Opportunity Scouting and Project Proposal Development

Working Group Charter

Introduction

The RESTART Foundation Working Group on Opportunity Scouting and Project Proposal Development brings together the scientific and industrial priorities of the RESTART community to develop competitive project initiatives, identify suitable funding opportunities and build lasting collaborations. It supports a coordinated approach from early ideas to proposal submission and learning from evaluation outcomes.

The Group is chaired by Nicola Blefari Melazzi, University of Rome Tor Vergata and President of the RESTART Foundation. The Co-Chairs are Maria Luisa Merani and Giovanni Giambene. The Group comprised 37 members as of 21 October 2026.

Shared contacts and workspace

Mailing list: restart.wg.projects@fondazione-restart.it

Repository: RESTART Working Group shared workspace

Initial priorities

- Contribute to the RESTART Annual Event on 17–18 February 2027.

1. Scope and Areas of Work

The Working Group turns the scientific and industrial priorities of the RESTART community into competitive project initiatives, funding opportunities and lasting collaborations. Its scope covers opportunity scouting, early concept development, consortium building, proposal preparation and learning from evaluation outcomes.

Opportunity scouting and strategic assessment

The Group monitors relevant regional, national, European and international research, development, demonstration and technology-transfer opportunities, including experimentation and innovation procurement where appropriate. Together with the thematic Working Groups, it assesses technology trends, research challenges, industrial needs and opportunities to exploit existing results and infrastructure.

Opportunities are assessed against strategic fit, eligibility, idea maturity, expected impact, partner availability, preparation effort and the sustainability of commitments.

Consortium building and project design

The Group helps build complementary consortia, involving external partners, SMEs, end users and potential adopters where useful. It connects funding opportunities with the expertise directory and integrates standardisation, technology transfer and adoption pathways into project design.

2. Mandate, Purpose and Objectives

The Group identifies suitable opportunities and supports continuity of the Foundation's activities and the exploitation of existing results through a coordinated project pipeline. Its objectives are to:

- Promote substantive SME and end-user participation and academia–industry collaboration.
- Develop concepts before calls are published, starting from research problems, industrial needs and reusable results.
- Support the definition of objectives, methodology, work structure, impact, exploitation plans, budgets, responsibilities and deliverables, and identify coordinators and complementary partners.
- Organise internal quality reviews, challenge-based project-design workshops and mock evaluations by experts independent of the writing team.
- Analyse evaluator feedback, reuse knowledge and materials, and recommend staged funding pathways from feasibility to demonstration and adoption.

3. Expected Outputs, Deliverables and Milestones

Expected outputs

- An annotated opportunity calendar with deadlines, essential requirements, target participants and relevance assessments, together with a shared go/no-go procedure.
- A portfolio of project concepts describing problems, objectives, expected results, required partners and potential funding routes, and a map of members' interests in coordination and participation.
- Reusable concept sheets, work-plan templates, checklists and review criteria; submission-ready proposals and periodic outcome reports.
- A year-end portfolio assessment and a proposed contribution to the RESTART Annual Event through a project-development workshop or partner-building session.

Milestones

The implementation targets cover the first 12 months from charter approval and depend on agreed resources. The calendar commitments below are retained from the presentation.

Timing	Milestone
End of October 2026	Define the Working Group charter.
17–18 February 2027	Contribute to the RESTART Annual Event.
Month 3	Define scouting priorities, prepare the initial calendar and establish opportunity-selection criteria.
Month 6	Develop at least five project concepts and identify the first opportunities to pursue.
Month 9	Establish consortia and preparation plans for selected initiatives; conduct the first internal proposal reviews.
Month 12	Target at least three submitted proposals, subject to suitable calls and available resources; assess the portfolio and review the charter.

Indicators and implementation roadmap

The Group tracks opportunity relevance, concepts matured, proposals submitted, evaluation quality and funding secured when outcomes become available. It assesses results against preparation effort and uses the findings to improve selection, proposal support and the project pipeline. It maintains a roadmap linking feasibility, demonstrators and adoption through complementary funding instruments.

4. Membership, Governance and Participation

Membership

Proposed membership includes interested RESTART members contributing relevant expertise, needs or operational capacity, with balanced academic and industrial participation, including SMEs. External stakeholders, end users and specialist experts may be invited for defined activities, with appropriate information-sharing arrangements.

Leadership and coordination

Chair: Nicola Blefari Melazzi (RESTART). Co-Chairs: Maria Luisa Merani and Giovanni Giambene.

The proposed coordination team comprises the Chair/Co-Chairs, a coordination contact and deliverable owners. Appointments, responsibilities and available effort are to be confirmed when approving the charter.

Participation and decisions

The Group uses its established mailing list and shared workspace for contributions, draft reviews and documented decisions, and agrees a regular meeting schedule. The Chair/Co-Chairs assess substantive consensus and record significant objections. Each deliverable is assigned an owner and a deadline.

Proposal responsibilities and authority

Each selected proposal is assigned an initiative lead, contributors and preparation resources. The authorised bodies decide participation, financial commitments and formal submission. Working Group coordination supports these decisions and the preparation process.

5. Coordination and Working Method

Knowledge sharing and review

The Group works through the established mailing list and shared workspace, using versioned drafts, an agreed meeting frequency and a final deliverable review period. Internal proposal reviews and mock evaluations draw on experts independent of the writing team.

Progress monitoring and reporting

A shared action and milestone tracker records owners, deadlines and dependencies. Regular meetings review results, progress and constraints. Periodic progress summaries to RESTART coordination are proposed, alongside an annual assessment of outputs, indicators, lessons learned and recommendations. The reporting cadence is to be agreed.

Cross-group collaboration

- Use the capability mapping developed by the Consultancy and Matching of Interests and Expertise Working Group to identify partners and connect opportunities with available expertise.
- Involve the Standardisation Working Group in the development of impact pathways.
- Involve thematic Working Groups in concept development and technical review.

Charter review

After 12 months from charter approval, the Group reviews results, remaining needs and available resources. It proposes either completion of the mandate or a revised charter, using the portfolio assessment to guide the next project-development roadmap.

Items to confirm at approval

- Coordination team appointments, deliverable owners, responsibilities and available effort.
- Meeting frequency, final review periods and progress-reporting cadence.
- Agreed resources for the 12-month targets and the arrangements for selecting and supporting individual initiatives.