URBACT IV

Guide for applicants to the Call for Innovation Transfer Networks

2024 – 2026
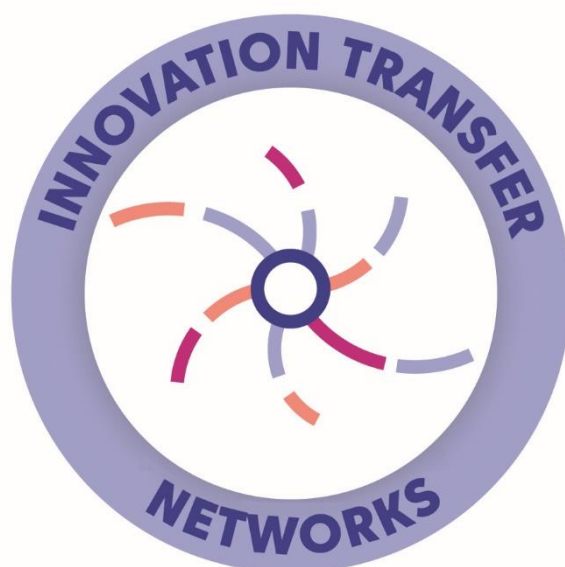
Introduction

URBACT offers cities a unique opportunity to learn from other peers in Europe in order to improve the way cities are managed. URBACT networks foster the exchange of experience and good practice across cities, building urban stakeholders' capacity to develop efficient solutions. One could say that URBACT is an accelerator of sustainable integrated urban development in Europe enabling cities to benefit from the tried and tested URBACT Method.

URBACT Innovation Transfer Networks (ITN) provide a framework for cities to adapt and prepare for the transfer of projects developed and implemented under the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) initiative.

In contrary to other types of URBACT networks, Innovation Transfer Networks will be formed along the topics of Urban Innovative Action projects that were implemented from 2016 to 2023. Cities that have implemented an UIA project will act as Lead Partners by default. During the call of Innovation Transfer Networks, cities willing to transfer the experience and know-how of a UIA project should go to the URBACT Partner Search Tool and express their interest to the UIA project.

- ✓ **For cities having implemented a UIA project** and acting as a Lead Partner of an Innovation Transfer Network, this is a chance to sustain and extend their original UIA project by developing a <u>Continuity plan following advice from the partner cities and from URBACT experts.</u>

- ✓ **For cities willing to transfer an innovative project (from a UIA city)** this is a chance to address urban challenges by creating a deep understanding of the innovations (process and practices), and design ways to transfer and adapt the project (or specific elements of it) to their own context. It includes mobilising key stakeholders for the implementation by building a solid <u>Investment Plan.</u>

This guide will introduce potential beneficiaries to the URBACT networking framework. It provides a better understanding of what one can expect by joining an URBACT Innovation Transfer Network. It also clarifies the commitment and contributions expected from partners as well as the added value of being a partner in an URBACT network.

It contains detailed information for drafting a proposal for the Innovation Transfer Network, including the main features of the network journey, how to set up a partnership and shape network exchange and learning programme of activities. It provides essentials for high-quality network proposals.

This guide should be read alongside the Terms of Reference for the creation of Innovation Transfer Networks. In addition, the URBACT Programme Manual shall be used as the main reference document for detailed information around management of networks including the main URBACT rules and procedures and the development of the network budget. Links are provided in the guide where relevant.

We hope this Guide to Innovation Transfer Networks will provide all potential beneficiaries with useful advice on building a successful proposal.

Join us! Together, we drive change for better cities!

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Is the URBACT network the right place for your city?

Before even getting started it is important to reflect on the statements listed below. If you agree with them, then URBACT is the right place!

Your city:

- ✓ wants support to tackle an urban policy challenge by exploring pertinent solutions in an integrated way.

- ✓ wants to obtain financial support to work with other cities around Europe to replicate and scale the innovations emerging from completed UIA projects.

- ✓ wishes to involve relevant key local stakeholders in the transfer process and in policy-making and implementation.

- ✓ needs a safe space for experimentation of innovative approaches for local and organisational impact.

- ✓ is eager to ensure sustainable urban development through concrete actions with proper exploration of financial models and making links with relevant EU Cohesion funds.

- ✓ wants to benefit from tailor-made URBACT capacity building activities on participatory and integrated policy-making, including on topics like s: digital transformation, gender equality and green transition.

What does URBACT offer?

❯ Transnational exchange & inspiration:

Europe's cities often face similar challenges. Yet, although there are many solutions, it can be difficult to share these in a structured way. URBACT enables the learning environment, innovative approaches and the know-how to help cities co-design solutions to urban challenges. By bringing together cities from diverse backgrounds URBACT widens the scope of shared experiences and approaches. Through peer review with partners across Europe and exposure to different perspectives and practices you will generate new ideas for your own city as well as support other local authorities to build better solutions to their local challenges.

Transnational exchange and learning activities include site visits showing concrete examples of cities dealing with their local challenges. While exchanging with the host city staff and stakeholders questioning their approach, partner cities often reconsider their own approaches to similar issues. By participating in the transnational activities organised by the networks, you will also have the opportunity to benefit from the thematic inputs provided by European urban experts, academics and researchers as well as practitioners and policy and decision makers at different levels.

> *"Being part of the URBACT community gave us the opportunity to meet with and learn from many like-minded cities across Europe. It also raised the profile of Preston as a medium-sized city and enabled us to share our experience of progressive procurement in a way that would not have been possible without our participation in the URBACT programme."*
>
> *(Lead Partner in Procure and Making Spend Matter network)*

❯ Method and guidance on how to develop and implement integrated local policies

As a network partner you will have the opportunity to practice integrated and participatory approaches within the framework of the **URBACT Local Group** to be created in each partner city. This includes experimentation by testing actions for possible upscaling, applying the integrated approach - considering different policy areas and governance levels at the same time, and ensure active engagement of relevant stakeholders by practicing effective participatory methods & tools.

URBACT offers wide assortment of [tools](#) to co-design integrated policies with citizens, NGOs, public partners, businesses to co-produce the strategy and a plan for specific policy challenge. Each partner in the URBACT network will undertake this work. URBACT Local group offers safe space for learning by doing and networking with relevant partners, decision makers and potential funders.

> *"It will be remembered as an opportunity to experiment and explore. Communities will remember the fun events that brought people together. Institutions will be effected by changes in ways of working."*
>
> *(Partner in Resilient Europe network)*

❭ Bespoke expertise support for network activities

URBACT provides each network Network with a specific budget for the appointment of network experts to support the exchange and learning process. Each URBACT network appoints URBACT validated Lead Expert who assists the network over its entire duration in order to maximise the impact of exchange and learning activities. In addition, Ad hoc network experts are recruited to provide support on specific needs identified by networks such as support with the design of exchange and learning activities, specific thematic expertise and support with methods & tools for integrated and participatory approaches.

❭ Tailor-made programme for enhancing capacity in policy-making

The URBACT Programme offers regular support to partners over the entire duration of the networks. This includes targeted guidance for specific outputs and activities as well as effective learning.

In addition to the network activities, partners in URBACT networks benefit from exclusive training and capacity-building activities, notably:
- tailor-made capacity-building events designed exclusively for network partners;
- support on cross-cutting themes – Digital transformation, Gender equality, Green transition;
- targeted training schemes for specific stakeholder groups, including elected representatives, local practitioners, among others.

Through these training sessions, URBACT aims to achieve sustained impact by improving the way cities work with their communities beyond the life span of the URBACT network.

> *"URBACT is offering concrete tools to work with on local level - very useful. Also inviting & sharing the experiences of networks and cities with good practices is highly useful - a good example is the best way to learn."*
>
> *lLead Partner in SibDev Network)*

❭ Communication, knowledge and visibility activities for URBACT beneficiaries.

Over the years, URBACT has developed different communication channels and tools to communicate on the work of URBACT networks and cities.

At EU level, the URBACT website, www.urbact.eu, gives visibility to all approved URBACT networks through dedicated network pages where networks can upload articles, videos and materials produced by the cities for an external audience. In addition, the work of URBACT networks and cities is promoted to a wide EU audience through URBACT newsletters, social media, reports, publications, infographics and videos.

The URBACT programme also puts forward the work and outputs of cities involved in URBACT networks during EU events like the URBACT City Festivals, the European Week for Cities and Regions, the EU Cities Forum, UN-HABITAT events like World Urban Forums, and makes connections between URBACT networks and other institutions/organisations working on sustainable urban development (European Commission, European Urban Initiative, Urban Agenda for the EU, Council of European Municipalities and Cities, European Investment Bank, and others).

Finally, the URBACT Knowledge Hub brings together, analyses, and synthesises content and good practices coming from URBACT networks and other organisations when necessary. Currently, this

Knowledge Hub has been collecting and sharing content around [gender equality](#), [housing](#), and [renewing the Leipzig Charter](#), [Food](#) and [Strategic Procurement](#).

At national level, [National URBACT Points](#) (appointed by national ministries) are in charge of communicating about URBACT and the work of URBACT cities to their countries in their native languages. Furthermore, URBACT cities are regularly invited to national networking events to present their work within URBACT and benefit from visibility through the webpages and communication channels of the National URBACT Points.

What is expected from you as URBACT network partner?

❭ Gaining inspiration from transnational activities

Commitment to take an active part in the transnational exchange and learning activities is mandatory. The active contribution of all partners in the transnational activities is a key condition for a rich and effective exchange and learning process for all partners.

The key tasks to be performed:
- ✓ preparation and active contribution to the transnational exchange and learning network activities around specific policy content requiring professional proficiency in English,
- ✓ possible hosting of a transnational event,
- ✓ ensuring knowledge uptake at local level

Transnational activities are conceived as a logical sequence of exchange and learning moments that will feed into partner activities at local level. Continuity in terms of participation to transnational meetings is crucial. Although you may definitely consider bringing in new participants, depending on the themes being covered during each meeting, it is recommended that the officer in charge of the URBACT Network at local level ("the local coordinator") is always on board.

❭ Ensuring impact with local actors

The co-production of an Investment Plan (and Continuity Plan for Lead Partners) by the **URBACT Local Group** is a compulsory requirement for all partners involved in Innovation Transfer Networks. This is a co-creation process which requires ongoing work over the whole lifetime of the network. Partners should link the local work to what is happening in transnational meetings and should record key learnings throughout the duration of the network.

You will commit to set up and run an URBACT Local Group that will bring together representatives of different departments within the local administration (in order to ensure horizontal integration), including elected representatives, decision-makers, in charge of the policy areas being addressed. This participatory process should involve representatives of communities, residents, beneficiaries linked to the policy you intend to deal with, as well as representatives of delivery agencies, third sector and private interests when relevant. The requirement to develop a participatory approach through the URBACT Local Group should not lead to duplication, and partners can build on existing local partnerships when appropriate.

URBACT Local group can be used also as a platform for networking in order to strengthen the links with EU cohesion policy funds and build relationship with key local decision-makers notably the relevant managing authorities in charge of operational programmes.

All partners must be committed to engaging with local stakeholders and to mobilising the resources needed (in terms of human, time and financial resources). This includes identifying as soon as possible the "right" local coordinator for the network.

❱ Communication

If no one talks about it, it is as if it did not happen. This is why communicating about ongoing activities and final results is crucial. Besides meeting the necessary EU publicity and visibility rules (as described in the URBACT Programme Manual "Communication at network level"), the network's findings and lessons learnt should be shared more widely, with all urban practitioners who may be facing similar policy challenges across Europe. This can be done in various ways, for instance with videos, infographic, events, reports and articles that I capture and reflect network exchange and learning activities, the uptake of thematic knowledge and progress in partner cities.

Most of the outputs will be produced by network experts, nevertheless, partners' active contribution will be essential for making these sharing materials meaningful for wider audience. These shall be published on the respective network webpages on the URBACT website and promoted via social media, newsletter or during events. Bear in mind that producing the right content through suitable channels – with a target audience in mind – will be of great help when seeking mindset changes and getting more people on board for your cause.

To ensure high visibility of the network activity, outputs and results, the Lead Partner shall appoint a communication officer that will be in charge of applying the EU publicity and visibility requirements, of maintaining a network webpage on the URBACT website and social media, and of coordinating both with the URBACT Secretariat and the network partners for their respective local communication activities.

❱ Taking advantage of programme-led activities

The URBACT Programme Secretariat organises a variety of training and capacity-building sessions for partners and local stakeholders involved in approved URBACT networks. Attendance and active participation of partners in these activities is expected. Programme will also facilitate various knowledge sharing activities where partners can be invited to share their experience with wider audience.
Specific training sessions will be organised for the Lead Partner's team on topics which can help deliver the project successfully. Examples include general project management, public procurement issues, reporting costs, being audited and network communications. These sessions are often organised as virtual meetings.

In addition, all network partners as well as network Lead Experts will be invited to attend general information and guidance sessions as well specific practical working sessions in order to share and exchange together about the learning experience in different networks.

! All partners shall ensure and commit to this network all the necessary resources – financial and staff over the network lifetime.

PART I

Innovation Transfer networks Journey

This section provides essentials around the URBACT Innovation Transfer networks framework. It includes an overview of activities to be undertaken in all networks.

❭ In a nutshell:

Innovation Transfer networks will have a total duration of 24 months which will be organised around 3 distinct stages with related milestones:
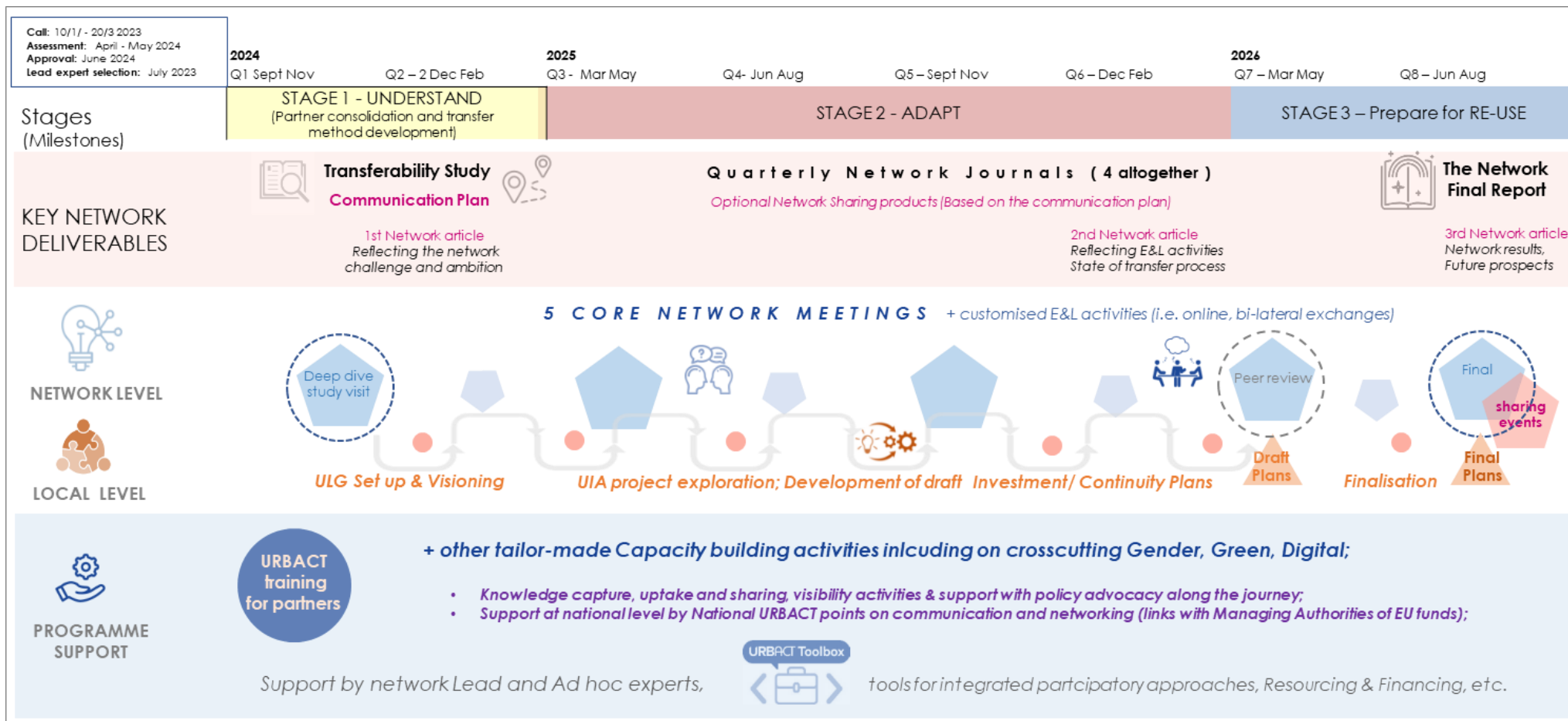
- ✓ Stage 1 – Understand: the first 6 months will be dedicated to the developing a deep and shared understanding of the UIA project that includes visits of Lead Partner and Lead Expert to the network partners for the production of a Transferability Study.

- ✓ Stage 2 – Adapt: the following 12 months will be dedicated to exchange and learning activities focusing on the adaptation of the UIA project to different city contexts. By breaking down the UIA project into different modules and by establishing the conditions for transfer at local level, partners will co-create their first draft Investment Plan. For the Lead Partner this will be the time for a first version of the Continuity plan focusing on improvement and sustainability of the UIA project.

- ✓ Stage 3 – Preparing for Re-use: in the final 6 months partners will review their plans and improve them by exploring funding options for future implementation. This period will also see the production of a Network Final report reflecting the results and future prospects.

All networks will have a minimum set of standard activities and benefiting from bespoke support from network experts. Networks are expected to organise at least 5 core network meetings (in-person) as well as the additional (customised) set of exchange and learning activities (in-person and/ or online) developed during the stage 1 based on the Transferability study. Each Transferability Study will provide a detailed framework for the UIA project transfer with a unique network roadmap. This will feed the transfer process and the development of Investment/ Continuity plans at local level.

Capturing learning and sharing key lessons with wider community of practitioners is essential for our joint URBACT mission. In this regard, 4 Quarterly network Journals and at least 3 network articles for network target audiences are expected to be produced during the life-span of the network. In addition, reaching relevant decision makers (including funders) is key for ensuring proper implementation of policies on the ground. In this regard, all networks will have the opportunity to produce respective Communication plans guiding the networks towards their policy advocacy ambitions.

A menu of tailor-made capacity building activities exclusively designed for ITN partners shall strengthen the capacities for the design and implementation of innovative solutions. The programme-led knowledge and communication activities will accompany the networks throughout their URBACT journey in their quest for recognition by making their results visible!

The Innovation Transfer network journey in a nutshell (infographic):

URBACT — Co-funded by the European Union — Interreg

Call: 10/1/ - 20/3 2023 Assessment: April - May 2024 Approval: June 2024 Lead expert selection: July 2023	**2024** Q1 Sept Nov	Q2 – 2 Dec Feb	**2025** Q3 - Mar May	Q4- Jun Aug	Q5 – Sept Nov	Q6 – Dec Feb	**2026** Q7 – Mar May	Q8 – Jun Aug

Stages (Milestones)

STAGE 1 - UNDERSTAND (Partner consolidation and transfer method development) | STAGE 2 - ADAPT | STAGE 3 – Prepare for RE-USE

KEY NETWORK DELIVERABLES

Transferability Study — **Communication Plan**

Q u a r t e r l y N e t w o r k J o u r n a l s (4 altogether)

Optional Network Sharing products (Based on the communication plan)

The Network Final Report

1st Network article — *Reflecting the network challenge and ambition*

2nd Network article — *Reflecting E&L activities — State of transfer process*

3rd Network article — *Network results, Future prospects*

NETWORK LEVEL

5 CORE NETWORK MEETINGS + customised E&L activities (i.e. online, bi-lateral exchanges)

Deep dive study visit — Peer review — Final — sharing events

LOCAL LEVEL

ULG Set up & Visioning — UIA project exploration; Development of draft — Investment/ Continuity Plans — Draft Plans — Finalisation — Final Plans

PROGRAMME SUPPORT

URBACT training for partners

+ other tailor-made Capacity building activities inlcuding on crosscutting Gender, Green, Digital;

- Knowledge capture, uptake and sharing, visibility activities & support with policy advocacy along the journey;
- Support at national level by National URBACT points on communication and networking (links with Managing Authorities of EU funds);

URBACT Toolbox

Support by network Lead and Ad hoc experts, tools for integrated partcipatory approaches, Resourcing & Financing, etc.

The 3-stage journey of Innovation Transfer networks

Stage 1 - Understand

The duration of Stage 1 – the Understand stage is 6 months, starting from 1ˢᵗ September 2024.

Stage 1 is dedicated to developing detailed network activities and ensuring a well-balanced and coherent partnership. The main objective is to establish a clear and thorough comprehension of the original UIA project.

The kick-off event (in-person) will be organised at the start of the journey by the URBACT team. This event will be open to all participating partners and appointed network Lead Experts (the exact date and place is yet to be defined). The aim of this event is to orientate all partners and Lead Experts around the ITN framework, methodology and tools.

The 1ˢᵗ deep dive network meeting, taking place in the Lead Partner city as initial immersion to the UIA project and introduction to local delivery partners shall follow. The objective will be to facilitate a deep understanding of the approach amongst transfer partners. This will include exploration of the project's potential for modularisation, as part of the transfer process.

The Transferability Study will be produced with the support of a network Lead Expert during first stage. The Transferability Study will provide a platform for the network's activities. It will comprise three core elements:
- ✓ First, it will include a precise summary of the UIA project with detailed analysis of its transfer potential.
- ✓ Second, it will review the transfer context in each of the transfer partner cities. For this, a series of bilateral visits from the Lead Expert (and ideally the Lead Partner) to each of the transfer partner cities is expected. Ideally these will be physical visits. The purpose of these will be to gather information required to complete the Transferability Study. This will take account of key factors such as local strategic priorities, levels of political support and potential funding sources. This review will also highlight local assets and barriers to transfer and implementation.
- ✓ Finally, the Transferability Study will also set out the proposed network roadmap including methodology for exchange and learning.

The network roadmap (work programme) shall be co-created and agreed with all network partners based on the preliminary results of the Transferability Study (including the city profiles and identified scope of the transfer of specific UIA project modules). For this, it is suggested to organise, towards the end of the stage 1, another network meeting (in-person or online) with a dedicated workshop.

This stage will also involve the identification of relevant local stakeholders to be involved in the URBACT Local Groups (ULGs). The composition respective ULGs may be informed by the UIA City Work Package stakeholder structure. The analytical work undertaken for the Transferability Study can support and inform developments at the local level. The key to linking the transnational and local work is the ULG comprising local stakeholders relevant to the network theme. This stage the

ULG should also include initial reflections on the transfer of the specific UIA project modules and its adaptation within the context of each partner city.

<u>Work on the communication strategy and plan</u> for the network shall also be undertaken during first stage. For this, the Lead Partner of each network shall appoint a communication officer in charge of the network's branding and communication activities (respecting EU publicity and visibility requirements, maintaining a network webpage on the URBACT website, social media, developing communication materials). URBACT Secretariat will provide a specific support on this during this period.

Stage 2 - Adapt

The duration of Stage 2 is 12 months, starting from 1st March 2025.

Stage 2 is the engine room of the UIA project transfer. This is where the core activity is undertaken to extract the essential components of the UIA project, assess which are most relevant for each transfer city, and prepare the ground for the Investment Plans.

Networks are expected to connect their transnational and local activity by combining the intelligence from the Transferability Study and follow the agreed network roadmap. <u>Various types of network exchange and learning activities can be envisaged</u>, i.e.:
- ✓ the in-person core network meetings,
- ✓ bi-lateral staff/ stakeholder exchanges,
- ✓ online masterclasses in specific topics or policy-making tools,
- ✓ workshops on particular UIA modules, etc.
- ✓ regular reviews of partner progress and results;

The combination of online and/ or in-person formats for these activities shall be well thought trough by taking in consideration the related carbon footprint. The use of Ad hoc experts is strongly encouraged during this period for enriching the overall learning experience with tailored inputs around the specific thematic areas or support around the use of specific methods & tools.

Throughout this stage partners will focus on mapping and visioning, this includes:
- ✓ the identification of the elements of the UIA project that will be adapted and implemented in each transfer partner city
- ✓ the examination of how the Lead Partner will sustain and enhance their original project.

<u>Secondly, at local level, partners will</u> mobilise relevant local stakeholders to test actions inspired by the UIA project. The lessons learnt from these activities will drive the development of the draft Investment/ Continuity plans. These can be also used as the 'trigger tool' to build relationship with key delivery agents including the relevant national authorities of EU funds.

Upon request from URBACT beneficiaries, <u>National URBACT Points can have an emphasised supporting role at local level during this stage</u>. They will act as enablers for networking with key local stakeholders and decision-makers (notably the relevant managing authorities in charge of

operational programmes) by organising relevant networking events at national level and providing communication support to partners.

Quarterly Network Journals (4 altogether) reflecting network activities are expected to be produced by all networks. These will provide insights about the network progress from transnational and local activities. These Journals shall be published on network webpages and can feed the production of the Network Final reports to be delivered at end of the journey.

Throughout this stage, targeted and tailor-made programme capacity building activities will complement the network activities by offering support on all the key aspects of integrated and participatory policy- making including support with defining most adequate funding opportunities. In addition, programme will offer the support around consideration of the cross-cutting thematic dimensions - Digital transformation, Gender equality, Green transition in partners' local activities. The use of the URBACT Toolbox will be strongly encouraged with possible live tutorials around various tools.

Knowledge Hub and communication activities initiated by the URBACT Secretariat will focus on both identifying relevant content coming from different networks or partner cities and providing relevant knowledge to networks, in order to create or reinforce synergies and contributions among different parties and external partners.

The Mid-term reflection (MTR) process starting towards the end of this stage will enable to pause and reflect on the progress being made at the mid-point of the network journey. It will be a well-structured and guided process with an aim to optimise the design and delivery of network exchange and learning activities for the remaining period. Based on the results of the MTR, networks will have the possibility to adjust and reprogram their network's activities, outputs and budget. Further guidance will be provided on this point following approval of networks.

Stage 3 - Preparing for Reuse

The duration of Stage 3 is 6 months starting from 1st March 2026.

Stage 3 is the concluding phase of the networks which will be characterised by the completion of the Innovation Transfer network outputs and the dissemination of key lessons.

A core Network meeting focusing on the peer-review of draft Invesment plans shall be incorporated in network workplans at the beginning of this stage. This meeting shall have the aim to compare and review partners' draft plans for final improvements related to the delivery of actions and stakeholder's involvement. Lead Partner reflections on their Continuity plan can provide an additional dimension to these reflections.

A final network meeting is expected at end of the Journey. The first part the meeting can be a closed session for partners where the focus will be on reviewing the final Investment Plans including Lead Partner reflections on their Continuity plan. The second part can be an open session (in hybrid format) with a focus on sharing network results and lessons, aimed at an external audience of cities and wider urban stakeholders (as identified in the network Communication plan). This second

session will ideally involve holders of targeted financial resources, such as Managing Authorities and relevant national ministries.

To complement this, each city may choose to host its own local event, aimed at a city/regional audience. This can be done as part of the URBACT Local Group activities with the purpose to celebrating the city's achievements, to explain how the UIA project has been adapted and to showcase and promote the Investment Plan to key stakeholders and funders.

Lead Partners may also host their own local event, with a slightly different twist. Starting with the project, they can share their experience of customising it with other cities, underlining how it has been adapted and reused. They can also explain how their initial UIA project has been enhanced or upgraded use the Continuity plan to reinforce the city's political support and commitment to the project.

! Just as importantly, at the end of this stage it will be also important to include main network management and coordination activities related to the network formal closure.

PART II

The organisation of key network activities and outputs

The activities in URBACT networks are always structured around 3 Work Packages (WPs).

- ✓ WP1 — Network Management
- ✓ WP2 — Network Level (Transnational) Activities
- ✓ WP3 — Local Level Activities

Each work package has its own aim. **Work package 1** focuses on network management and coordination and is crucial to ensure the correct functioning of the network. **Work Package 2** and **Work Package 3** are intertwined and shall feed each other - a continuous flow of knowledge between the transnational and the local level activities should therefore exist, for effective results. Communication and dissemination activities are spread throughout all Work Packages.

Each work package outlines activities that shall take place in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Regardless of uniqueness of network work programmes all networks shall follow the same framework for shaping the network activities.

❭ Standard & customised network outputs

Work Package 2 and 3 define a set of standard outputs that should be produced by all networks. Programme aims to increase the impact and effectiveness of the exchange and learning in networks by focusing on the process and therefore streamline the production of possible outputs. By analysing our various types of outputs and activities in past projects we have been able to identify the most useful elements in order to improve the overall URBACT experience for partners.

All proposed standard outputs shall be considered in network proposals. Proposed standardised outputs allow plenty of space for diversification and creativity within the given frames.

All applicants are invited to propose as well customised network activities/ outputs in addition to standard (expected) network outputs. Based on the principles and ideas defined in the application form these will be further developed and elaborated during stage 1 on the basis of the Transferability Study (and Communication plan) which shall provide detailed description of different network activities responding to specific network needs for maximising the impact of exchange and learning in URBACT.

Work Package 1 - Network Management

The activities to be developed under Work Package 1 aim to ensure the sound management and coordination of the network concerning both the overall project management and all aspects of administrative and financial management. These also include organisation of responsibilities between the partners by building a strong collaborative relationship and ensuring the effective communication flows within the network and external audience.

❭ Key activities include:

- To sign all the contractual documents at Programme and network level
- Recruiting, if necessary, appropriate staff to ensure efficient project management and communication
- Regular coordination meetings to ensure strong communication between partners concerning project coordination
- Appointment and coordination of network Lead and Ad hoc experts in line with expertise framework provided by the programme
- Submission of official reporting documents by all partners – every 12 months
- Organise the Mid-term reflection process and possible budget reprograming during the second half of the Adapt stage
- Regular network management 'health checks' with the URBACT Joint Secretariat
- Final closure documents (end of the project) to be submitted by all partners
- To receive and transfer ERDF funds to partners (Lead Partner's responsibility)
- Ensuring ongoing communication on the network's activities and results with contribution from all project partners in compliance with EU publicity guidelines
- Delivering operational actions to implement the network communication plan (producing and publishing content on the network website and other channels)
- Lead Partners providing assistance and guidance to all project partners related to administrative and financial management including external communication activities with the support of URBACT Secretariat
- Attending information and training sessions and other relevant events organised by the URBACT Programme (based on the invitation)

A dedicated Online networking and collaborative space will be enabled for all network partners (on Basecamp or similar) in order to facilitate the coordination and flow of information. It will be used as a central channel for communication with the entire URBACT community. It enables an effective management of information, content, processes and outputs. This includes:

- A repository of key URBACT guidance and reference materials for different activities gathered in a dedicated "One stop support shop" suitcase/ folder.
- The targeted message boards for sharing news and key announcements
- The collaborative Calendar of all network and programme activities
- Automatic check-ins for gathering feedback around key deliverables
- Campfire for quick peer Q&A support
- Network folders with key outputs produced on the way
- Private network collaborative spaces (on Basecamp) managed by Lead Partners

! Further details and information about different elements related to functioning and management of URBACT networks including administrative, financial and communication aspects is provided in the URBACT IV Programme Manual – Book 1 – The URBACT Networks.

Work Package 2 - Network level (transnational) Activities

Work Package 2 is about the transnational exchange and learning (E&L) activities, which form the core of all URBACT networks. The lessons learnt during the transnational activities will inspire partners to adapt this knowledge at local level, develop skills relating to innovative practices and co-design a robust Investment/ Continuity plan with peers.

The transnational exchange and learning activities in Innovation Transfer networks should be built on the following principles:

- ✓ <u>Sharing:</u> To explore the UIA project solutions and foster the exchange of experience among partners
- ✓ <u>Learning:</u> To strengthen the practical knowledge and skills of partners in the policy area related to the UIA project
- ✓ <u>Mainstreaming:</u> To draw lessons from the exchange on an on-going basis and to help shape the local thinking and proposals that will be reflected in partners' Investment/ Continuity Plans
- ✓ <u>Supporting:</u> To support all partners in improving their local policies in relation to the UIA policy theme, including Lead Partners through their Continuity Plans

Past URBACT experience indicates that a detailed methodological approach to structuring and organising transnational exchange and learning is key to a successful URBACT network. As transnational exchange is, by definition, collaboration between languages, learning styles, culture, governance models, a clearly defined framework is vital.

! Every Innovation Transfer network is unique and therefore the detailed methodology for the transnational network activities will be determined during the 'understand' stage based on the Transferability Study responding to distinctive partner situations. Nevertheless, all applicants are invited to present (in the application form) key principles and ideas for shaping their network activities in line with the general networking framework set out in present guide for Innovation Transfer Networks.

A. Development of bespoke transfer methodology and network roadmap

❭ The Transferability Study

The Transferability Study is a key network deliverable to be produced during the stage 1. It will describe in detail the UIA project and its transfer potential, placing it within the context of the EU's urban policy priorities. It will review the transfer context in each of the transfer partner cities - the local conditions, as well as the ambition for the transfer of the different UIA project components. On that basis, the Transferability Study will set out the network's bespoke exchange and learning methodology based on the identified assets and barriers to transfer and implementation. Every network will develop a unique roadmap will detailed workplan of activities to be undertaken at transnational and local level.

The production of Transferability study is the main responsibility of the Lead Expert, but requires the input of all partners in the network. The Lead Expert (ideally accompanied by the Lead Partner) is required to visit and interview all partners in order to develop the partners' profiles for the study. The study will build on the different contributions provided by partners (local data, strategic priorities, delivery structures, related interventions, existing funding possibilities etc.)

During these visits the Lead Expert (and Lead Partner) should present the URBACT framework and explore the potential and scope of the UIA project transfer. The partner visits should be organised in close cooperation with the partners and include possible meetings with the relevant project coordination staff, possible URBACT local group coordinator, elected representative(s), civil servants concerned with the policy challenge addressed, relevant delivery bodies and other local stakeholders identified as potential members of the URBACT Local Group.

Clear political support for the participation of the city in the Innovation Transfer network should be demonstrated by all partners involved and shall be investigated during the visits from the Lead Expert and Lead Partner.

! Specific guidelines for the Transferability Study will be available for approved Innovation Transfer networks.

〉 Network Communication Plan

The Communication Plan shall be designed to help your network communicate effectively to achieve its core objectives. It provides a useful roadmap for identifying who needs to be reached, and what they need to hear, so as to ensure the project is a success.

Each network shall develop its own plan for ensuring that its own visibility ambition and objectives at network level are met. The activities and outputs to be set out in the plan shall be in coherence and complementary to the standard network activities and outputs foreseen.

Communication is everyone's business and, both for transparency but also increasing visibility reasons, all project partners should be involved with the development of the communication plan, setting objectives, messages, target audiences, channels and planning at network-level. The plan shall include specific content and milestones to be shared widely, as showcasing results from network activities optional events open to attendants beyond project partners, news and articles.

Communication is a crucial process embedded into every step of an URBACT network. It ensures that URBACT cities can create a positive legacy, making project live beyond its life cycle.

! Network communications activities and main features of network Communication plans are thoroughly described in the URBACT Programme Manual, Book 1, Section F - Communication at Network level.

B. Organisation of Exchange and Learning (Transfer) activities

When designing the unique transfer exchange and learning itinerary, all applicants shall consider the pre-defined stages and volume of activities that are set out as a reference framework for the progress to be made at the specific point in time. These network activities can include different components - specific thematic inputs, workshops, field visits, peer review sessions, staff and stakeholder exchanges as well as dissemination activities.

Each Innovation Transfer Network journey shall include the following activities:

❭ At least Five Core (in-person) transnational network meetings

These are in-person network meetings gathering all partners. At least five of these meetings are expected to be organised during the network journey in order to ensure the sufficient exchange and learning between partners. Several of these meetings shall have a specific focus with related types of exchange and learning activities foreseen:

- ✓ The first core network meeting in Stage 1 shall include the deep-dive UIA Case Study visit hosted by the Lead Partner city. The objective will be to facilitate a deep understanding of the UIA practice by the transfer partners. This will include assessment of the project's potential for modularisation, as part of the transfer process.
- ✓ At least one core network meeting in stage 2 and 3 shall include the peer review of draft Investments plans designed and led by the network Lead Expert.
- ✓ A final network meeting network meeting with optional sharing event.

❭ Customised set of exchange and learning activities.

Various types of exchange and learning activities with in-person or online formats can be foreseen. Applicants are expected to suggest general principles and ideas for organisation of these activities, however, the exact number and formats of possible customised activities shall be defined during the activation stage based on the Transferability Study.

! Any changes to the initial customised set of activities proposed in the application form might also have an effect on the overall network budget. The reprogramming of the network budget planned at the mid-point of the network project cycles will be used to balance the spending and costs foreseen by partners in different budget lines.

Further guidelines for shaping network activities are provided in Part III of the guide.

C. (Standard) network outputs for capturing and sharing network results

Production of various thematic and methodological outputs shall take place during the lifetime of the network in order to ensure an effective uptake of knowledge. Nevertheless, structured process of interim updates on network progress is suggested. We expect different specific thematic and methodological outputs produced by networks to be captured and summarised within unique standard network outputs. Therefore, a minimum set of outputs with three standard formats are proposed for capturing and sharing network results – Quarterly Network Journals, Network Articles and Network Final Report.

❭ Four Quarterly Network Journals

Different thematic and methodological productions shall be captured and summarised within unique standard network output– Quarterly Network Journals. Each network is expected to produce 4 Quarterly network reports reflecting network activities undertaken in quarters 3 to 6 (Stage 2 – Adapt).

Preferably, these reports should aim to capture and connect learning for the partners in the network but these shall also have an adequate format for network communication - the knowledge generated by the network is interesting and useful for a wider audience of local, regional, national and EU-level policy makers and practitioners not directly involved in the network activities. Therefore, these shall include at least:

- ✓ Highlights from network bespoke exchange and learning activities
- ✓ Thematic inputs related to the UIA project transfer and related policy areas
- ✓ Partners' local activities and progress made in relation to the transfer of the UIA project components as well as the production of the Investment/ Continuity plans
- ✓ Brief presentation of tools developed and/ or used demonstrating integrated and participatory approaches

Networks are free to design their own unique visual identity which can be inspired and combined with a variety of formats showcasing network activities in concise and effective way. The quarterly network journals will be produced with the help from network experts and shared as regular network webpage updates. These can feed the production of the Network Final Report to be delivered at end of the journey.

❭ Three Core Network Articles

At least three network articles shall be produced throughout the network duration in order to showcase the interim results of the network activities to a wider audience in a concise format. These will be produced by the network Lead Expert. Each network article will reflect the state of play linked to the specific milestone of the network journey:

- ✓ First network article shall present network challenges and ambition. It will be published on the network webpage during stage 1 as a first network output dedicated to wider audience.
- ✓ Second network article shall be shared towards the end of stage 2 summarising network exchange and learning activities and the key insights from the transfer process
- ✓ The third article shall be shared in final stage and reflect network results, impact at local level, as well as future prospects

❭ The Network Final Report

The Network Final Report should focus on what the network partners have learnt in this process. It is the Lead Expert who is responsible for its production. There is no predefined format for the network results report but the objective is to document the network journey, including activities and results. The audience will be urban policy-makers and practitioners interested in the lessons from these pilots. This output should include the following elements which are considered of interest for other cities:

- ✓ Introducing the UIA project and the network partners in their diversity
- ✓ Demonstrating the added value of working in a transnational URBACT network to develop an Investment/ Continuity plan
- ✓ Presenting the highlights and challenges of the journey and the main learning from partners
- ✓ Suggesting next steps for the network partners in terms of implementation of the Investment Plans

! Any other additional outputs for capturing and sharing network results can be foreseen and produced depending on the network ambition. These can be used for knowledge sharing purposes or advocacy by using various possible formats (e.g. focused articles, policy papers, policy recommendation, case studies, videos, etc.). These can be detailed during stage 1 and included in the network communication plan. The production of these outputs can be supported by network Lead and/or Ad hoc experts as part of their work plans.

Work Package 3 – Local level activities

Local level activities within the URBACT network are centred on the URBACT Local Groups (ULGs), established in each participating city.

The ULG aims to have an impact on local governance and practices by enabling save space for the innovation in city administrations. It promotes the environment for active involvement of local stakeholders in co-creation and production of Investment/ Continuity Plans. It shall foster:

✓ The development of organisational culture by building bridges inside the city administration as well as with external actors.
✓ Building relationship with key stakeholders involved by exploring and testing solutions i.e. including concrete pilot experiments, organising creative workshops and sharing events etc.
✓ Improved professional capacity by practicing tools & methods for effective project design and implementation processes and ensure the financial sustainability of the actions.
✓ Creating links with national managing authorities of EU cohesion funds. This can be done also with National URBACT points acting as brokers (i.e. with networking events).

❭ The Local level activities include:

- Setting up and running a URBACT Local Group for the co-production of Investment/ Continuity plan
- Taking part in the exchange activities at transnational level and contribute to these activities (participation to seminars with relevant delegates, organisation of study visits, production of inputs, etc.)
- Testing actions activities as an integral part of the transfer process. It can be used as a tool for triggering the stakeholders' engagement and try out the coherence and operationalisation of specific UIA elements for the potential upscaling included in the Investment Plans.
- Taking part in the capacity-building activities organised by the URBACT Secretariat for local stakeholders involved in URBACT Local Groups.
- Share results and lessons learnt and good practices to local stakeholders involved in urban development and wider EU community.
- Translating the network communication plan into communication activities at local level (e.g. local events, social media channels in local languages and coordinated efforts with the National URBACT Points).
- Making links with EU cohesion policy funds by building cooperation relationships with Managing Authorities of Operational Programmes.

A. The URBACT Local Group (ULG)

❭ What is an URBACT Local Group?

The ULG is a fundamental tool that enables experimentation for innovation in city administrations based on the participatory approach. As the programme promotes multi-level participation, we expect the composition of these groups to reflect the project's thematic focus. This means that a network on digital transformation will have a different stakeholder mix to one promoting carbon reduction. Cities should think carefully about the composition of their ULG, ensuring appropriate

coverage. Partners should also seek the participation of their relevant Managing Authority, to promote the visibility of their planning work, and to ensure alignment with the National Cohesion Policy Framework. The URBACT Toolbox includes tools on identifying appropriate stakeholders and establishing the ULG.

〉 What's the role of the ULG Coordinator?

Each city will appoint a coordinator for its ULG. This key person will function as the main contact point for other partners by attending transnational network sessions, as well as being the pivotal link within the ULG on the ground. The ULG Coordinator will be responsible for the delivery of the city activities and outputs described below.

S/he will also be the key point of contact for the National URBACT Points (NUPs), throughout the lifespan of the project. NUPs should play a key role in capitalising network activities and results and supporting the networking activities with relevant national decision-makers.

〉 What's the format for ULG sessions?

The ULG is an active working group that will be at the heart of the transfer learning process in each city. It may be a group designed especially for the URBACT project, or be a relevant group that is already in place. Each ULG will be different, reflecting local structures, priorities and actors. The core ULG members are expected to meet on a regular basis and to take account of the URBACT principles and tools to work efficiently and interactively. The URBACT Toolbox provides guidance around how to design and run these sessions well.

ULGs will organise a series of meetings and events, in line with the network framework, to drive the co-production process and create an Investment/ Continuity plan. The network level activities can provide inspiration to try out ideas, concrete solutions, and tools with the relevant stakeholders. The ULG process should be closely linked with the overall network methodology and feed the exchange and learning at transnational meetings.

The ULG can be used as laboratory to experiment and learn by doing. Testing actions described below can be used to involve different stakeholders in the transfer process in order to assess the possible upscaling of specific UIA project elements, test stakeholders' engagement and build closer relationships. This is one of the essential factors for the successful integrated approach.

〉 How often should the ULG meet?

At the start of the project, each ULG should define its working patterns based on the general networking framework agreed within the network during stage 1. This will include regular working sessions which are often linked to the transnational network meetings. For example, it can be very helpful for the core ULG members to meet prior to a transnational meeting to prepare and ensure that the opportunity is optimised. Following the transnational sessions, it is also helpful to meet in order to share feedback and key learning points. ULGs have also found it useful to come together when key activities or outputs are due, such as Investment Plans.

The ULG Coordinator is responsible for the organisation of the ULG working sessions.

B. The Investment Plans for transfer partners

Each project partner transferring the UIA project shall produce an Investment Plan at the conclusion of the project. The core content of this will be:

- ✓ A needs analysis establishing the rationale for the projects included in the Investment Plan
- ✓ A detailed description of the UIA project, including its results and evidence of impact
- ✓ A detailed outline of the adapted modules of the UIA project
- ✓ An operational workplan including risk analysis and planned actions
- ✓ Details of the partnership delivery model – including roles and responsibilities
- ✓ A schedule of activities, outputs and outcomes
- ✓ A budget with identified sources of funding
- ✓ A monitoring and evaluation framework

The development of the Investment Plan will be led by the local ULG Co-ordinator, supported by the wider local group. The network Lead Expert will also assume an active role in facilitating the development of the plan.

The initial draft Investment Plan should be seen as a working document. Its primary audiences will be the ULG members, other city stakeholders, the wider network membership and the URBACT Secretariat. The content gathered for the Transferability Study process will help inform its initial shape, and its iteration will be influenced by continual peer review with the other network partners, thus reinforcing the links between local and transnational activity. The final Investment Plan will be aimed at internal and external fund holders and decision makers, including the relevant Managing Authority[1]. Early involvement of potential funders, particularly Managing Authorities, will increase the Investment Plans' prospects of success. Ideally, this should be through involving the Managing Authority in the ULG. Where this is not possible, regular dialogue with the managing Authority – and other potential funders – will be instrumental in ensuring visibility for the plan, and alignment to wider strategic priorities.

! Specific guidance for the production of ITN Investment Plans will be provided to the approved networks. All Investment Plans should be drafted in the local national language to ensure shared ownership by the ULG members at local level. The final Investment Plan should be published in PDF format – in principle, in both the national language and English.

C. The Continuity Plan for the Lead Partner

Each Lead Partner will develop a Continuity Plan. The objective of these is to help Lead Partners build on their initial UIA project activity. Each plan will be tailored to the UIA city's needs and priorities and each Lead Partner will determine its own set of activities, supported by the network Lead Expert. Several benefits will be derived from leading an Innovation Transfer network, notably:

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[1] *Managing Authority structures differ across Member States. For example, some have only national MAs whilst others combine these with regional versions. There are also separate ESF and ERDF Managing Authorities, as well as Intermediate Bodies which administer ITI funds. Each partner must decide which is the most appropriate decision-making body to target and involve in their work.*

✓ Enhancing the city's profile as a lead player in the network's policy area
✓ Gathering suggestions for improvement to their UIA model from the network's peer review activities
✓ Sustaining the practice and reviewing it considering the cross-cutting principles of Green transition, Digital Transition and Gender equality.

The departure point for Lead Partners will be an initial analysis of the current state of play in relation to their UIA project. As part of this, local stakeholders will identity priorities that can be addressed throughout the network duration. These will be unique to each Lead Partner. However, examples might include a focus on the project's sustainability, the development of mitigation plans, refining specific processes, or an aspiration to raise the city's influencing reach in relation to the policy theme. It is recommended that transfer partner also be invited to participate as observers in some of these activities, along the lines of the Lighthouse/Follower city model in Horizon 2020.

! URBACT does not prescribe any pre-suggested format or shape of the Continuity Plans. Lead Partners are free to suggest the output that they consider most relevant to serve the purpose they want to achieve in accordance with the objectives of the Innovation Transfer networks. The final Continuity Plan should be published in PDF format – in principle, in both the national language and English.

D. Testing actions

The philosophy of an URBACT network is to collaborate and identify possible solutions to a particular challenge. By including an opportunity for cities to test some of these solutions at a smaller scale before embarking on larger scale actions is an innovative way to bring about a culture change in city administrations. 'Starting small but thinking big' is perhaps a most suitable motto to use to explain testing activities in the URBACT network.

Within the ULG framework partners have the possibility to prototype solutions derived from the UIA project adaptation process and carry out specific testing actions. During stage 1 the network will explore and identify possible formats and scope of possible testing actions that would best suit network partners. This shall be explored within the Transferability Study and embedded in the customized exchange and learning methodology for the following stages.

Testing actions can be triggered by a specific solution integrated in the UIA project or an idea, a concept from exchange and learning activities. These can be tested to check the relevance, feasibility and added value of its implementation in a particular local context. These can be used to involve different stakeholders in the design process in order to assess the possibility for upscaling. Partners will be able to learn from these tests, measure the results and either adapt, upscale or reject specific actions to be included in the Investment/ Continuity plans based on this experience. These can improve the future delivery of actions by being aware of possible risks and hardships.

! More details around testing actions from previous URBACT networks will be provided to approved projects. Please note, URBACT as a programme does not finance infrastructure investment and works mainly on improving methods of working to solve urban challenges using soft measures. The testing activities will follow this principle and as such hard infrastructure projects cannot be supported by the programme.

Summary of network outputs (table)

	Standard network outputs as required in application submission system synergie CTE			Customised Outputs to be developed by the network during the 'Understand' stage	
WP	Type of Output	Quantity	When	Type of output	when
2	The Transferability Study	One per network	At the end of stage 1		
2	Network Communication Plan	One per network	At the end of stage 1		
2	Core network in-person meetings (Transnational Network meetings)	At least 5	First network meeting in stage 1 (including the deep-dive study visit) Others to be defined by the network (in stages 1 – 3)	Customised set of exchange and learning activities (in-person and/ or online)	Notably in stages 2 and 3
2	Quarterly Network Journals	4 per network (reflecting activities in quarters 3 – 6)	To be shared in Quarters 4 - 7	Optional set of sharing products to be foreseen by each network based on the communication plan	To be defined in communication plan
2	Network Articles	At least 3 per network	1st at the end of stage 1 2nd at the end of stage 2 3rd at the end of the network		
2	The Network Final Report	1 per network	During the final quarter		
3	URBACT Local Group (contact list)	1 per partner	At the end of Understand stage (can be updated at mid-point)		
3	Investment Plan	1 per project partner	During the final quarter		
3	Continuity Plan	1 by the Lead Partner	During the final quarter		

! All required standard network outputs shall be considered in network proposals. All applicants are invited to propose as well customised network activities/ outputs in addition to standard network outputs. On the basis of the principles and ideas defined in the application form these will be further developed and elaborated during stage 1 based on the Transferability Study.

PART III

Hints & Tips for setting up an Innovation Transfer Network

This section provides additional reflections and guidelines to potential Lead Partners to be considered for the development of the network proposals.

Does the UIA project have the potential for transfer?

An Innovation transfer network is built around a successful innovation project (funded under UIA) brought to the network by the Lead Partner. The project (transfer) partners will focus on the identification and adaptation of the original innovation project processes and practices and prepare for its reuse, in a format that reflects the local context. The full implementation of this may take longer than the lifetime of the network, and the eventual output may differ markedly from the original. The transfer journey, although a shared experience, is ultimately a unique one for all partners including the Lead Partner.

For transfer partners, the innovative solutions will be relevant for a policy challenge they want to address at local level. For Lead Partners having opportunity to sustain original UIA project with an enhanced model should be the main aim to create this network.

The potential for transfer of the original UIA project is the most weighted criterion for assessment of network proposals. Dimensions considered by assessors of network proposals can be used as the reflections when explaining your ambition for creation of the Innovation Transfer Network describing the motivation, commitment and expected results of each partner to join the network:

- ✓ Does the UIA project address a challenge that is widespread across EU cities?
- ✓ Does the UIA project have the potential to be transferred to other cities of different sizes and working in different contexts?
- ✓ Is the UIA concept clear and easy to understand?
- ✓ Can the UIA project demonstrate impact?
- ✓ Can the UIA project be modularised to facilitate adaptation and transfer?
- ✓ Does the Lead Partner have a clear motivation to transfer the UIA Practice and learn from this process using the tools proposed by URBACT?
- ✓ Have the risks and challenges linked to transfer of the UIA project been identified and explained?

In addition, policy dimensions the UIA project tackles is an important component of the application form and the proposal should clearly set out the following points:

❭ The relevance of the policy challenge within the urban dimension of EU cohesion policy context:

Relevance can be communicated in the application form in two ways:
- ✓ Firstly, the policy challenge must be relevant for a high number of cities across Europe. Although URBACT is initially interested in exchange and learning within the networks, ultimately the programme has a particular interest in solutions relevant for all European cities.
- ✓ Secondly, the policy challenge should reflect the European Union urban policy priorities which are reflected within the URBACT Programme objectives defined by EU cohesion policy objectives (2021 – 2027). These provide a coherent clustering of the topics and activities supported. Complementing these objectives, network applicants shall also consider other relevant activities under the urban dimension of EU cohesion policy notably Urban Agenda for the EU.

Any other relevant initiatives for consideration are provided in the Terms of Reference of the call.

❭ Considering the URBACT cross-cutting policy principles:

In addition to the main UIA policy challenge addressed, the network proposals shall also reflect on the opportunities in relation to the cross-cutting thematic considerations, including:
- ✓ digital transformation
- ✓ green transition
- ✓ gender equality (it can include also other equality, diversity and inclusion aspects)

Regardless of the main policy focus of the UIA project, applicants are invited to take the extra mile and consider how these holistic themes can be part of the challenges. A tailor-made capacity building support related to the consideration of the cross-cutting thematic dimensions will be provided by the programme to all approved networks.

Building the Partnership

An effective transnational partnership is central to the success of any URBACT network. Since 2002, the URBACT Programme has supported more than 1 000 cities in nearly 150 different networks; it has therefore extensive experience to draw upon. URBACT also has a good understanding of the essential ingredients for a successful transnational network. In this section, we share our experience in order to support the development of high-quality partnership.

Below are some key questions the Lead Partner will ask to potential partners before choosing them for the network proposal to be submitted:

- ✓ Is the policy challenge tackled by the UIA project relevant for the partner?
- ✓ Does each partner have a shared understanding of the policy challenge to be addressed?
- ✓ Does each of the partners have an evident commitment to tackling the policy challenge with possible local links to Sustainable Urban Development through Cohesion Policy?
- ✓ Is the strategic environment of partner cities relevant to adapt and transfer the target innovation?
- ✓ Do partners demonstrate a willingness and ability to undertake the activities (e.g. having appropriate competence, resources, political support and motivation and a clear understanding of the work necessary to produce an Investment Plans?
- ✓ Does each partner commit to provide sufficient resources for their network activities as required?

! Lastly, it should be ensured that the proposed partnership is eligible in the proposed framework. The Terms of References – Section 4 of the call for proposals details the eligibility criteria for possible compositions of partnerships.

A. Relevance of partners

The relevance of partners operates at two levels. Firstly, there is the question of the relevance of participating cities. Secondly, within those cities, there is the issue of local stakeholder relevance. The following considerations reflecting both levels should help cities acting as Lead Partners in selecting the partners and institutions to be involved:

- ✓ The challenge addressed must be a priority for all network partners. This can be evidenced in a number of ways. For example, it will be identified within local strategies and/or within the existing operating framework for EU funds, usually with identified resources attached. In some cases, the city will have previously tried to address this challenge, with limited degrees of success. Thirdly, different stakeholders within the city will have identified this challenge as being important, again reflected in their respective strategic planning.
- ✓ The experiences of all network partners are relevant and will contribute to the learning process of the whole partnership. Each partner city will contribute to the transnational exchange and learning activities with their own experiences and knowledge. These will be different for each partner depending on the local context, previous experiences.
- ✓ For certain topics the size and positioning of the city could be important comparable elements for the coherence check of partners' local situations i.e. maritime cities working on maritime issues.
- ✓ There is a clear understanding of the added value an involvement in an URBACT network will bring to the partner in relation to respective capacity building needs.

B. Selecting potential transfer partners

As Lead Partner you might receive an expression of interest from cities interested in transferring your UIA project. You can first send them a simple questionnaire (see example below and a more detailed one <u>here</u>). On that basis you will be able to do the shortlist of the most relevant candidates and follow up with more detailed questionnaire or even a phone call before making a final choice.

❭ EXAMPLE – SIMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ASSESSING RELEVANCE OF PARTNERS

Institution details:
1. Partner institution (Name, Adress, Postcode, City):
2. Are you a public body?
3. What is the size of your city ?
4. Type of area (more developed, less developed, transition) ?
5. Are you currently partner in an URBACT network or applying to join others? If yes which one(s)?
6. Contact Person (First name, Family name, Service, Function, Phone number, Mobile number,, Email, Address, Postcode, City)
7. Who from your city would take part in transnational exchange meetings? (ability to speak English & in depth knowledge of the topic needed)

Partner profile:
8. Have you already been involved in an URBACT Network? What is your motivation to join this network?
9. What are the problems and challenges faced by the partner city in relation to the theme?
10. What are the existing policies, strategic frames and concrete actions developed by the partner city so far in relation to the policy challenge?
11. What could be the scope of the Investement plan to be produced by the partner within the framework of the network?
12. Who will be involved in the initial URBACT Local Group to be set up by the partner city?
13. What is the potential contribution of the partner city to the network activities and what does the partner expect from the network?
14. What is the experience of the partner city in terms of working through transnational exchange in relation to the policy challenge?
15. What is the added value URBACT would bring to the city in terms of learning and capacity-building?

! In the application form it is necessary to provide detailed information on partners' local strategic framework, motivation, commitment and potential for Investment Plans to be funded by using Cohesion Policy funds and programmes.

C. Seven tips for building a "Great" partnership

❭ There is no such thing as a perfect size

It is up to each network to decide about the ideal size of their partnership, as this depends on many factors. It is clear though that going for the minimum number of partners is very risky. It could be that one partner you want to involve drops out at the very last minute before you submit your application i.e. joins another Network proposal, does not provide the signed Letter of Commitment on time, etc. Anything can happen!

❭ Ensuring the (geographical) balance of partnership

The partnership for Innovation Transfer Network shall, according to the eligibility criteria, include a minimum number of partners from EU Less developed and Transition regions as well as maximum of 1 partner from other countries involved in the URBACT IV Programme, i.e. Norway, Switzerland and Instrument for Pre-accession (IPA) countries. At the same time, you should aim for geographical balance across Europe – a partnership cannot include two partners from the same country. In this regard, you should consider having a reserve candidate (possibly with the signed Letter of Commitment) that is ready to join, in case of a last-minute drop out. In addition, a sufficient number of partners from more developed regions is expected in a balanced partnership. The map showing the categorisation of EU Regions for 2021-2027 can be found here.

❭ Welcome newcomers

Not all cities in Europe have had the opportunity to take part in an URBACT network and experience the "URBACT learning journey". Thus, URBACT's guiding principle is to ensure participation of a maximum number of cities in URBACT networks. URBACT is particularly seeking to support cities which are new to the programme, i.e. the city has not been a partner in URBACT II or III. You should consider all these elements when selecting partners without sacrificing the quality and relevance of your project proposal. The partner search tool and contacting the National URBACT Points are two good ways to look for cities that have never been involved in URBACT before and that have the same interest with yours in joining this network.

❭ Be demanding, test the commitment

Besides considerations on the size of the partnership, the focus should be on the "quality" of the partner and on the relevance of their participation in a specific network. Aim for coherence and complementarity in terms of partners' needs expectations and potential contributions. You should also make potential partners (and selected partners) aware of the 'URBACT networking framework' described in PART I and II of this guide and ask for commitment to these expectations. Therefore, the Lead Partner preparing a good questionnaire to collect information on partner cities in order to inform final partnership selection is very important.

❭ Beware of the "sleeping partners"

Once the network is approved and activities get started, some partners can turn out to be less active than expected. Therefore, developing a partnership with a minimum number of partners is also risky should some of them turn out to be "sleeping partners". Even though you can consolidate the partnership during stage 1 with possible replacement of partners the dynamics in the partnership and the richness of the transnational exchange may be impacted.

❯ Be smart – connect!

To facilitate the partner matching process, the URBACT programme encourages you to use the Partner Search tool and contacts of National URBACT points which can be very useful for finding right partners from different countries. These are provided in **section 10 – useful resources** of the Call document. **For questions regarding the eligibility of "non-city" partners you should always consult the URBACT Secretariat at itn@urbact.eu. Do it early enough during the selection process as the eligibility verification process of non-city partners might take time.**

❯ The best tip to avoid mistakes

Do not accept new partners on a "first come, first served" basis. Take time to speak with the relevant people in a candidate partner city before you decide on your final partnership. Try to avoid cities who reach you through consultants -this can be an indication that the city does not have real interest and/or capacity to become committed and active partner.

Try to detect some potential flaws in candidate partners' interest:
- Just want to become an URBACT city, no matter what topic; (cities committed to more than 3 network proposals can already be considered questionable)
- want to become an URBACT city with my topic, no matter what network;
- want to become an URBACT city although not equipped to actually handle the topic and make a difference at local level;
- are more interested in the budget than the policy challenge;
- ambitious politician with no commitment of wider municipality administration (incl. staff allowed to travel etc.);
- ambitious officer with no support from politicians who understand the importance of the project.

Shaping network (exchange and learning) activities

A. Customisation of network exchange and learning activities

There is no single preferred methodological approach to the customisation of the transnational exchange and learning in networks. URBACT does not adopt a prescriptive approach and welcomes innovative models and creative approaches. The most important thing is that the methodology proposed is realistic, clearly explained and has a logical rationale. It should also consider the specificities around the policy issues being addressed as well as the needs and the experience of all partners. Key success factors for effective learning in relation the theme shall be clearly demonstrated. In addition, the methodological approach should generate <u>a continuous flow of knowledge between the transnational and the local level</u> for the appropriate application of knowledge generated during different network activities.

Many networks in the past have encouraged transnational - local level synergy by planning their ULG core team meetings just before and after the transnational network meetings in order to enable an efficient knowledge flow. Likewise, one should consider the following:

- ✓ Having the appropriate URBACT Local Group representatives participating at different transnational network meetings.
- ✓ Having regular attendees at transnational sessions to ensure proper follow up of actions
- ✓ Using learning tools that enable and record the knowledge transfer from the transnational to local level and vice versa.
- ✓ Producing tools for network learning and knowledge uptake that can be used for monitoring knowledge transfer and progress made at local level by the respective ULG participants.
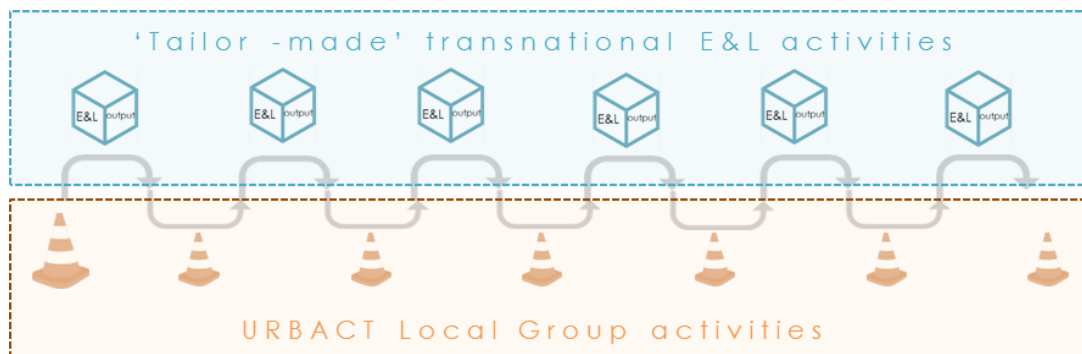
B. Ten reflections for designing effective Exchange & Learning activities:

1. Different lengths of transnational network activities can be foreseen. Physical sessions are likely to take place over a period of two to three days. If working online however, duration and format should differ, as discussed in points 7 and 8 below.

2. Transnational meetings should be interactive, stimulating and enjoyable. Consequently, regardless of the methodological approach, networks are expected to think seriously about the design and delivery of transnational sessions, so that participants get maximum benefit from the experience. Staff exchanges and bi/-tri lateral deep dive meetings, as well as specific study visits have proven to be very effective in past URBACT networks.

3. The thematic focus of the network will have an impact on the types of stakeholders that will be involved in the transnational meetings and thus on the type of activities that can be proposed during the sessions.

4. At the design stage of transnational E&L meetings, different activities can be considered. These include:
   ✓ Inputs from a variety of expert speakers (these might be Lead Experts and/or Ad-hoc experts working with the project, local experts on a particular topic or guest speakers from other networks and organisations)
   ✓ 'Forensic' site visits (with the active involvement of local stakeholders of the hosting city)
   ✓ Peer review exercises
   ✓ Group problem-solving
   ✓ Structured discussions and analysis sessions using dynamic facilitation techniques

5. The local stakeholders of the hosting city should play a key role in presenting their local situation in relation to the transfer process, needs and experiences/solutions. All partners should receive some orientation material in advance, so they arrive with some understanding of the local context, even if the meeting is online.

6. Advance planning is an important part of effective transnational seminars. At the very least, this means collaboration between the Lead Expert, Lead Partner and host partner around the agenda, contributors and the logistics. In some cases, Lead Experts have visited the host city in advance to see venues and meet the hosts. In other cases, they have organised online planning meetings in advance of the transnational seminars.

7. Even prior to the pandemic, URBACT networks were making increasing use of online tools and methods to reduce their carbon footprint. However, Covid-19 has provided a huge catalyst for the use of digital platforms which have been actively embraced by the Programme and its networks. Although face to face collaboration still offers the best basis for building trusted relationships, a growing range of activities can be conducted online and regardless of the pandemic, the future of urban collaboration is hybrid. URBACT has developed a range of resources to support this, which include the Hints and Tips materials and the URBACT Toolbox.

8. Online meetings require a technical rehearsal in advance, to ensure that the digital platform and all audio and visual inputs work correctly. Speakers also welcome the opportunity to check presentations and connections in advance of their inputs.

9. 'Housekeeping' matters also need to be considered carefully. These include finance, administration and communication issues. As much as possible, it is advisable to manage these aspects of the network outside the main business of the transnational seminars. This might mean via online meetings, separate to the exchange and learning sessions.

C. Tools for network learning and knowledge uptake

Knowledge coming from transnational exchange and learning activities should be effectively captured, organised and documented in order to follow progress in systematic way. These shall be easily accessible to all stakeholders involved in the local co-production process. A few examples are listed below:

〉 Pre- and post-meeting briefing note

This tool is used to capture and document the E&L rationale. The pre-briefing note provides a clear understanding of the content to be covered at each network meeting (including necessary preparations) and reminds partners about the tasks that need to be undertaken before the meeting. The post briefing note documents the learning from the meeting for each session, and lists the tasks to be undertaken before the next meeting. This is being considered as very efficient tool for ULG coordinators to report learning from the transnational to local level and as a reminder of tasks.

〉 Key Learning grid

A basic tool used at the end of each transnational network meeting in order to capture key learning points for each partner and actions to be carried out at local level. The grid is reviewed by partners and the Lead Expert at each transnational meeting. It helps partners record the history of learning and monitor actions throughout the journey. It can be also used for internal network recording of the exchange and learning process.

〉 Support and follow up materials

The set of all the materials, handouts, produced for/at network activities. These can include compilation of PowerPoints, templates, canvases, main learning notes from different sessions, photos, short videos, peer learning points etc. These can help ULG participants design debriefings at local level. Private Network Basecamp space will be available to all approved networks for gathering and organising all network productions and making them available for network partners.

Network expertise framework

Adequate expertise support has proven to be crucial for effective capacity building in cities. Transnational networking and learning between peers require careful design of events with inspirational facilitation techniques. Proper design and delivery of integrated sustainable urban development policies in cities demands a transdisciplinary approach.

For this reason, expertise support for URBACT networks is structured around three core dimensions (types of expertise) for ensuring effective exchange and learning:
- Expertise for the design and delivery of transnational exchange and learning activities
- Thematic expertise (related to wide array of themes and related subtopics in relation to sustainable urban development policy challenges)
- Methods and tools for integrated and participatory approaches for the design and delivery of sustainable urban development policies.

In addition, an adequate set of <u>communication skills</u> has proven to be vital for ensuring the overall quality of expertise support also in the context of hybrid working reality. These are required for all experts validated in the pool.

The Lead Expert role in URBACT networks remains pivotal for ensuring an effective learning. Expert candidates interested in this role shall validate a set of "<u>URBACT Lead Expert skills</u>" crucial for maximising the impact of network exchange and learning activities and knowledge production with proven leadership and coaching approaches.

A. Network expert roles and missions

140 days of expertise is available for each network regardless of the number of partners. In order to improve the efficiency of the expertise support provided to URBACT networks, expertise made available to approved networks is presented in two distinct URBACT network expert roles:

❭ A network Lead Expert:

Supports the partnership over the entire duration of the network which requires a high level of professional commitment (in case of appointment). A Lead Expert workplan will consist <u>of up to 112 days</u> of expertise spread over 24 months network duration. A Lead Expert's role is to empower and support cities in their sustainable development processes, rather than teach or dictate. A Lead Expert supports the network with:
- The definition of the main focus of network activities based on the Transferability Study. It includes designing the network work plan with a menu of exchange and learning activities with various formats, elaborating the main expected results and production of network outputs.
- The delivery of transnational exchange and learning activities with effective facilitation techniques.
- The knowledge of EU policy frameworks and the specific thematic fields tackled by the network.
- Coaching and supporting the use of effective methods and tools for the design and delivery of integrated and participatory processes in partner cities.
- The knowledge capture and uptake and communication of network results.
- Providing advises on testing actions.

This list of tasks is not exhaustive; each Lead Expert will have a dedicated work plan based on the suggested expertise support framework with defined task categories (see below).

! The Terms of Reference of the present call (Section 6.3.2.) provide detailed information about the appointment procedure for network Lead Experts. One can be appointed as Lead Expert only in one URBACT network at the time. However, appointed Lead Experts can perform other ad hoc expertise missions in other networks.

〉 Network Ad-hoc Experts:

Provide support on specific needs identified by the network with shorter and more specific expertise tasks. Minimum of 28 days of expertise will be available for ad-hoc expertise support. Most network ad-hoc expertise missions require shorter commitments (up to 5 days). Nevertheless, longer network ad-hoc expertise missions (6 - 20 days) are also possible depending on specific network expertise requests. Sometimes network Ad-hoc experts can also complement network Lead Expert support with specific and complementary tasks over the entire duration of the network – these kinds of missions usually exceed 20 days of expertise.

> Network ad hoc expertise missions can include tasks supporting one or more specific expertise needs in line with different types of expertise, such as:
> * supporting the design and facilitation of network meetings,
> * providing specific thematic inputs at different exchange and learning activities,
> * training on methods and tools for supporting integrated and participatory processes in partner cities,
> * customised support at local level and with the production of specific network outputs.

This list of tasks is not exhaustive; each network Ad-hoc Expert shall have specific set of missions defined with the work plan in line with suggested expertise support framework with defined task categories (see below).

! All approved networks shall appoint at least two network Ad hoc Experts during the life-time of the network. There are no limitations in relation to the number of Ad hoc expert missions in different URBACT networks.

B. The selection and appointment of network experts

The selection and appointment of network experts will take place after the network approval. All networks shall appoint at least 3 network experts during the life-time of the network – a network Lead Expert and at least two network Ad hoc experts. All selected experts appointed to carry out the expertise support shall be validated and included in the URBACT pool of experts. In case networks will not be able to find an adequate expert in the pool (due to the specificity of the expertise need), any expert can be invited to apply for validation – the call for experts will remain open over the entire duration of the URBACT programme.

The selected network experts are proposed via the expertise request form that shall be validated by URBACT Secretariat. For validation, the suitability, geographical balance and the gender balance of appointed network experts shall be considered. After the validation, URBACT Managing Authority makes the contractual arrangement with the expert whereas network Lead Partners are responsible for coordination and certification of expertise services. Detailed guidance will be provided to approved networks.

C. Mapping of expertise needs and organisation of tasks

The allocation of days to the network Lead Expert shall not exceed 80% (max. 112 days) of the total budget (140 days). Therefore, a minimum of 20% of the expertise budget (min. 28 days) shall be allocated to Ad-Hoc Experts supporting the network.

Expertise support in Innovation Transfer network will be structured and organised in the following way:

- Support with Network development, dynamics, and network results management (Approx. 35 days estimated, exclusively for Lead Experts). This includes:
  - ✓ Support Lead Partner with partnership dynamics including network coordination meetings
  - ✓ Delivery of the Transferability Study including bilateral partner visits and development of network E&L methodology
  - ✓ Support the Mid-term reflection process

- Support to transnational exchange and learning activities (approx. 50 days for Lead Experts and Ad hoc experts). Including:
  - ✓ Support the design and facilitation of core network meetings
  - ✓ Support the design (and delivery) of the customised set of exchange and learning activities in-person or online

- Support to partners with the delivery of local activities (approx.33 days for Lead Experts and Ad hoc experts). Including:
  - ✓ One to one support for the set-up and sustainment of URBACT Local Groups and the use of URBACT toolbox
  - ✓ Support with Testing actions
  - ✓ Support partners with production and reviews of Investment/ Continuity Plans

- Support with the knowledge capture and communication of network results (approx. 22 days for Lead Experts and Ad hoc experts). Including:
  - ✓ Support with the delivery of Communication plan and production of specific communication outputs defined by the network
  - ✓ Production of Quarterly Network Journals (Lead Expert task with possible external inputs)
  - ✓ Production of core network articles (Lead Expert task)
  - ✓ Production of the Network Final Report

! Most of the above listed tasks will have pre-defined suggestions of deliverables. Exact mapping of tasks together with expert workplan management and expert reporting templates will be provided to approved networks at the start of the journey.

D. Network Results management framework

In order to ensure the quality of expertise support across networks all Lead Experts will need to participate in essential information and training sessions and embrace the tools proposed by URBACT. For this purpose, specific guides will be designed for delivery of expected services.

Lead Experts play a key role for the network development and dynamics. The quality of the support provided will be assessed twice during network journey:
- The performance evaluation by partners at the end of Understand stage
- The Mid-term reflection process during the Adapt stage

Network results management framework will be introduced to all Lead Experts which includes:
- The use of digital tools (i.e. Miro) for monitoring partner progress and capacity building support
- The Mid-term Reflection report to be shared at the end of Adapt stage
- Regular Check-in sessions with Lead Experts to share the experience and ideas around the delivery of different support activities as well as the development of methodological approaches and tools.
- The use of well-established tools suggested by the programme for ensuring the balanced progress across networks notably related to the application of Integrated and participatory approaches and the Investment/ Continuity Plans co-production process.
- The dedicated Lead Expert space on Basecamp for programme support as well as 24/7 "peer support" - sharing experiences and ideas with other appointed network Lead Experts.

The "URBACT" Glossary

The URBACT Method[2]

It is an ensemble of processes and tools that enable an environment for promoting integrated sustainable urban development through effective learning and practice. The building blocks of the method are:

- ✓ Applying the integrated and participatory approaches at local level to solving concrete challenges with variety of stakeholders within the framework of URBACT Local Group.

- ✓ Networking amongst EU cities to exchange good practices and find solutions to their policy challenges with expert support

- ✓ Expertise support, capacity-building and training for urban practitioners to empower them to drive change within cities.

- ✓ Capitalisation and communication of knowledge and practices to reach and provide a wider community of urban practitioners in Europe and beyond with concrete solutions.

Network Lead Partners and Project Partners

Each network has to appoint a Lead Partner with full responsibility for network management, coordination of activities among the transnational partners, and implementation of the work programme. The Lead Partner also bears financial and legal responsibility and liability for the whole partnership towards the Managing Authority.

ULG = URBACT Local Group

The URBACT Local Group (ULG) is a fundamental building block of the URBACT programme. In every partner city, the ULG brings together all relevant local stakeholders related to the chosen policy challenge that the city wants to tackle. The ULG is the vehicle for a participatory process allowing relevant stakeholders to be involved in the co-production of Integrated Action Plans.

UIA = Urban Innovative Actions

ITN = Innovation Transfer Networks

URBACT Joint Secretariat

The URBACT Joint Secretariat, housed within the French Managing Authority (ANCT - L'Agence Nationale de la Cohésion des Territoires), is in charge of implementing and managing the Programme on behalf of the Member and Partner States of the European Union. The Joint Secretariat follows and supports networks on all aspects of their work from peer-learning processes, capacity building, communication activities, and capitalisation efforts to management & financial support.

URBACT Monitoring Committee

It is a committee of EU Member/Partner States set up to monitor the implementation of the URBACT Programme, in agreement with the Managing Authority. The Monitoring Committee reviews the implementation of the Programme and progress towards achieving its objectives and functions. It adopts the methodology, criteria for selection and the eligibility rules before the launch of each call for proposals as well as approves the selection of Networks.

NUP = National URBACT Point

The URBACT Programme currently runs 25 National URBACT Points covering 27 EU countries (Austria, Germany, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus-Greece, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France-Luxembourg, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Montenegro). National URBACT Points, represented by ministries, associations of cities, universities, or consultant agencies, are in charge of communication and networking around URBACT activities in their countries and in their native languages.

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[2] *URBACT Programme Manual sets out the modus operandi of the URBACT IV programme.*

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