Call for StartUps 2023-2024

Introduction

Among the goals of the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan of Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna is to strengthen the Third Mission, also via actions aimed at the University's students and alumni. These are targeted at enhancing and boosting entrepreneurship and technology transfer to increase employment and build on our students' expertise, on the one hand, and to expand the social, economic and cultural impact of the Alma Mater at a local level, on the other.

In order to pursue its Strategic Plan goals, the University has undertaken and plays a key role in a number of strategic projects: among others, **"Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti del Comune di Bologna" (in short CTE-COBO) –** financed by the **Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT)** through the 2014-2020 FSC funds and implemented in partnership with 16 organisations **–** and **"Ecosystem for Sustainable Transition in Emilia-Romagna" (in short ECOSISTER) –** funded under the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, Mission 4, Component 2, Investment 1.5, which involves 23 partners.

Through these projects, the University has established **two integrated pathways** for the creation and development of business projects **focussing on specific themes**. The integrated pathways fall within the scope of the Call for StartUps, which seeks to select the best emerging business projects within the University of Bologna:
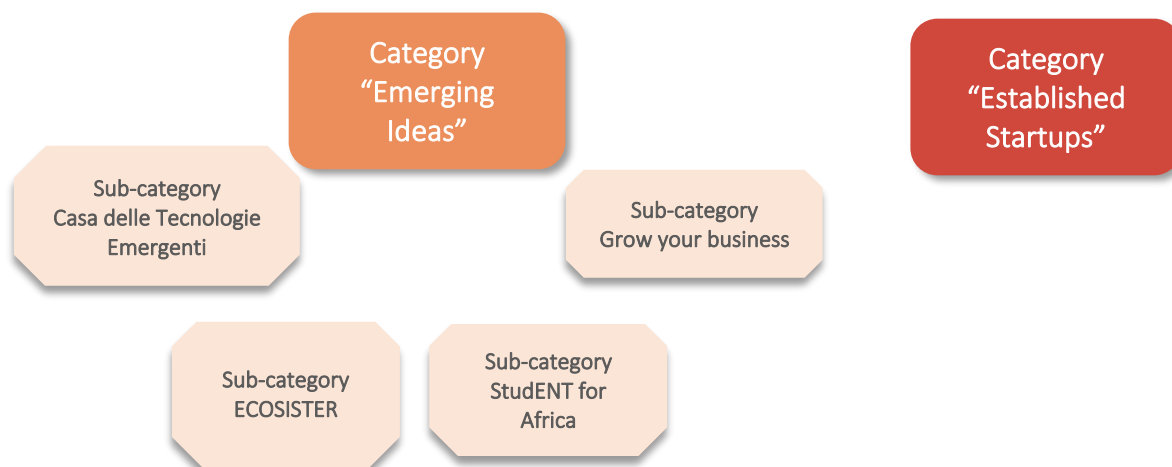
▪ The **Call for StartUps & "Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti del Comune di Bologna" (CTE-COBO) integrated pathway** aims to contribute to the transformation of the city of Bologna into a digital innovation and technology transfer hub supporting urban sustainability, through the implementation of the 5G network and the exploitation of certain emerging technologies. This pathway will allow the Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti to establish itself as a local incubator and accelerator of a support ecosystem for new digital entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the project will expand the innovation community and attract new skills and talent. It includes an Emerging Ideas sub-category within the scope of this Call.

▪ The **Call for StartUps & "ECOSISTER" integrated path** – co-designed in partnership with 5 Emilia-Romagna universities coordinated by ART-ER – seeks to support the ecological transition of the Emilia-Romagna economic and social system through a cross-cutting approach that encompasses all sectors, technologies and skills, combining digital transition and sustainability with employment, well-being and environmental protection, consistently with the goals of the Region's Labour and Climate Pact. In particular, ECOSISTER strives to support the idea generation phase within the student community, through awareness-raising actions, regular and permanent scouting activities, training, advice and coaching to evaluate feasibility. It includes an Emerging Ideas sub-category within the scope of this Call.

1. Purpose and structure of the Call for StartUps 2023-2024

The **"Call for StartUps 2023-2024"** aims to **select emerging or ongoing business projects** that are ready to access growth and acceleration paths.

The Call for applications is divided into **two categories**: "Emerging Ideas" and "Established Startups".

In turn, "Emerging Ideas" is divided into **four sub-categories**:

Category "Emerging Ideas"

Category "Established Startups"

Sub-category Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti

Sub-category Grow your business

Sub-category ECOSISTER

Sub-category StudENT for Africa

❖ **"Emerging Ideas" Category**

1) **"Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti" Sub-category**
   This sub-category aims to find **up to 15 business ideas** focussing on 5G and emerging technology, which will be supported under the CTE-COBO project (see Annex "Explanatory note on projects eligible for participation in Emerging Ideas – Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti"). In order to be eligible, projects must fall within one of the following thematic areas, to be indicated in the application:
   a) Industry 4.0;
   b) Innovative Urban Services;
   c) Culture and Creative Industries.

2) **"ECOSISTER" Sub-category**
   This sub-category aims to find **up to 10 business ideas** focussing on the digital transition, which will be supported under the ECOSISTER project (see Annex "Explanatory note on projects eligible for participation in Emerging Ideas – ECOSISTER"). In order to be eligible, projects must fall within one of the following thematic areas, to be indicated in the application:

a) Climate change mitigation;
b) Climate change adaptation;
c) Sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources;
d) Transition to a circular economy;
e) Pollution prevention and control;
f) Protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

3) **"StudENT for Africa" Sub-category**
This sub-category selects **up to 5 business ideas** whose business focusses on the African content.

4) **"Grow your business" Sub-category**
This sub-category selects **up to 10 business ideas** that do not fall within any of the above categories and are strongly theme-specific.

❖ **"Established Startups" Category**
This category selects **up to 10 established startups** in any sector.

The requirements to apply, grants and prizes vary according to the category and sub-category, as detailed in the following sections.

2. Emerging Ideas Category

2.1 Participation requirements

The four Emerging Ideas sub-categories all share the same participation requirements, which must be met at the time of submitting the application.

The following **applicants** can propose ideas:
- Students enrolled in a first or second cycle degree programme;
- Students enrolled in a professional training programme (first-level or second-level professional master's programme);
- Students enrolled at a specialisation school (excluding medical doctors under specialist training pursuant to Legislative Decree 368/99);
- Graduates who obtained their degree less than 3 years prior to the publication of the Call for applications (i.e. who graduated after 01 December 2020);
- Students enrolled at the Bologna Business School (with exclusive reference to the Graduate Masters of the University of Bologna coordinated by the BBS);

- Graduates of the Bologna Business School (with exclusive reference to the Graduate Masters of the University of Bologna coordinated by the BBS) who obtained their degree less than 3 years prior to the publication of the Call for applications (i.e. who graduated after 01 December 2020).

In addition to the above-mentioned applicants, a project **team** can include any other natural or legal person.

Participation is excluded for PhD students, for whom other initiatives are reserved. In particular, since 2023, the AlmaValue call for applications brings together under a single financial instrument the resources and services supporting pre-competitive development of research results and business development.

Each applicant can propose just one business idea[1].

Without prejudice to the requirements above, anyone who submitted an application in previous editions can apply again in the role of applicant or member of a team, provided they are not partners in a startup established as a result of other initiatives held by the University in the past.

2.2 Project requirements by sub-category

Upon submitting a project, the applicant must select the category and sub-category to which their business idea refers. Please select a sub-category that is consistent with your project. If in doubt, see the annexes to the Call.

A business idea can fall within more than one sub-category or within more than one thematic area of the same sub-category. In that case, the applicant will select the sub-category and thematic area of priority for their business project. If an evaluation committee considers that a project submitted under a certain sub-category is not relevant to that sub-category, it will be entitled to move it to a different one, without penalty for the project itself.

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[1] The limit only applies to the role of applicant and within the same category of the Call (Emerging Ideas or Established Startups). This means that an applicant cannot submit more than one project or the same project in more than one sub-category within the "Emerging Ideas" category. However, the same person can be an applicant for a team and a member of other teams at the same time. It is also possible to act as the applicant for both a team applying in the Emerging Ideas category and a team presenting its business in the Established Startups category.

"Emerging Ideas – Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti" Sub-category

The business ideas presented must fall within one of the following **thematic areas**:

  a) Industry 4.0;
  b) Innovative Urban Services;
  c) Culture and Creative Industries.

The developed solutions must meet the definition of innovative solution, meaning "a solution of public interest enabled by 5G and based on at least one of the emerging technologies indicated in the Public notice of the Italian Ministry of Economic Development, 'Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti', i.e. AI, IoT, Blockchain, Quantum Technologies at the pre-commercial stage, augmented, virtual and immersive reality".

For further information, please refer to Annex "Explanatory note on projects eligible for participation in Emerging Ideas – Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti".

"Emerging Ideas – ECOSISTER" Sub-category

The business ideas presented must fall within one of the following **thematic areas**:

  a) Climate change mitigation;
  b) Climate change adaptation;
  c) Sustainable use and protection of water and marine resources;
  d) Transition to a circular economy;
  e) Pollution prevention and control;
  f) Protection and restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems.

The above thematic areas correspond to the environmental objectives laid down in Regulation (EU) 2020/852.

Moreover, the projects must meet at least **one** of the following **requirements**:

  1. Propose innovative products/services;
  2. Use new technologies;
  3. Be based on high-profile knowledge;
  4. Adopt innovative organisational and/or market solutions.

For further information, please refer to Annex "Explanatory note on projects eligible for participation in Emerging Ideas – ECOSISTER".

"Emerging Ideas – StudENT for Africa" Sub-category

The business ideas presented must aim to create business in African. This sub-category also includes projects that are not based in Africa or only plan to carry out part of their activities directly in that geographical area, as long as they have a strong business focus on the African continent.

"Emerging Ideas – Grow your business" Sub-category

Business ideas that do not fall within any of the above sub-categories and are strongly theme-specific can be presented within the "Grow your business" sub-category, which seeks to select innovative projects in a broad range of thematic areas.

2.3 Evaluation criteria and Evaluation Committees

Phase 1: Preliminary survey

All applications will be preliminarily surveyed by ARIN - Innovation Division of the University of Bologna to establish their eligibility in terms of correctness, completeness of the documentation and fulfilment of the applicable requirements. The offices in charge will assess whether an application is consistent with the theme and can advise the Evaluation Committees to move the project to a different sub-category, without penalty for the applicant.

Phase 2: Evaluation of the applications

The **project ideas** approved at the end of the preliminary survey will be selected based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Description	Score
1. Innovation potential of the solution in the market (WHAT)	- Originality and innovative nature of the solution; - Advantages brought compared to solutions currently available on the market; - Level of development and testing of the product/service offered; - Characterisation and identification of prospective markets, customers, end users and beneficiaries; - Ability to meet real market needs and opportunities.	Maximum score: 10 Minimum threshold: 6/10
2. Applicant and team (WHO)	- Complementarity of team members and appropriate knowledge to develop the project; - Motivation;	Maximum score: 10 Minimum threshold: 6/10

	- Expertise and relationships.	
3. Implementation and effectiveness (HOW)	- Viability and technical feasibility of the product/service; - Sustainability of the business model.	Maximum score: 10 Minimum threshold: 6/10

The **maximum score** available is **30 points**. Only the projects that have obtained **at least 6 out of 10 points in each evaluation criterion** will be considered eligible.

The final scores, which will determine the ranking lists, will be calculated by averaging the points assigned by each member of the Evaluation Committee.

In the event of a tie, priority will be given to the project that scored the highest in criterion 2 – Applicant and team. If a tie persists, priority will be given to the project that scored the highest in criterion 3 – Implementation and effectiveness.

The **number of projects that can be selected within each sub-category** is as follows:
- "Emerging Ideas – Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti" sub-category: up to 15 projects
- "Emerging Ideas – ECOSISTER" sub-category: up to 10 projects
- "Emerging Ideas – StudENT for Africa" sub-category: up to 5 projects
- "Emerging Ideas – Grow your business" sub-category: up to 10 projects

Four Evaluation Committees, one for each sub-category, will be appointed by decree of the Head of the Innovation Division (ARIN) of the University, with members chosen from among experts in the field, both inside and outside the University of Bologna, including representatives of the partners in the CTE-COBO ed ECOSISTER projects.

Following the evaluation process, **four ranking lists** will be drawn up:
- "Emerging Ideas – Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti" ranking list;
- "Emerging Ideas – ECOSISTER" ranking list;
- "Emerging Ideas – StudENT for Africa" ranking list;
- "Emerging Ideas – Grow your business" ranking list.

2.4 Benefits and grants

Benefits and grants for selected Emerging Ideas

The following benefits and grants are provided **for all selected Emerging Ideas**, regardless of the sub-category:

PDAI – Programma di Accensione Imprenditoriale: A course offering support and guidance in developing business ideas, held by the University of Bologna in cooperation with its innovation hub, AlmaCube, both online and in person, from March to June 2024. The course will involve experts from the worlds of business and finance, business consulting, social impact, communication, intellectual property, financial instruments and incubation as speakers. Through lectures and one-on-one mentoring sessions focussing on each of the selected emerging ideas, teams will acquire key business development skills and build a professional network, which is essential to face future market challenges.

Almacube's Prize: among those who took part in the PDAI, the innovation hub Almacube will select during Startup Day 2024 an entrepreneurial project that, once the startup is established, will benefit from the **advanced incubation program** free of charge. The program includes training workshops, networking, mentoring, consulting and 1-to-1 coaching supplied by experienced professionals.

Team building support: Every business team needs different and complementary skills to face market challenges. The *Call for Players 2024* online event will bring together the teams of the Emerging Ideas selected in the Call who are interested in finding specific skills to strengthen their project and the Players who want to put their skills into play to foster the development of those projects. During the event, the selected teams and the Players will be able to get to know each other, interact and, if they wish, continue developing the projects together.

StartUp Day 2024: The projects selected in the Call will be presented at the StartUp Day 2024, an event held by the University of Bologna to foster and support a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, where teams will be able to network and share their business idea with stakeholders and players in the innovation system.
The teams will also meet students and non-students interested in developing their business projects together – both players who have participated in the *Call for Players 2024* and other players they will have the opportunity to connect with at the event.

AlmaLabor co-working: The selected projects will be able to use the AlmaLabor co-working site at Via Ugo Foscolo 7, Bologna, free of charge, to work together on developing their business idea. To use the AlmaLabor co-working site, teams will need to book via the application https://calma.unibo.it/coworking/day.php, specifying the name of the project and making reference to the Call for StartUps 2023-2024 in the "full description" field.

Sponsors' prizes: At the StartUp Day, some sponsors may award prizes in cash and/or in kind to the best Emerging Ideas, which will be evaluated also based on the pitches made at the event.

Accreditation: Having been involved in initiatives or projects promoted by the University to foster business development, the startups established as a result of participating in the Call will have the opportunity to be accredited as University of Bologna startups. Accreditation will give them access to free or discounted services offered by the University itself. For further information: https://site.unibo.it/idea/en.

Additional benefits and grants

The business projects selected within the **"StudENT for Africa" sub-category** (Phase 1) will access a second phase of selection, in which they will compete for a prize intended to fund the best project, of €2,500 (gross). The winner of the prize may not receive other financial aid of a similar nature, for similar purposes and selection criteria, during the same period.

The winning team will be selected at the StartUp Day 2024 by the "StudENT for Africa" Evaluation Committee or by the Evaluation Committee that selected the projects submitted for the "Emerging Ideas – StudENT for Africa" sub-category. The Evaluation Committees will assign up to 10 points based on the pitch the teams will make at Startup Day 2024, which will be added to the points already assigned in Phase 1 selection.

The outcome of the selection process will be announced at the StartUp Day 2024, and the ranking list will then be published on the dedicated web page.

3. Established Startups Category

3.1 Participation requirements

The participation requirements must be met at the time of submitting the application.

Established startups **in which at least one of the partners** falls within any of the following can apply:

- Students enrolled in a first or second cycle degree programme;
- Students enrolled in a professional training programme (first-level or second-level professional master's programme);
- Students enrolled at a specialisation school (excluding medical doctors under specialist training pursuant to Legislative Decree 368/99);

- Graduates who obtained their degree less than 3 years prior to the publication of the Call for applications (i.e. who graduated after 01 December 2020);
- Students enrolled at the Bologna Business School (with exclusive reference to the Graduate Masters of the University of Bologna coordinated by the BBS);
- Graduates of the Bologna Business School (with exclusive reference to the Graduate Masters of the University of Bologna coordinated by the BBS) who obtained their degree less than 3 years prior to the publication of the Call for applications (i.e. who graduated after 01 December 2020).

That partner will act as the applicant for the Call.

Startups that have been established as legal entities for **no more than 2 years** can apply (an updated Chamber of Commerce certificate must be attached to the application). Sole proprietorships are excluded.

If a startup already applied in past editions, it can re-apply in the current one, provided it was not selected.

3.2 Evaluation criteria and Evaluation Committee

Up to 10 innovative startups will be selected based on the following criteria:

Criteria	Description	Score
1. Innovation potential (WHAT)	- Originality and innovative nature of the solution; - Advantages compared to competitors' solutions; - Level of technical and commercial development of the product/service.	Maximum score: 10 Minimum threshold: 6/10
2. Value creation (WHY)	- Applicability of the solution to real products/processes/services; - Characterisation and identification of prospective markets, customers, end users and beneficiaries; - Ability to meet real market needs and opportunities.	Maximum score: 10 Minimum threshold: 6/10

3. Implementation and effectiveness (HOW)	- Sustainability of the business model; - Sustainability of the revenue model.	Maximum score: 10 Minimum threshold: 6/10

The maximum score available is 30 points. Only the ideas that have obtained **at least 6 out of 10 points in each evaluation criterion** will be considered eligible.

The final scores, which will determine the ranking list, will be calculated by averaging the points assigned by each member of the Evaluation Committee.

In the event of a tie, priority will be given to the project that scored the highest in criterion 2 – Value creation. If a tie persists, priority will be given to the project that scored the highest in criterion 3 – Implementation and effectiveness.

The **Evaluation Committee** will be appointed by decree of the competent Head of Division, with members chosen from among experts in the field, also outside the University.

3.3 Benefits

StartUp Day 2024: The startups selected in the Call will be presented at the StartUp Day 2024, an event held by the University of Bologna to foster and support a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, where teams will be able to network and share their business project with stakeholders and players in the innovation system. In particular, the selected startups will be reserved a **dedicated space** in the Expo Area at the StartUp Day 2024 and will have the opportunity to introduce themselves to stakeholders and players in the innovation system through a pitch.

Accreditation: Having been involved in initiatives or projects promoted by the University to foster business development, the startups will have the opportunity to be accredited as University of Bologna startups. Accreditation will give them access to free or discounted services offered by the University itself. For further information: https://site.unibo.it/idea/en.

4. Application deadline and application form

In order to **apply** for both categories in this Call, "Emerging Ideas" and "Established Startups", **applicants** must file an **online application form** available at the following link: https://ricercatm.unibo.it/startupday/index.aspx.
Applications will be open **from 01 December 2023**.

After logging into the online platform, the applicant must fill in and submit the application **by 31 January 2024 at 2:00 p.m.**
Applications and documents submitted in any way other than the above or after the deadline will not be considered.

By way of example, please find attached a facsimile of the application form, showing a preview of the information you will need to provide upon submitting your online application.

5. Publication of the ranking lists

The ranking lists for both categories, "Emerging Ideas" and "Established Startups", will be published by **01 March 2024** on the website https://site.unibo.it/idea/en/our-idea/activities-and-initiatives/call-for-start-up.
If an applicant withdraws, the competent Committee reserves the right to select the next applicant on the ranking list.

6. Confidentiality and Intellectual Property

The information contained in the applications will be used by the University of Bologna exclusively for the purposes of this Call and will not be disclosed or made accessible to third parties unless expressly authorised to do so by the applicant(s), without prejudice to any third parties who need to access the information for the purposes of this Call.
Having regard to intellectual and industrial property rights, please refer to the provisions of the University of Bologna Regulations on industrial and intellectual property.

7. Privacy

Pursuant to Article 13 of the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016), the applicants are informed that any personal data provided to or in any case obtained by Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna will be processed for the purposes of participating in the Call for StartUps and managing the related activities. The data will be processed by specifically authorised persons, using also computerised means, in the manner and to the extent necessary to achieve the aforementioned purposes, including in the event of sharing the data with third parties. The provision of said data is essential in order to participate in the Call and refusal to provide said data will make it impossible to participate in the selection process. Applicants have the rights referred to in Articles 15 et seq. of the aforementioned Regulation (EU)

2016/679, in particular the right to access their data, to request and obtain the rectification, erasure or restriction on processing of their data, as well as to object to the processing of their data. The data subject may exercise these rights by emailing Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna at privacy@unibo.it. Data subjects who believe that their personal data have been processed in violation of the requirements of the Regulation may file a complaint with the Italian Data Protection Authority, as provided for by Article 77 of the above Regulation, or seek an effective judicial remedy (Article 79 of the Regulation). The legal basis for the data processing is Article 6, paragraphs 1(c) (processing for compliance with a legal obligation) and 1(e) (processing for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest) of Regulation (EU) 2016/679. The Data Controller is Alma Mater Studiorum – Università di Bologna (registered office: via Zamboni 33, 40126 – Bologna, Italy; email: privacy@unibo.it; PEC: scriviunibo@pec.unibo.it). The Data Protection Officer's contact details are: registered office: via Zamboni 33, 40126 – Bologna, Italy; email: dpo@unibo.it; PEC: scriviunibo@pec.unibo.it. For further information, please see the website www.unibo.it/privacy.

8. Contact details

For **information about the Call for applications**, please visit https://site.unibo.it/idea/en/our-idea/activities-and-initiatives/call-for-start-up.
For **administrative issues** and **doubts** about the Call for applications, please contact kto.imprenditorialita@unibo.it.

For **technical issues** in accessing the platform and submitting your application, please contact the **Studenti Online Help Desk** Monday to Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., at help.studentionline@unibo.it.
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Late applications will not be accepted unless they could not be submitted due to technical issues that can be demonstrated (e.g. by means of a screenshot showing the error) and unless reported in good time to the contacts above.

A **meeting** to explain the **key elements of the Call** and how to apply will take place **on 05 December 2023, from 2:00 to 2:30 p.m.**, at the AlmaLabor site at Via Ugo Foscolo 7, Bologna (1st floor). Participants can attend in person or online. The meeting will be held in Italian. Free admission, subject to availability of seating.

9. Annexes

Fac-simile online application form Call for Startup 2023-2024

Guidelines Call for Startup 2023-2024
FAQs Call for Startup 2023-2024
Features of business projects within the Emerging Ideas – Casa delle Tecnologie Emergenti sub-category
Features of business projects within the Emerging Ideas – ECOSISTER sub-category

10.   Administrative Procedure Supervisor

The Administrative Procedure Supervisor is Jacopo Fanti, Head of the KTO – New Entrepreneurship Process Unit.

jacopo.fanti@unibo.it +39 051 2080629