

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

F4E Supply Chain Excellence Award

Inaugural Edition 2026 • Issued by the PCSCF Department, Fusion for Energy

1. About the Award

The F4E Supply Chain Excellence Award is a recognition programme celebrating outstanding contributions by European companies to the fusion supply chain. It operationalises F4E Industrial Policy Objectives 1–3, in particular Objective 2 (broadening Europe's industrial base) and Objective 3 (fostering innovation and competitiveness), and complements the broader engagement begun at F4E Supply Chain Days.

Important: The Award is a recognition programme. It is *not* a procurement procedure and confers no advantage, preference or expectation in any current or future F4E procurement, contract or contractual relationship. Participation is voluntary and free of charge, and a company's decision to apply or not to apply has no bearing on its standing with F4E.

2. Who may apply

- Any current or former F4E contractor, subcontractor, or technology / development partner — including Technology Development Programme (TDP) participants and Fusion Partnership beneficiaries — with at least one contract or agreement active or completed within the assessment period.
- Subcontractors and lower-tier suppliers are explicitly encouraged to apply, in coordination with the relevant prime contractor where appropriate.
- For the SME Rising Star category, applicants must meet the EU definition of an SME (fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover not exceeding €50m or a balance-sheet total not exceeding €43m). SME status must be met within the assessment window, and evidence of SME status must be provided.
- The Collaborative Partnership category requires a joint application by two or more companies, each of which must consent to the submission.
- Every application must be accompanied by a mandatory F4E Project Manager endorsement — a separate, electronically signed confirmation of the factual accuracy of the application. An application submitted without it is not eligible (see section 8 and the F4E Project Manager Endorsement Form).

3. Assessment period

For the inaugural edition, eligible contributions are those delivered between **1 January 2024 and 30 June 2026**. A contribution may be a completed project, a significant milestone on an ongoing project, or a sustained pattern of excellent performance across one or more contracts.

The Award uses a rolling assessment window that moves forward by one year for each subsequent edition. This accommodates the multi-year nature of most F4E contracts without forcing applicants to isolate a single calendar year, while keeping the most recent performance always in scope.

Edition	Assessment window	Award ceremony
Inaugural 2026	1 Jan 2024 – 30 Jun 2026	BSBF 2026, Maastricht
2027	1 Jan 2025 – 30 Jun 2027	Supply Chain Days 2027
2028	1 Jan 2026 – 30 Jun 2028	Supply Chain Days 2028

A specific contribution may be recognised only once. A winning contribution may not be re-submitted in a later edition, although a company may apply again for a different contribution.

4. Award categories

Five categories are open. A company may apply to one category per cycle and should select the category that best fits its strongest contribution.

Category 1 — Excellence in Delivery (Industrial Policy Objective 1)

Outstanding technical and contractual performance on an F4E contract. Open to primes and subcontractors.

Category 2 — Innovation Pioneer (Industrial Policy Objective 3)

A novel technology, process or solution developed in the context of F4E work that advances the state of the art. Open to all suppliers, start-ups and TDP participants.

Category 3 — Sustainability Champion (Industrial Policy Objectives 2 & 3)

Exemplary environmental or social practice in the delivery of fusion components or services. Open to all suppliers.

Category 4 — SME Rising Star (Industrial Policy Objective 2)

An SME making a disproportionately large contribution relative to its size. Open to SMEs only (EU definition: fewer than 250 staff and turnover ≤ €50m or balance sheet total ≤ €43m). SME status must be met within the assessment window.

Category 5 — Collaborative Partnership (Industrial Policy Objectives 1–3)

A consortium, joint venture or prime–subcontractor team demonstrating exceptional collaboration and knowledge sharing. Requires a joint application by two or more companies.

5. Assessment criteria and weightings

Each category is assessed against five weighted criteria. “Capacity building” — skills development, workforce strengthening, knowledge management and capability creation — carries a 15% weight in every category, reflecting F4E’s ecosystem mission and the workforce challenge on the path from ITER to DEMO.

Category 1 — Excellence in Delivery

Criterion	What it covers	Weight
Quality & conformity	The extent to which deliverables met technical specifications, quality standards and acceptance requirements, including reliability and the management of defects.	30%
Cost & schedule performance	Adherence to agreed cost and schedule, efficient use of resources, and the management of change without compromising the outcome.	25%
Problem-solving	The capacity to anticipate, identify and resolve technical or programmatic challenges, including responsiveness and the	20%

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Criterion	What it covers	Weight
	robustness of the solutions adopted.	
Capacity building	Investment in skills, workforce development, knowledge management and capability creation that strengthens the company and the wider European fusion ecosystem.	15%
Collaborative spirit	The quality of cooperation with F4E and other actors, including transparency, communication and a constructive, partnership-oriented approach.	10%
Total		100%

Category 2 — Innovation Pioneer

Criterion	What it covers	Weight
Novelty	The originality of the technology, process or solution relative to existing practice, and the degree of advance over the state of the art.	30%
Fusion impact	The significance of the innovation for fusion outcomes — performance, cost, manufacturability, reliability or enabling capability.	25%
Cross-sector potential	The potential for the innovation to be applied, transferred or commercialised beyond fusion, in other industries or markets.	20%
Capacity building	Investment in skills, workforce development, knowledge management and capability creation that strengthens the company and the wider European fusion ecosystem.	15%
Scalability	The potential to scale the innovation from demonstration towards industrial or series production.	10%
Total		100%

Category 3 — Sustainability Champion

Criterion	What it covers	Weight
Environmental performance	Measures that reduce environmental impact across the lifecycle — energy, emissions, materials, waste, water or circularity.	30%
Measurable impact	The extent to which sustainability outcomes are quantified, evidenced and independently verifiable.	25%
Social responsibility	Practices that benefit people and communities — health and safety, inclusion, fair work, local engagement or workforce wellbeing.	20%
Capacity building	Investment in skills, workforce development, knowledge management and capability creation that strengthens the company and the wider European fusion ecosystem.	15%
Replicability	The potential for the practice to be adopted by other suppliers or transferred across the ecosystem.	10%
Total		100%

Category 4 — SME Rising Star

Criterion	What it covers	Weight
Contribution relative to size	The scale and significance of the contribution to F4E work judged against the company's size and resources.	30%
Growth enabled by F4E work	The development of the company — capability, capacity, employment, turnover or market reach — attributable to its F4E engagement.	25%
Overcoming barriers	The challenges faced in entering or scaling within the fusion supply chain, and how these were overcome.	20%
Capacity building	Investment in skills, workforce development, knowledge management and capability creation that strengthens the company and the wider European fusion ecosystem.	15%
Ecosystem contribution	The value the company brings to the wider European fusion ecosystem, including diversification of the supplier base.	10%
Total		100%

Category 5 — Collaborative Partnership

Criterion	What it covers	Weight
Quality of collaboration	The effectiveness, openness and maturity of the working relationship among the partners and with F4E.	30%
Joint problem-solving	The way partners combined capabilities to address shared technical or programmatic challenges.	25%
Knowledge sharing	The exchange and retention of knowledge, methods and lessons across the partnership and, where relevant, the wider ecosystem.	20%
Capacity building	Investment in skills, workforce development, knowledge management and capability creation that strengthens the company and the wider European fusion ecosystem.	15%
Delivery outcome	The results achieved through the collaboration, including performance against objectives.	10%
Total		100%

6. How applications are scored

- Each criterion is scored from 0 to 10 by each member of the Award Panel.
- To promote consistency between assessors, each 0–10 score follows a common band scale: 9–10 outstanding; 7–8 very strong; 5–6 meets expectations (5 is the pass level for a criterion); 3–4 limited; 0–2 little or no evidence.
- Individual scores are combined into a weighted score per criterion, using the published weightings, for a total out of 100%.
- To be considered for an award, an application must reach **at least 50% of the maximum score on each individual criterion** and **at least 60% of the maximum overall**.

- The Panel may shortlist applicants and may invite shortlisted applicants to a short interview before finalising its decision.
- The Panel may decide not to make an award in a category if no application meets the quality threshold. This protects the standing of the Award.
- In addition to the five categories, the Panel may confer a non-competitive Special Recognition citation for an extraordinary one-off contribution.

7. Who decides — the Award Panel

Applications are evaluated by a mixed Award Panel. All members score and vote on an equal basis; decisions are taken by simple majority, with the Chair holding a casting vote in the event of a tie. The Panel combines internal operational knowledge with an external majority that provides independence and cross-sector perspective.

Internal members: a PCSCF representative (Chair); a Projects Department representative; and a FUTED Department representative.

External members (constituting a majority): the Chair of the Procurement & Contracts Committee; the Chair of the ILO Network; a representative of a peer Big Science Organisation (e.g., CERN, ESO, ESS, ESA, European XFEL), rotating each cycle; and an academic specialising in procurement or innovation policy. Gender and nationality balance are considered in appointments.

- No industry representatives sit on the Panel, in order to avoid commercial conflicts of interest.
- All members sign a declaration of interests. Any member with a conflict in respect of an applicant recuses themselves from that assessment.
- Individual scores and deliberations are confidential.

8. How to apply

- Applications are submitted by email to the functional mailbox supply-chain-award@f4e.europa.eu.
- The working language is English.
- Maximum length: eight pages for items 1–4 below (Parts A–E of the Application Form) combined, plus the separately submitted F4E endorsement, plus optional annexes (maximum five pages or three files).
- Every application must include the mandatory F4E Project Manager endorsement, submitted together with the application. It is a separate, electronically signed confirmation of the factual accuracy of the application (not a recommendation or ranking), and an application submitted without it is not eligible.

An application comprises the following:

Item	Content	Length
1. Applicant information	Company, legal form, size, SME status, F4E contract reference(s), category, contact person.	1 page
2. Narrative description	What the company did, why it was exceptional, addressing each of the five criteria for the chosen category (use the criteria as sub-headings).	max 3 pages
3. Evidence of impact	Quantitative data (KPIs, delivery metrics, before/after	max 2 pages

Item	Content	Length
	comparisons) and qualitative evidence (testimonials, third-party validation).	
4. Capacity-building statement	How the F4E work built skills, strengthened the workforce, or created capability within the company and the wider ecosystem.	1 page
F4E endorsement (mandatory)	A factual validation by the responsible F4E Project Manager, provided as a separate, electronically signed document and submitted together with the application (see the F4E Project Manager Endorsement Form). A confirmation of facts — not a recommendation or ranking.	Separate document
Annexes (optional)	Photos, technical summaries, press material, video links.	max 5 pages

9. What winners receive

There is no monetary prize. The package combines recognition with tangible business value.

Recognition & pride	Visibility & business value
A bespoke fusion-inspired trophy. The Director's personal commendation letter. An on-stage moment at the ceremony, with professional photography and video. Membership of the F4E Excellence Circle alumni network.	A co-branded case study and short film. The right to use the 'F4E Award Winner' badge in marketing for three years. Amplification through the ILO Network across all Member States. A keynote or panel slot at the next BSBF or Supply Chain Days, and a featured Industry Portal profile.

10. Key dates

Milestone	Date
Call for Applications published; applications open	15 July 2026
Applications close	15 September 2026, 23:59 CEST
Eligibility screening and Panel scoring	16–29 September 2026
Winners selected and notified confidentially	30 September 2026
Award ceremony	BSBF 2026, Maastricht (27–30 October 2026)

11. Rules and conditions

1. One application per company per category per cycle; applicants should select their single strongest contribution.
2. Each application concerns a single contribution and a single category; the same contribution may not be entered in more than one category in the same edition.

3. F4E may verify the factual information provided in an application where appropriate, including with the responsible F4E Project Manager and against F4E's own contract and performance records.
4. Applicants who are not selected may request brief, qualitative feedback against the published criteria; such feedback conveys the Panel's general observations and does not include criterion-level scores, rankings or comparisons with other applications.
5. A winning contribution may not be re-submitted in a later cycle; a company may apply again for a different contribution within the then-current window.
6. An unsuccessful applicant may re-apply in a later cycle for the same or a different contribution, provided it falls within the assessment window in force at that time.
7. Collaborative Partnership applications require the consent of every named partner.
8. The Award Panel's decisions are final.
9. The Award confers no advantage, preference or expectation in any F4E procurement or contract.
10. Applications are treated confidentially. Winners agree to reasonable publicity (case study, photography, use of name and logo for award communications). Applicants retain ownership of their intellectual property and grant F4E a non-exclusive licence to use submitted material for award-related communications only.

12. Data protection

Personal data contained in applications is processed by F4E in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on the protection of personal data by the Union institutions and bodies, solely for the purpose of administering the Award, which may include verifying the accuracy of the information provided where appropriate. Data is retained no longer than necessary and is not shared beyond the persons involved in administering and evaluating the Award, except for the publication of winners as described in the Privacy Notice published together with this Call. Queries may be addressed to the F4E Data Protection Officer at DataProtectionOfficer@f4e.europa.eu.

13. Contact

Applications, the F4E endorsement, and any questions about the Award are sent to the dedicated functional mailbox: supply-chain-award@f4e.europa.eu.