scientific Integrity

The proposals submitted and the results derived from funded projects shall comply with the principles of scientific integrity and good research practice.

The following shall be considered conduct contrary to scientific integrity, amongst others:

a) Plagiarism

Total or partial plagiarism.

b) Fabrication

Fabrication, falsification or manipulation of data.

c) Omission

Deliberate omission of relevant information.

d) False Information

Presentation of false or misleading information.

e) Misappropriation

Misappropriation of results, methodologies or developments belonging to third parties.

f) Other Conduct

Any other conduct that infringes the internationally recognised principles of research ethics.

The detection of any such conduct may result in exclusion from the call, revocation of the grant and any other administrative or legal actions as may be appropriate.

Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence

AION Synapse Foundation recognises the value of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools as a support for research, information analysis, programming, content generation, software development, data visualisation and other scientific and technical activities.

The use of Artificial Intelligence tools during the development of the proposal or the execution of the project shall be permitted, provided that the principles of transparency, scientific integrity, responsibility, traceability and authorship established in these Terms of Reference are respected.

Consequently:

O1	O2
The Principal Investigator shall be solely responsible for the content, quality, veracity, originality and scientific rigour of the proposal submitted and of all products derived from the project, irrespective of the use of Artificial Intelligence tools.	The use of Artificial Intelligence tools shall not substitute the intellectual authorship nor the academic responsibility of the participating individuals.
O3	O4
Artificial Intelligence may not be used to fabricate, manipulate, alter, falsify or conceal data, experimental results, scientific evidence, bibliographic citations, academic references or any other information that may compromise the integrity of the research.	Where the use of Artificial Intelligence has made a substantial contribution to the methodological development, code generation, information analysis, content production or any other relevant component of the project, the Principal Investigator shall declare this transparently in the Final Technical Report or in any derived publications, where pertinent.
O5	O6
The use of Artificial Intelligence tools shall comply with applicable legislation on intellectual property, personal data protection, confidentiality, cybersecurity and the rights of third parties.	Artificial Intelligence tools that violate fundamental rights, promote discriminatory practices, generate unlawful content or fail to comply with the ethical principles internationally recognised for the responsible development and use of these technologies may not be used.

Beneficiary individuals shall adopt reasonable measures to verify the accuracy, consistency and reliability of any information generated by means of Artificial Intelligence tools prior to incorporating it into the proposal, the project or its results.

Failure to comply with the provisions contained in this section may be considered a breach of the principles of scientific integrity and shall give rise to the adoption of the measures set out in these Terms of Reference, without prejudice to any other administrative or legal actions that may be applicable.

Article 44. Conflicts of Interest

Applicants, beneficiaries, evaluators and any person participating in the development of the call must declare in a timely manner any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest that may compromise the objectivity of the process.

A conflict of interest shall be understood as any situation in which personal, professional, economic, family or institutional interests may influence or appear to influence the impartiality of decisions related to the call.

AION Synapse Foundation shall adopt the necessary measures to prevent, manage and resolve any conflict of interest that may affect the transparency of the process.

The obligation to declare conflicts of interest shall be permanent throughout all stages of the call and the execution of the project. Any subsequent situation that may affect the impartiality, independence or transparency of the process must be communicated in writing to AION Synapse Foundation as soon as it becomes known to the person involved.

Article 45. Transparency and Fraud Prevention

AION Synapse Foundation may verify at any time the authenticity of the information and documentation submitted by participating persons.

Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy

AION Synapse Foundation maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards any form of corruption, bribery, fraud, influence peddling, collusion, extortion, money laundering, terrorist financing, or any other practice contrary to ethics, legality, and institutional integrity.

All applicants, beneficiaries, members of the Evaluation Committee, Affiliated Institutions, and other participants in this call for applications must act in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and ethical conduct throughout all stages of the process.

The following are expressly prohibited:

- a)

Offering, promising, soliciting, or accepting money, gifts, favours, benefits, commissions, incentives, or any other undue advantage with the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing decisions related to the call for applications.
- b)

Attempting to influence members of the Evaluation Committee, AION Synapse Foundation staff, or any person connected to the process of evaluation, award, monitoring, or closure of the call for applications.
- c)

Entering into agreements between applicants intended to distort free competition or to compromise the objectivity of the evaluation process.
- d)

Submitting false documentation, altering information, concealing relevant data, or carrying out any other fraudulent act in order to obtain an undue advantage.
- e)

Using the grant for purposes other than those authorised, or diverting resources towards activities that have not been approved.
- f)

Engaging in any conduct that may compromise the independence, impartiality, transparency, or credibility of this call for applications.

Any person who becomes aware of a possible irregularity may report it to AION Synapse Foundation through the official channels established by the Foundation. The identity of the informant shall be treated with due confidentiality, without prejudice to any applicable legal obligations.

The verification of any of the conducts described above may result, depending on the severity of the case, in the rejection of the application, exclusion from the evaluation process, revocation of the grant, termination of the Grant Agreement, a request for total or partial reimbursement of the funds awarded, disqualification from participating in future calls for applications promoted by AION Synapse Foundation, and the pursuit of any administrative, civil, or criminal proceedings that may be applicable under the relevant legislation.

AION Synapse Foundation may collaborate with the competent authorities where there are indications of conduct that may constitute administrative infringements or offences related to corruption, fraud, documentary falsification, misappropriation of resources, or any other unlawful conduct detected during the course of the call for applications.

Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect fraud, documentary falsification, identity fraud, double funding, misuse of resources, or any other irregularity, the Foundation may:

O1	O2	O3
Request additional information.	Temporarily suspend the evaluation or implementation process.	Declare the application inadmissible.
O4	O5	O6
Revoke the grant awarded.	Request total or partial reimbursement of the funds disbursed.	Disqualify the responsible party from participating in future calls for applications by AION Synapse Foundation.
O7		
Initiate such administrative or legal proceedings as may be applicable.		

Article 46. Audit and Verification

AION Synapse Foundation may carry out technical, administrative, financial or documentary verifications at any stage of the call and up to the definitive closure of the funded projects.

Beneficiary individuals must facilitate access to the information, documentation and supporting evidence required for such processes.

Unjustified refusal to cooperate with audit or verification activities shall constitute a breach of the obligations arising from the grant.

Article 47. Regime of Non-Compliance and Sanctions

Failure to comply with any of the obligations established in these Terms of Reference (ToR) or in the Grant Agreement may give rise, depending on the severity of the case, to one or more of the following measures:

- a)

Formal requirement to remedy the non-compliance where appropriate.
- b)

Temporary suspension of the grant.
- c)

Revocation of the award.
- d)

Early termination of the Grant Agreement.
- e)

Total or partial reimbursement of the funds granted.
- f)

Disqualification from participating in future calls issued by AION Synapse Foundation for the period determined by the Foundation.
- g)

Initiation of administrative, civil or criminal proceedings applicable under current legislation.

The measures adopted shall be proportionate to the nature and severity of the non-compliance and shall guarantee the beneficiary's right to submit any clarifications and documentation they consider pertinent within the time limits established by AION Synapse Foundation.

SECTION IX. DATA PROTECTION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND COMMUNICATIONS



Article 48. Protection of Personal Data

AION Synapse Foundation shall process the personal data provided by applicants and beneficiaries exclusively for the administration, evaluation, award, execution, monitoring and closure of the present call, as well as for the fulfilment of the legal, regulatory and institutional obligations arising therefrom.

The processing of personal data shall be carried out in accordance with the legislation in force at the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) and with the Personal Data Protection Policy of AION Synapse Foundation.

Personal data shall only be used for the purposes set out in these Terms of Reference (ToR) and shall not be sold or transferred to third parties for purposes other than those established in the call.

Article 49. Confidentiality

All technical, scientific, financial, administrative or strategic information provided during the application, evaluation, execution and closure process of the projects shall be treated with strict confidentiality by AION Synapse Foundation and by all persons involved in the administration of the call.

Members of the Evaluation Committee, Foundation staff and any authorised third party shall maintain confidentiality with respect to information acquired in the course of their duties.

The obligation of confidentiality shall remain in force even after the conclusion of the call.

The following shall not be considered confidential:

a)

Information that is in the public domain.

b)

Information whose disclosure is required by a competent authority.

c)

Information whose publication has been expressly authorised by the beneficiary.

The obligation of confidentiality set out in this article shall remain in force throughout the execution of the project and shall continue to have effect once the relationship arising from the present call has ended, for as long as the information retains its confidential nature or until express written authorisation from the owning party for its disclosure has been obtained.

Article 50. Official Communications and Electronic Notifications

All official communications related to this call for applications shall be conducted exclusively by AION Synapse Foundation through the established channels. Communications, notifications, requirements and administrative decisions may be carried out by electronic means.

Official channels



Official Electronic Application Form

The exclusive channel for the submission of applications and the generation of the corresponding electronic confirmation of receipt during the open period of the call for applications.



Official Landing Page of the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0

The principal channel for the publication of the Terms of Reference, application forms, timetable, frequently asked questions, announcements, clarifications, addenda and official results.



Institutional Website of AION Synapse Foundation

The channel for the publication of institutional information, documents and official communications related to the call for applications.



Email address `grants@aionsynapse.org`

The channel designated for technical enquiries, platform-related support and direct communications with applicants. This email address shall not be valid for the submission of applications, unless AION Synapse Foundation expressly enables an alternative channel by means of an official announcement.



Email address registered by the Principal Investigator

The channel for the sending of confirmations, requests for information, requirements, notifications and decisions related to the application.

Responsibilities of the applicant

The Principal Investigator shall be responsible for:

O1	O2	O3
Providing a valid, active and regularly used email address.	Verifying that the address registered in the Official Electronic Application Form is correct.	Keeping their contact information up to date throughout all stages of the call for applications.
O4	O5	
Periodically checking their inbox, junk mail folder, spam folder and automatic filters.	Retaining the electronic confirmation and the reference code assigned to their application.	

Validity of notifications

Communications sent to the email address registered by the Principal Investigator shall be deemed validly notified from the moment of their dispatch.

The failure to read, receive or become aware of a communication due to causes attributable to the addressee shall not invalidate the notification nor suspend the established deadlines.

No communication issued by third parties or disseminated through channels other than those established herein shall have official status or give rise to any obligation on the part of AION Synapse Foundation.

Articles 51-52. Retention of Information and Rights of Data Subjects

Article 51. Retention of Information

AION Synapse Foundation shall retain the documentation and records related to this call for applications for the period necessary to fulfil the administrative, legal, financial, institutional and audit purposes arising from the programme.

Upon expiry of that period, the documentation may be deleted, archived or anonymised in accordance with the Foundation's internal document management and data protection policies and the applicable regulations of the DIFC.

Article 52. Rights of Data Subjects

Individuals whose personal data is processed may exercise the rights recognised under applicable legislation with respect to access, rectification, updating, restriction or erasure of their data, where this is legally permissible.

Requests relating to the exercise of these rights must be directed to the official electronic mail address made available by AION Synapse Foundation for that purpose.

The exercise of these rights shall not affect the validity of participation in the call for applications where the processing of data is necessary for the execution of the selection process, the administration of the grant, or the fulfilment of legal or contractual obligations.

The party invoking a situation of force majeure must notify AION Synapse Foundation in writing as soon as it becomes aware of its occurrence and provide, where reasonably practicable, the information or documentation required to substantiate its existence and assess its effects on the execution of the project. Upon receipt of such notification, the Foundation shall analyse each case individually and adopt such measures as may be appropriate, in accordance with these Terms of Reference and the Grant Agreement.

SECTION X. FINAL PROVISIONS



Article 53. Interpretation of the Terms of Reference

The interpretation of these Terms of Reference (ToR) shall rest exclusively with AION Synapse Foundation, which shall resolve any situation not expressly provided for in accordance with the principles of legality, transparency, objectivity, scientific integrity, equal opportunities and sound administration.

The decisions taken by the Foundation in relation to the interpretation of these Terms of Reference shall be binding upon all participants in the call.

Article 54. Amendment of the Terms of Reference

AION Synapse Foundation may amend, supplement or clarify these Terms of Reference where there are technical, legal, operational, administrative or institutional reasons that justify doing so.

Any amendment shall be published officially through the Official Landing Page of the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 and the institutional website of AION Synapse Foundation, and shall enter into force from the date of its publication, unless expressly stated otherwise.

Amendments shall not have retroactive effect on actions already concluded, unless they benefit all participants and do not affect the principles of equality and transparency.

Reservation of Rights of AION Synapse Foundation

AION Synapse Foundation reserves the right to adopt such administrative, technical, operational or legal decisions as may be necessary to ensure the proper conduct of this call, provided that such decisions respect the principles of legality, equality, transparency, objectivity, good faith and institutional integrity.

In particular, the Foundation may:

O1	O2	O3
Issue clarifications, interpretations, circulars, guidance notes or official communications relating to the application of these Terms of Reference.	Correct material, typographical, arithmetical, referential or formal errors that may be identified during the course of the call, provided that such corrections do not substantially alter the conditions of participation or affect the principle of equality among applicants.	Request additional information or documentation where strictly necessary to verify compliance with the requirements set out in these Terms of Reference.
O4	O5	O6
Adopt the administrative measures necessary to preserve the transparency, objectivity, security and sound management of the call.	Declare the call wholly or partially void where no proposals are submitted, where the applications received do not meet the minimum quality standards established, where there is insufficient budgetary provision, or where exceptional circumstances arise that justify such a decision.	Decline to award the full number of micro-grants envisaged where the proposals evaluated do not attain the scientific, technical, ethical or administrative standard expected by AION Synapse Foundation.
O7		
Resolve any situation not expressly provided for in these Terms of Reference, always seeking an interpretation consistent with the objectives of the programme and with the general principles governing this call.		

Decisions taken by AION Synapse Foundation in the exercise of the powers set out in this section shall be duly reasoned and shall be communicated through the official channels established for the call.

This clause does not authorise AION Synapse Foundation to retroactively modify the essential conditions of the call, nor to adopt decisions that infringe the principles of equality, transparency, objectivity, free competition or legal certainty of the participating persons.

Article 55. Suspension or Cancellation of the Call

AION Synapse Foundation may suspend, postpone, modify the timetable of, or cancel wholly or partially the present call where circumstances of force majeure, unforeseen events, legal restrictions, budgetary insufficiency, security considerations, institutional decisions, or any other situation that prevents the normal conduct of the process arise.

The suspension or cancellation of the call shall not give rise to any right to indemnification, financial compensation, or claim of any kind on the part of applicants or beneficiaries.

The exercise of the powers set out in this article may be prompted by, amongst other causes, legal, regulatory, budgetary, financial, institutional, operational, or force majeure reasons affecting the viability, continuity, or proper execution of the call, without this giving rise to any right to indemnification, compensation, or claim of any kind on the part of applicants or beneficiaries.

Article 56. Force Majeure

AION Synapse Foundation shall not be held liable for the non-fulfilment or delay in any of the obligations arising from the present call where such non-fulfilment or delay is attributable to circumstances of force majeure or unforeseen events beyond its reasonable control.

The following shall be considered circumstances of force majeure, amongst others:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| a) Natural disasters | b) Armed conflicts or civil disturbances |
| c) Public health emergencies | d) Widespread telecommunications failures |
| e) Acts of a competent authority | f) Extraordinary circumstances |

The selection and funding of a project by AION Synapse Foundation shall not constitute certification, validation, accreditation, or scientific, technical, legal, ethical, or commercial endorsement of its content, methodology, results, or derived products. Responsibility for the execution of the project and for the consequences of its activities shall rest exclusively with the beneficiary and, where applicable, with the participating institutions.

Article 57. Limitation of Liability

AION Synapse Foundation shall not assume liability for:

- a)

Errors or omissions made by applicants during the preparation or submission of their proposals.
- b)

Failures in internet services, electronic mail, or technological systems used by third parties.
- c)

Loss or alteration of information caused by circumstances beyond the Foundation's control.
- d)

Expenses incurred by applicants in preparing or submitting their proposals.
- e)

Decisions taken by Affiliated Institutions in relation to the execution of projects.

Applicants and beneficiaries shall cooperate fully, promptly and in good faith with any process of verification, review, investigation or audit conducted by AION Synapse Foundation in connection with potential instances of fraud, corruption, documentary falsification, conflict of interest or other irregularities. Unjustified refusal to provide information or to comply with requirements made by the Foundation may constitute a serious breach of these Terms of Reference and give rise to the adoption of the corresponding administrative and contractual measures.

Article 58. Applicable Jurisdiction

These Terms of Reference (ToR) shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the legislation in force in the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC), United Arab Emirates.

Any dispute arising from the interpretation, application, execution or fulfilment of these Terms of Reference (ToR) or of the Grant Agreements shall be resolved in accordance with the applicable regulations of the Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) and the dispute resolution mechanisms provided for under that jurisdiction.

Severability Clause

Should any provision contained in these Terms of Reference be declared null, invalid, inapplicable or unenforceable by a competent administrative or judicial authority, such circumstance shall not affect the validity, force or enforceability of the remaining provisions, which shall continue to produce full legal effect to the extent that they may be complied with in accordance with their purpose.

In such case, AION Synapse Foundation shall endeavour to replace the affected provision with another which, within the applicable legal framework, reflects as faithfully as possible the purpose and intention originally pursued by the replaced provision.

A declaration of nullity or inapplicability of a provision shall not confer any right upon applicants or beneficiaries to request the suspension, annulment or repetition of actions carried out during the call, unless a competent authority expressly directs otherwise.

Obligations arising from these Terms of Reference which, by their nature, must subsist after the close of the call, including those relating to confidentiality, protection of personal data, intellectual property, use of institutional identity, audit, reimbursement of funds and dispute resolution, shall remain fully in force even where another provision is declared invalid or inapplicable.

Article 59. Documents Forming Part of the Call

The following official documents form an integral part of this call:

O1	O2
Terms of Reference (ToR).	Official Applicant Guide.
O3	O4
Official Application Form.	Official Budget Form.
O5	O6
Model Institutional Endorsement Letter.	Model Grant Agreement.
O7	O8
Final Technical Report Template.	Final Financial Report Template.
O9	O10
Personal Data Protection Policy.	Intellectual Property and Open Science Policy.
O11	O12
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), when published.	Official communications, addenda, and clarifications issued by AION Synapse Foundation during the course of the call.

In the event of any discrepancy between the official documents, the following order of precedence shall apply:

1	5. Official Communications issued by AION Synapse Foundation
2	4. Official Forms
3	3. Official Applicant Guide
4	2. Grant Agreement
5	1. Terms of Reference (ToR)

Article 6O. Entry into Force

These Terms of Reference (ToR) shall enter into force upon their official publication on the Official Landing Page of the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 and on the institutional website of AION Synapse Foundation.

Their content shall be binding upon all applicants, beneficiaries, members of the Evaluation Committee, and all other participants involved in the development of the call for proposals.

These provisions shall remain in force throughout all stages of the SYNAPSE Ideathon 1.0 - Call No. 001-2026, including application, evaluation, adjudication, formalisation, implementation, monitoring, administrative closure, archiving, and auditing of funded projects.

Upon the issuance of Certificates of Compliance and Closure for all selected projects and the completion of the corresponding administrative proceedings, AION Synapse Foundation shall officially declare Call No. 001-2026 concluded, without prejudice to any obligations of confidentiality, intellectual property, data protection, audit, or any other obligations which, by their nature, must remain in force following the closure of the programme.

Any addendum, amendment, clarification, or official communication issued by AION Synapse Foundation during the validity period of the call shall form an integral part of these Terms of Reference from the date of its publication, unless expressly stated otherwise.



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