GUIDELINES/CHECKLIST
- for Lead partners and Project partners

Are you participating in a project application?
Has your project already been approved for funds?

Take a look at this checklist for different stages of the planning, application, implementation and finishing of a project.

USEFUL LINKS
Make yourself familiar with the programme website: www.interregaurora.eu Here you can find all the rules, FAQ, the terms for the calls, the programme manual as well as tutorials and templates. You can also find a calendar with events as well as a news section and a section with results and much more!
Direct link to the online programme manual: www.interregaurora.eu/programme-manual/
Questions? Check the website, the programme manual and FAQ. If you still have questions – contact your programme officer, Controllers or send an email to: interregaurora@lansstyrelsen.se This email can be used to get in contact with all programme authorities for Interreg Aurora.
MIN ANSÖKAN The joint application for support as well as the payment application EU are made in the portal MIN ANSÖKAN. In case you experience any technical errors - make an error report to Tillväxtverket (TVV). Link to Tech support at TVV (who is the owner of the system)

BEFORE YOU DECIDE TO APPLY FROM INTERREG AURORA
Make yourself familiar with the programme website and the online programme manual and participate in webinars and trainings offered by the programme.
Make sure that your project idea contributes to one of the specific goals that the programme supports. Use the opportunity to get feed-back on your project idea by submitting early project ideas and/or ask for consultations when offered by the programme!
Develop the project idea and application together within the partnership! Early involvement makes a better ownership of the project implementation. Make sure that your project idea has a cross-border added value and is something new and not ordinary activities for the involved organisations.
Make sure that your partnership constitutes of eligible partners and that all partners have the administrative capacity to run a project: - All partners need to have capacity to pay all costs and wait for reimbursement until the costs are reported in a payment application, approved by Controllers and the supporting joint progress report is approved by the Joint secretariat. - All partners need to know that when budgeting for Staff costs – those costs are only for persons employed by the partner organisation and the partner organisation pays the salary and social fees for that person. - There are several simplified cost options used by the programme – check out the possibilities with unit costs and flat rates! For Small-scale projects the programme uses the "Lump sum based on a draft budget"-method. - Lead partners have more responsibilities than project partners - decide carefully whom of the partner organisations will take the role as Lead partner EU, and Lead partner Norway (when there are Norwegian partners)
Always check carefully the terms of references for the call you intend to apply in, all information about dates and different conditions can be found on the programme website. **NOTE!** There might be limitations in amounts or which priorities and specific objectives that are possible to apply from. Also note the last day for submission of an application! Applications submitted too late or not having considered the terms of references for the call will be rejected.

WHEN YOU ARE READY TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION
Remember that the application for support is joint for all partners – both EU and Norway!
Make sure that you have a plan for how the project budget will be co-financed besides the funds from Interreg Aurora. Co-financing can be own funds or financing from other external sources.
Interreg Aurora staff have no access to the application before it is submitted – this means they cannot help with changes in the application before it is submitted.
Make sure you have understood the meaning of the programme indicators. You do not need to have targets on all indicators but at least one activity indicator and one result indicator. Set reasonable targets in the indicators that suits your project. Your project will not score higher because you set high targets.
Remember to add at least one contact person for each partner organisation. You can choose from the roles contact person, project leader or financial person and you can add their name, organisation, email and phone number. These can be changed at a later stage – you can then send an email to the programme authorities about the need to change contacts.
Remember that you need to fill out the application form in English.
Before you finally submit the application – go through every section one more time to make sure that you have registered information in all fields, that you give sufficient answers and descriptions in the different sections.
Remember to submit the joint application during an open call. **TIP!** Do not wait until the last evening of the open call – if you have questions after office hours there will be no help available.

WHEN YOUR SUBMITTED APPLICATION IS ASSESSED

Be prepared to answer any requests for completions or follow up questions from the Joint Secretariat during the assessment procedure.

Applications failing to fulfil formal criteria (administrative or eligible reasons) will be rejected by the Managing Authority and will not be assessed further and will not be presented to the Steering Committees for prioritization.

You may withdraw a submitted application at any time before the Steering Committee meeting if you find that the project is no longer possible to implement, as an example if you find out that applied external co-financing will not be approved, and you cannot replace it with own financing. Upload a document in Min Ansökan or send an email to the programme authorities to acknowledge a withdrawal.

Applications that pass the formal criteria will be assessed against the selection criteria and presented to the Steering Committees for prioritization.

WHEN THE DECISION IS MADE

The Steering Committees will prioritize among the applications based on the fulfilment of the selection criteria.

- Applications that fulfil the mandatory criteria, and for Sápmi applications the additional Sápmi criteria will be approved (if there is available funding in the programme).
- Applications that do not fulfil the mandatory criteria, or the additional Sápmi criteria, will be rejected.

LEAD PARTNERS:
You will receive information about the approval or rejection in an email from your programme officer in few days after the Steering Committee meeting and the formal decisions will follow in a couple of weeks.

LEAD PARTNERS:
Formal decision regarding EU-funding will be published by the Managing Authority in Min Ansökan and formal decisions regarding IR-funding (Norwegian partners) will be published by the Norwegian Managing Organisation in the portal Regionalforvaltning.

NOTE! It is one joint project but the Aurora financing for EU-partners and Norwegian partners are handled in different systems. It is the LP EU who applies for EU-payments in Min Ansökan and the LP Norway who applies for Norwegian funding in Regionalforvaltning.

Carefully study the conditions written in the decisions for EU-funding and IR-funding respectively and again, update yourself on the instructions in the online program manual.

NOTE! Lead partners have more responsibilities than project partners.

WHEN YOUR PROJECT APPLICATION IS APPROVED
Take part of webinars, trainings and tutorials offered by the programme authorities, ie: - Online start-up meetings - trainings and tutorials on reporting - how to work with sustainable development goals.
LEAD PARTNERS: Make sure to arrange a partnership agreement with the other involved partners, among other things you should agree upon practical matters such as how you will administrate the reporting and payments as an example. The programme does not have a template for the partnership agreement, nor do you need to send it to the programme administration. **TIP!** Set internal dates regarding each reporting period so every project partner knows when they need to submit documents to LP for the LP to submit the payment application in due time.
LEAD PARTNERS: Remember that you are responsible for the implementation of the project. Make sure that you have set routines for the managing of the project and how you will communicate internally within the project.
LEAD PARTNERS: Make sure that you have set routines for the reporting. The reporting periods are stated in the formal decisions from the Managing Authority/Managing Organisation. Decide on routines for the payment applications – who will upload all material in the portals – is it only the Lead partners or will you give access to all partners to upload their respective material? Who will take care of requests of completions – only Lead partners or can all partners access the requests and upload completions? **NOTE!** You as Lead partner have the responsibility to make sure that the reporting is made in time including the correct documentation from each partner and that completions are submitted when asked for.
LEAD PARTNERS: Make sure to keep yourself updated on the progress on all partners participation both regarding activities and how the budget is used. If you foresee any changes in for example the budget, activities or staffing of the project - check the programme manual to see if you need to ask for a change decision or if it is considered as a minor change. - When minor changes, it is sufficient to describe those in the joint progress report. - When major changes you need to apply for a changed decision and remember to apply for both the EU-decision and the Norwegian decision if applicable.

WHEN APPLYING FOR PAYMENTS – SMALL-SCALE PROJECTS

LEAD PARTNERS: Submit the payment application in Min Ansökan and Regionalforvaltning (when Norwegian participation) and attach the written joint final report in both systems.
Small-scale projects shall not report on real costs, nor any indicators.

NOTE! You must fill out the fields directly in Regionalforvaltning, it is not enough to refer to the annexed joint progress report.

The payment is made to the Lead partner who shall pay forward to the other partners their share.

NOTE! Small-scale projects will be paid a lump sum if/when the final report is approved. No actual costs need to be verified when applying for the payment but if the final report is not approved – there will be no payment at all.

WHEN APPLYING FOR PAYMENTS – REGULAR PROJECTS

LEAD PARTNERS: Payment applications consist of a joint progress report and expenditure reports and shall be submitted within two months after the end of a reporting period. The reporting periods are stated in the decisions. It is possible to ask for more time in justified cases.

- The payment application is made in Min Ansökan regarding the EU-partners. At the latest in the final reporting period, you need to report on the indicators which you do directly in Min Ansökan.
- The payment application is made in Regionalforvaltning regarding the Norwegian partners. It is not enough to refer to the annexed joint progress report in Regionalforvaltning, you need to fill out all the fields directly in the system.
- Payments are made to the Lead partner who shall pay forward to the other partners their share.

NOTE! In Min Ansökan it is not possible to submit a payment application for a new period if the previous period is not paid. You don't need to ask for more time in those cases. The same applies if the case is under assessment for a change decision, during that time you cannot apply for payment.

GENERAL TIPS REGARDING YOUR PAYMENT APPLICATION
Make sure to correctly fill in, name and then submit all mandatory documents for the reporting period. You can find a list of the documents and templates in the programme manual. - When templates are to be used, make sure you always use the latest version in case of updates in the template. - Carefully read the instructions and provide the requested information and if necessary, add annexes to support the information. - Make sure that all documents are correctly labelled according to the instructions in the programme manual (how to name attachments to the payment application and how to name the joint progress report). If you name them correctly, they are easier to find, and you can avoid unnecessary questions from the programme authorities. - Make sure that documents that are to be signed by the authorized signatory are signed correctly. **NOTE!** You will be requested to complete the application if some documents are missing, not filled or signed correctly. Make sure that persons according to the project´s own internal routines have user accounts in Min Ansökan. A user account is necessary to be able to access the project, see any requests for completions and upload completions.
LEAD PARTNERS: The joint progress report is written with input from all project partners. The report shall be written on the template published on your project in Min Ansökan. The template is supplemented with guidelines on how to write a satisfactory report. **NOTE!** Clearly describe who has done what. One way to do this is to make separate sections under each work package description for the partners, another way is to highlight the name of the partner in the text. Do not write "we did…." or "the project team did…" but write clearly the name of the partner who did the thing you describe.
Make sure to deliver all mandatory documents (joint progress report and documents supporting the expenditures) in due time to the person who uploads the documents in the reporting portals.
If you have produced material such as videos or reports that can be found online, you are welcome to submit links to where this material can be found. If not submitted, you might be asked for this to verify the production and the information obligation.
If you have produced material such as roll-ups, durable plaques and other communication material, you are welcome to submit photos of this material. If not submitted, you might be asked for this to verify the production and the information obligation.
Real costs shall be verified with actual costs in the ledger and paid before submission of the payment application. Controllers might ask for additional verification of reported costs, such as: - proof of payments, invoices, receipts, tickets, agendas, participant lists, meeting notes from seminars/events/meetings and documentation on procurement procedures.

SPECIFIC TIPS REGARDING THE SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: PARTNER CERTIFICATE, ADMINISTRATIVE ROUTINES, AUTHORIZATION TO SIGN AND PROJECT LEDGER
PARTNER CERTIFICATE: Make sure that the partner certificate that certifies the costs for the period are filled in and signed correctly. - It must be signed by an authorized signatory. - It must be signed after the date of the ledger extract. - The total signed amount shall correspond to the amount reported in the expenditure report, it shall cover both real costs and flat rate amounts. - Use the comment box to provide useful information to the controllers about the costs for the period. **NOTE!** There is a template for the partner certificate. If the partner certificate is missing or not filled or signed correctly, you will be requested to complete the application with a corrected partner certificate.
ADMINISTRATIVE ROUTINES: Make sure that you have submitted a clear description of the administrative routines for your organisation. If something changes, you should submit a new description. **NOTE!** There is a template for the description of the administrative routines, and they may be supplemented with copies of your organisation's own handbooks, guidelines and routine decisions. You might also be asked to submit a revised description if something seems to be outdated. It is ok to make the descriptions of administrative routines in English, Finnish or Swedish.
AUTHORIZATION TO SIGN: Make sure to submit a proof of authorization to sign on behalf of the organization. If there are changes, you must submit a new proof. **NOTE!** If signings on any document (where a signing is needed) are not according to the proof, you will be requested to complete the application with a new proof (or a new signing according the earlier submitted proof)
PROJECT LEDGER: Make sure that the ledger extract from the accounting system is only covering the costs for the project and that the information in the ledger is easy to follow. You need to have some kind of separate accounting code in your accounting system to be able to extract only the costs for the project. - The date for the extracts must be visible - The project accounting code must be visible – to verify that it is only costs for the project - The extract shall be a system report and not an export to excel. - The extract does not need to be signed. - If you only use unit costs for staff and flat rate 40% for other costs you do not need to submit a ledger extract. **NOTE!** If the ledger is missing, is only an excel file or is not showing the separate accounting code or is for the wrong period, you will be requested to complete the application with the correct ledger extract.

SPECIFIC TIPS REGARDING COSTS
Staff costs can be calculated and verified either by unit costs (applicable from call 7) or real costs. All partners must use the same method, and the choice is made when one applies for support.
Unit costs for staff do not need to be verified with actual costs in the project ledger, nor proof of payments. The Controllers will check: - the report of hours to verify the number of hours worked for the project and, - the employment confirmation to verify that the person is employed by the partner and working for the project. **NOTE!** If these documents are missing, not filled or signed correctly, you will be requested to complete the application with the correct documents.
Real costs for staff shall be verified with actual costs in the project ledger but you do not need to submit proofs of payments if not requested by Controller. The Controllers will check: - the project ledger, - the summary of staff costs, filled in according to valid task assignments and pay slips, - the payslips or report showing what the salary consists of for each person and month, - the task assignments defining the on beforehand decided workload (%), - verification of the social fees. **NOTE!** The fixed percentage in the task assignment could cover the whole project duration but should at least cover one reporting period.
Flat rates are calculated automatically on top of the approved staff costs and do not need to be verified with actual costs in the project ledger, nor proof of payments. The Controllers will check the Staff costs and if any adjustments in staff costs the flat rates will be adjusted accordingly. **NOTE!** Costs covered by flat rates must not be reported as real costs under any other cost category.
LEAD PARTNER EU: - Make use of the excel template which you find in the expenditure report section when you have started a payment application in Min ansökan. Fill the template with the necessary information and upload it to create several lines in the expenditure report at once. - Make one excel per partner and connect it to the correct partner when you upload the files. - Create lines only for eligible real costs (one verification in the ledger shall correspond to one line in the excel file) and/or unit costs for staff if you are using that (possible from call 7). - If you deduct part of a verification due to non-eligibility, explain in the comment’s column why the reported cost differs from the verification in the ledger. - Flat rates will be added automatically by the system. **NOTE:** Negative posts (credit posts) must be deducted from a positive amount (debet post) and explained in the comment’s column. The system cannot handle negative amounts apart from revenues where the system assume that the amount is negative and automatically calculate with it as deduction from the total costs.

HOW THE PAYMENT APPLICATION IS CHECKED
The joint progress report will be checked and approved by the assigned programme officers at the Joint Secretariat. If both EU partners and Norwegian partners are involved, the progress report must be approved by both EU programme officer and Norwegian programme officer.
Be prepared to answer any requests for completions or follow-up questions from the programme officers regarding the progress report. Requests for completions on the joint progress report will be published in Min ansökan and a notification will be sent to the contacts at the Lead partner organisations. **NOTE!** If the report is not completed in Regionalforvaltning – the LP Norway will get specific emails with requests to complete the form in Regionalforvaltning (as it is not enough to refer to the annexed joint progress report).
The expenditure reports will mostly be made by a desk-based check but from time to time you might get a visit for an on-the-spot check.
The expenditure report in Min ansökan regarding EU-partners will be checked by the Controllers. Swedish Controllers will check Swedish partners' expenditures and Finnish Controllers will check Finnish partners' expenditures.
The expenditure report in Regionalforvaltning regarding Norwegian partners will be checked by Troms fylkeskommune.
Be prepared to answer any requests for completions or follow-up questions regarding the expenditures. The aim of the checks is to ensure that partners do not apply for support for ineligible costs. Furthermore, the check is to verify that the costs for which support is requested comply with national and EU legislation, applicable financing decisions, the programme support conditions (programme manual) and approved amending decisions. Requests for completions regarding EU-funding payments will be published in Min Ansökan and a notification will be sent to the project partner and a contact at the Lead partner organisation. Notifications can only be sent to addresses registered in the system (these can be changed by the programme authorities if you notify the need of a change). **NOTE!** The payment application in Min Ansökan covers all EU-partners in the project meaning that the payment will not be made until the check of all partners is completed (and the joint progress report is approved).

SPECIFIC TIPS REGARDING FINISHING OF THE PROJECT
The project must send the final payment application no later than 2 months after the end date of the project time.
The final report is written on the same template as earlier reports. There are some text boxes in the template which are only mandatory to fill in the ~~joint~~ final progress report. Check the guidelines on how to write a satisfactory report.
All project activities including closure activities must be finished before the end date stated in the grant decision document.
Expenditure must be incurred before the end date but may be paid after the end date but before the final report is submitted. No expenditure incurred after the end date stated in the grant decision document can be reimbursed by the programme.
If the project is delayed, the project is allowed to apply for a new end date. You must apply for this during the decided project period (not after the date when the formal project period is already ended).
Remember to fill in the outcome of the output and result indicators directly in Min ansökan. Add comments to explain and verify the outcome. As an example, if you have submitted an application to Horizon Europe, write the name of the project application, the name and period of the call for when you submitted the application.
Remember to report on co-financing paid to the project from external financiers if you haven’t reported this earlier.
Remember that a cost category may be exceeded but the total budget cannot be exceeded when you report the costs in Min ansökan. If the actual costs are more than the total budget you need to deduct some of the costs to be able to submit the payment application in Min Ansökan.
Remember to keep all your project documents available at least for a period of seven years following the end of the calendar year when the project was formally closed by the Managing Authority. This period can be even longer if other rules are applicable to the project partner (national rules, EU regulations, state aid regulations and alike).