Guidelines for the call, submission and approval of STSM, dissemination and conference grant applications

Revised on 29th January 2026

Submitted to a vote of the MLQC4FC Management Committee on 29th January 2026.

For general COST instructions about the internal grant application process, see
https://www.cost.eu/uploads/2025/01/COST-Grant-Awarding-user-guide.pdf

Calls for applications during Grant Period 1

During the first grant period (GP1), 2 calls are foreseen for STSM, dissemination, ITC and YRI conference grant applications.

The table below summarises tentative deadlines for grant applications and the corresponding travel windows during GP1. Note that there is a travel ban during the last two weeks of October 2026 in order to allow enough time for completion of the report and the subsequent reimbursement before the end of GP1 on 31st October 2026. The travel window associated with the last call includes the first months of the second grant period (GP2) in order to allow for proper planification when needed.

Grant application deadline	Travel window
07/02/2026	15/02/2026 – 14/06/2026
31/05/2026	15/06/2026 – 15/10/2026

The calls for applications will be announced by the Grant Awarding Coordinator at least 2 weeks prior to the deadline (except for the very first call)

Budget allocation

- For each round of application, about one half of the yearly budget allocated to the respective STSM and conferences is to be distributed.
- The Grant Awarding Committee has the right to adjust the budget of the individual calls if need be.
- For each round of application, at least half of the corresponding budget is usually reserved for applications targeting the closest travel window.

Submission of STSM and conference grant applications

- All members of the Action are eligible to apply.
- Applicants must submit their applications for STSM or Conference grants (Dissemination, ITC and YRI) online before the deadline through the COST application form:
  https://e-services.cost.eu/activity/grants/add
- The following documents should be provided:
  - Application form: templates can be downloaded for
    - STSM
    - ITC conference grants
    - Dissemination conference grants
    - YRI Conference grants
  - Simplified budget:
    - A breakdown of the travel and daily allowance (including housing) costs should be provided in the application.
  - Letter of invitation:
    - STSM: from the host (physical person or institute),
    - Conference: invitation or abstract acceptance from organisers.
  - For Conference Grants:
    - A copy of the abstract should be provided as well. Posters are admitted only for YRI Conference Grants and not for Dissemination and ITC Grants.
  - CV including selected publications,
  - For PhD and master students only: letter of support from their supervisor.

Evaluation of STSM and conference grant applications

Shortly after the submission deadline, the Grant Awarding Coordinator prepares and distributes a summary of the applications to the Grant Awarding Committee.

In case of a direct professional or personal connection between the submitter and a member of the Grant Awarding Committee, the implied member shall not participate in the evaluation of the application in question.

A closed meeting of the Grant Awarding Committee is organised about 1-2 weeks after the submission deadline in order to compare the applications, to approve, reject or adjust them. Ex officio, the meeting is open to the MLQC4ML chair and vice chair, without voting right. The criteria considered by the Grant Awarding Committee are listed below (without a hard-coded algorithm to ensure flexibility):

- Scientific quality and relevance to MLQC4FC,
- Geographical inclusiveness (the ITC classification is according to the home institute of the candidate),
- Gender balance and juniority (people under 40 years of age are prioritised for STSM, ITC and Dissemination conference grants). Note that, as per COST regulations, YRI conference grants are only awarded to young researchers (below 40 years old). ITC conference grants are only awarded to ITC-based researchers.
- Effectiveness of the grant (e.g. duration vs cost, added value of the networking, etc).

During their evaluation, the Grant Awarding Committee may consult the WG leaders if needed.

The closed meeting will be documented in minutes to be published in a location accessible to the MLQC4FC Management Committee. In addition, a summary of the decisions will be made available to all grant applicants timely after the meeting.

In order to optimise the use of the available budget, the Grant Awarding Committee may apply a reduction of the total amount granted to an individual application. The motivation of the reduction shall be presented to the applicant in due time. If needed, a new application with the agreed budget may be submitted in e-COST again, for the same grant period.