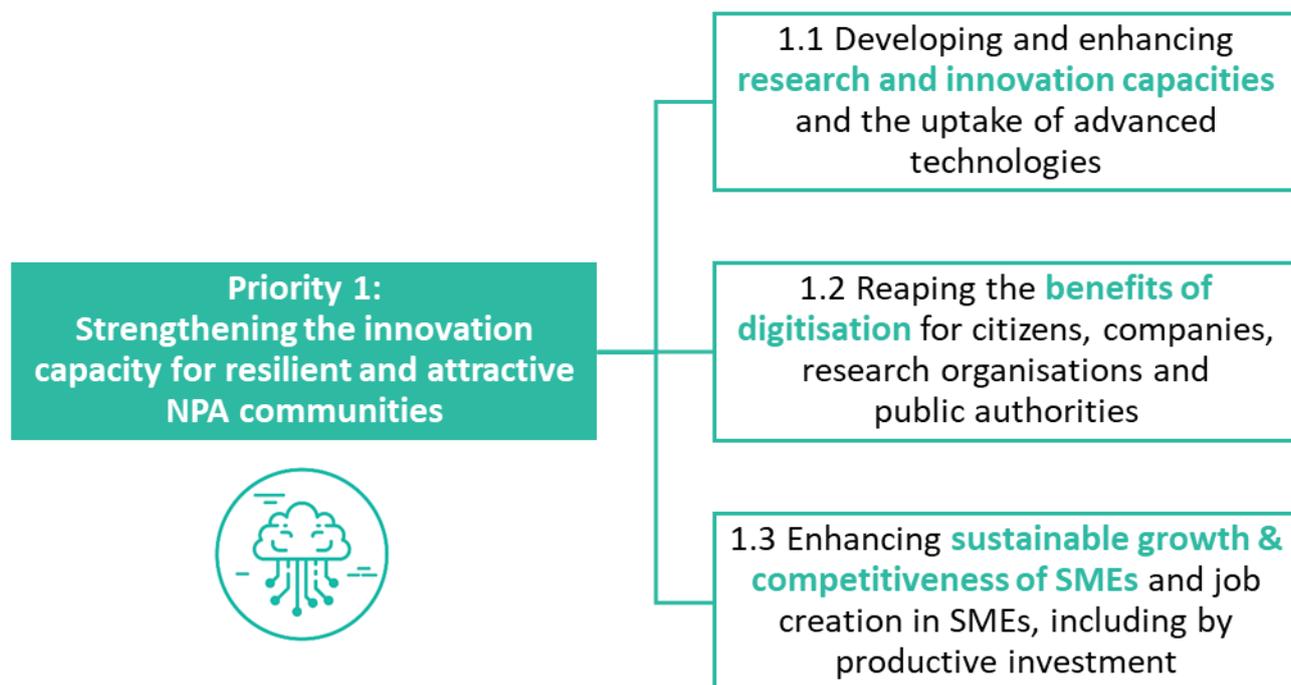**Annex 2 – Bridging Call**

Detailed overview of NPA 2021-2027 Priorities and Specific Objectives

PRIORITY 1: Strengthening the innovation capacity for resilient and attractive NPA communities

Priority 1: Strengthening the innovation capacity for resilient and attractive NPA communities

1.1 Developing and enhancing **research and innovation capacities** and the uptake of advanced technologies

1.2 Reaping the **benefits of digitisation** for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities

1.3 Enhancing **sustainable growth & competitiveness of SMEs** and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investment

Specific objective 1.1: Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies

Enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies are of key importance for SMEs and micro enterprises, and related, the NPA area as a whole. Through innovation and pursuing higher value-added processes activities can be diversified and expanded, drawing on specialist sectoral knowledge and expertise in the area. Regional programmes and strategies, including smart specialisation strategies, which foster bottom-up policy approach for regional innovation and development can be the basis for identified key regional strengths.

In times of major change, most notably climate change, the vulnerable ecologies of the programme area place even more importance on innovation capacity as a means to adapt, manage and respond to change, and the innovation capacity is also of importance when other unforeseen catastrophes such as pandemics occur. To combat the climate change, green and blue technologies are of interest to the area.

Recognising that the innovation process can take time and involve many stages, projects can engage at various stages in the innovation cycle, from inception to testing and pre-commercial development, to expanding application and adoption. It is important to involve SMEs already when developing innovations, but also in the application of existing technologies. Examples of sectors in which the programme can finance projects are healthcare, energy, the marine economy, circular economy, transport, environmental and natural resources as well as innovation with emphasis on tourism, culture and creative industries.

Types of actions to be funded:

- Facilitating technology transfer to, or across, the Programme area benefiting SMEs, including green technologies.

- Facilitating commonly identified opportunities based on strengths in the programme area supported by research and innovation, including smart specialisation strategies.

In all activities that are approved by the NPA programme, there should be an integration of the horizontal criteria. This means that the activities should strive for a performance with low carbon footprint, with equal opportunities for men and women and inclusion of underrepresented groups, including indigenous peoples and other culturally and linguistically distinct groups originating from the NPA area.

Main target groups:
- Higher education and research
- Enterprise, except SME
- SME
- Business support organization
- Regional public authority
- National public authority
- Local public authority
- Non-profit organisations / Social enterprises

Indicators:
- Enterprises cooperating with research institutions (RCO10)
- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects (RCO 84)
- Organizations cooperating across borders (RCO 87)
- Jointly developed solutions (RCO 116)
- SMEs introducing marketing or organisational innovation (RCR 04)
- SMEs introducing product or process innovation (RCR 03)
- Solutions taken up or upscaled by organizations (RCR 104)

Specific objective 1.2: Reaping the benefits of digitisation for citizens, companies, research organisations and public authorities

Territories across the programme area experience challenges linked to long distances and access to markets and key services. Digitalisation and digital solutions are key to addressing and mitigating these challenges of importance for public service, SMEs and the communities and people who live in the area, e.g creating links between the public sector, networks of SMEs and education providers. Digitisation can help to mitigate challenges linked to demographic change, mitigate crises such as pandemics, and also create opportunities for younger population in remote and peripheral communities, e.g through remote healthcare and smart mobility. In order to make the advantages of digitisation accessible for everyone, it is important to develop digital skills and also to build capacity in SMEs, in public service, and in organisations.

Transnational collaboration has a vital role in strengthening the expertise and experiences of working with digital solutions in the programme area, both to widen and deepen the expertise coming from these peripheral areas, and also to apply new solutions.

Types of actions to be funded:

- Transfer and development of accessible digital solutions to create better conditions for people to live and work in the area. This includes technology-driven solutions for public service provision, as well as marketing models and solutions facilitating the use of distance-spanning technology to overcome long distance to market.

In all activities that are approved by the NPA programme, there should be an integration of the horizontal criteria. This means that the activities should strive for a performance with low carbon footprint, with equal opportunities for men and women and inclusion of underrepresented groups, including indigenous peoples and other culturally and linguistically distinct groups originating from the NPA area.

Main target groups:
- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- National public authority
- Sectoral agency
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research
- Education/training centre and school
- SME
- Enterprise, except SME
- Business support organisation
- General public (including local communities)

Indicators:
- Public institutions supported to develop digital services, products, and processes (RCO 14)
- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects (RCO 84)
- Organizations cooperating across borders (RCO 87)
- Jointly developed solutions (RCO 116)
- Users of new and upgraded public digital services, products and processes (RCR 11)
- Users of new and upgraded digital services, products and processes developed by enterprises (RCR 12)
- Solutions taken up or upscaled by organizations (RCR 104)

Specific objective 1.3: Enhancing sustainable growth and competitiveness of SMEs and job creation in SMEs, including by productive investments

Through transnational cooperation, the programme will contribute to enhancing the entrepreneurial climate of the NPA area by facilitating the transfer and development of business support strategies and solutions to overcome the particular challenges faced by start-ups and existing SMEs in remote and peripheral regions. An example is building networks and clusters with capacity to tackle the challenge with long distance to market for SMEs. Overcoming these challenges will contribute to a more dynamic business sector, in particular for SMEs in nontraditional sectors.

In the programme area, there are area-based specialisms linked to specific area-based cultural or natural resources as for example uniqueness of Arctic, islands, coastal areas etc. To manage traditional business in remote and sparsely populated areas there is a need to build economic diversification and resilience. Through innovation, traditional sectors can be diversified and expanded. A key sector for the area that has particulary high number of SMEs and micro enterprises is tourism. This is also a sector where it is important to engage indigenous groups and local communities in planning and activities.

Types of actions to be funded:

- Transfer and development of models and solutions for support to SMEs faced with commonly identified challenges and opportunities in peripheral regions with a particular focus on entrepreneurial skills and sustainable business models.

- Transfer and development of concepts for creating networks and clusters of SMEs and connecting entrepreneurial capacities across regions as well as adapting marketing models for a greater market reach.

In all activities that are approved by the NPA programme, there should be an integration of the horizontal criteria. This means that the activities should strive for a performance with low carbon footprint, with equal opportunities for men and women and inclusion of underrepresented groups, including indigenous peoples and other culturally and linguistically distinct groups originating from the NPA area.
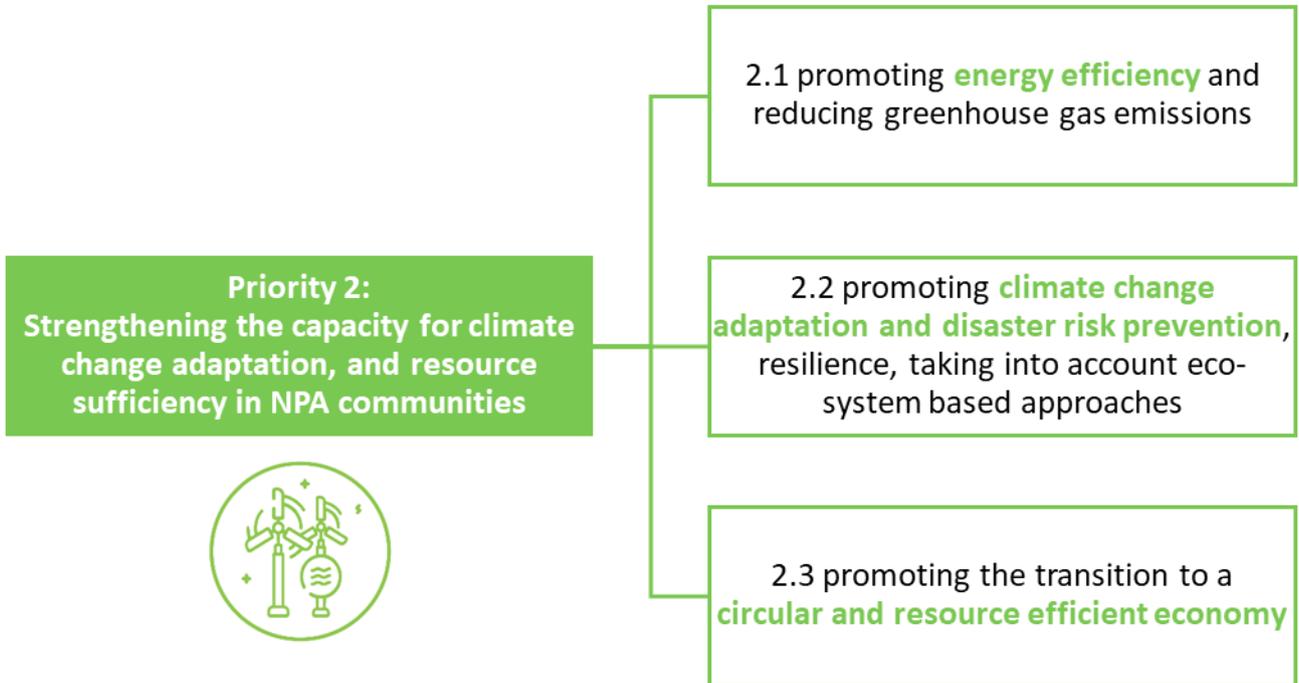
Main target groups:
- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- Sectoral agency
- Higher education and research
- Education/training centre and school
- SME
- Business support organisation
- General public (including local communities)

Indicators:
- Enterprises supported (of which micro, small, medium, large) (RCO 01)
- Enterprises with non-financial support (RCO 04)
- New enterprises supported (RCO 05)
- Organizations cooperating across borders (RCO 87)
- Jointly developed solutions (RCO 116)
- Solutions taken up or upscaled by organizations (RCR 104)

PRIORITY 2: Strengthening the capacity for climate change adaptation, and resource sufficiency in NPA communities

Priority 2:
Strengthening the capacity for climate change adaptation, and resource sufficiency in NPA communities

2.1 promoting **energy efficiency** and reducing greenhouse gas emissions

2.2 promoting **climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention**, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches

2.3 promoting the transition to a **circular and resource efficient economy**

Specific objective 2.1: Promoting energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions

Territories across the programme area have high energy needs linked to their cold and extreme climates. This, in turn requires smart energy solutions, including smart energy storage. Long distances and a lack of access of communities and hubs drives the need to explore community-based systems, for example for islands and remote areas. The area has a high potential for renewable energy resources and can build on vast expertise and experience in the field and a preparedness to adopt and apply new technologies and new solutions. The main focus is achieving net energy savings and respect of biodiversity and habitats.

Types of actions to be funded:

- Transfer and development of sustainable renewable energy generation and energy efficiency solutions suitable for cold climates and remote communities.

- Facilitating the use of place-based energy surpluses and development of smart energy management concepts in remote communities.

In all activities that are approved by the NPA programme, there should be an integration of the horizontal criteria. This means that the activities should strive for a performance with low carbon footprint, with equal opportunities for men and women and inclusion of underrepresented groups, including indigenous peoples and other culturally and linguistically distinct groups originating from the NPA area.

Main target groups:

- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- Sectoral agency
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research
- SME
- General public (including local communities)

Indicators:

- Dwellings with improved energy performance (RCO 18)
- Solutions for electricity storage (RCO 105)
- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects (RCO 84)
- Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations (RCR 79)
- Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations (RCR 104)

Specific objective 2.2: Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches

The vulnerability of the NPA regions and their geographies (sparsely populated costal-, mountain-regions and islands) makes combating climate change and climate change adaptation/resilience major challenges for the area. The specific nature and needs of these areas means it is vital to have input from specialists and local input with in depth knowledge of the unique and sensitive natural environments. The programme will support the transfer of knowledge and experiences between the regions in the programme, and the creation of new transnational networks.

Types of actions to be funded:

- Transfer and development of solutions that facilitate the use of community knowledge and builds local capacity for climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience in sparsely populated communities.

In all activities that are approved by the NPA programme, there should be an integration of the horizontal criteria. This means that the activities should strive for a performance with low carbon footprint, with equal opportunities for men and women and inclusion of underrepresented groups, including indigenous peoples and other culturally and linguistically distinct groups originating from the NPA area.

Main target groups:

- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- National public authority
- Sectoral agency
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research
- SME
- International organisation, EEIG
- General public (including local communities)

Indicators:

- National and sub-national strategies addressing climate change adaptation (RCO 27)
- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects (RCO 84)
- Organizations cooperating across borders (RCO 87)
- Jointly developed solutions (RCO 116)
- Population benefiting from protection measures against climate related natural disasters (other than floods and wildfire) (RCR 37)
- Population benefiting from protection measures against non-climate related natural risks and risks related to human activities (RCR 96)
- Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations (RCR 104)

Specific objective 2.3: Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy

The circular economy requires new solutions and innovations to transform production processes and change consumer behaviour. Crucially responses need to take into account territorial specificities, such as the impact of peripherality and extreme climates, some areas have recognised challenges in dealing with waste management, where distance and transport is an issue. For example waste is one of many aspects that could be included in actions to create circular economy. Other important aspects are resource efficiency in sectors as bio economy, blue economy, the building sector and infrastructure, food, and by-products from production.

In remote communities, there are already important strengths in this field, e.g a tradition of self-reliance, reusing and repurposing. Therefore circular, green and bio-economy are already integral parts of the NPA area. Another reason for the importance of these sectors are the high impact of pollution on sensitive environments in the NPA area.

The programme can, for example, support concepts for engaging sparsely populated areas in accessing wider networks and capacities for knowledge transfer and skills development.

Types of actions to be funded:

- Facilitating the transfer and development of solutions that promote resource efficiency, end-of-waste, and a better use of by-products in remote, and sparsely populated communities.

- Facilitating the transfer and development of solutions for community planning for the circular economy in remote, and sparsely populated communities.

In all activities that are approved by the NPA programme, there should be an integration of the horizontal criteria. This means that the activities should strive for a performance with low carbon footprint, with equal opportunities for men and women and inclusion of underrepresented groups, including indigenous peoples and other culturally and linguistically distinct groups originating from the NPA area.

Main target groups:
- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- Sectoral agency
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research
- Enterprise, except SME
- SME
- Business support organisation
- International organisation, EEIG
- General public (including local communities)

Indicators:
- Waste prepared for re-use (RCO 119)
- Pilot actions developed jointly and implemented in projects (RCO 84)
- Organizations cooperating across borders (RCO 87)
- Jointly developed solutions (RCO 116)
- Solutions taken up or upscaled by organisations (RCR 104)

PRIORITY 3: Strengthening organisational capacity among NPA communities to make use of cooperation opportunities

**Priority 3:
Strengthening the organisational capacity among NPA communities to make use of cooperation opportunities**

3.1 Enhance institutional **capacity** of public authorities and stakeholders **to implement** macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, as well as other **territorial strategies**

Specific objective 3.1: Enhance institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders to implement macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, as well as other territorial strategies

The goal for actions to enhance organisational capacity of public authorities and stakeholders in NPA is to develop more resilient communities. This includes working with natural and cultural heritage to protect, promote and develope these important features for the programme area and developing wider territorial synergies and links to the benefits of the programme area.

The NPA Programme has the potential to bring strong regional and territorial development perspectives to the EU Arctic Policy, as well as national Arctic policies, recognising the unique circumstances and challenges of the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme area compared to other parts of Europe. In particular, common characteristics in relation to demography, indigenous perspectives, peripherality, insularity and harsh conditions .

The NPA programme has a leading role in the cooperation between the Arctic INTERREG programmes (a cooperation that potentially will be extended to national programmes and other Arctic networks). To bring the cooperation to a project level, the NPA can support projects that cooperate across programmes in order to encourage increased alignment, synergies and results.

The specific objective does not only target Arctic regions, but also other northern European regions that have similar features and challenges.

Types of actions to be funded:	Main target groups:
• Development and transfer of capacity building concepts to engage stakeholders in cooperation based on local knowledge, supporting them to implement strategies for Northern Periphery and Arctic regions. In all activities that are approved by the NPA programme, there should be an integration of the horizontal criteria. This means that the activities should strive for a performance with low carbon footprint, with equal opportunities for men and women and inclusion of underrepresented groups, including indigenous peoples and other culturally and linguistically distinct groups originating from the NPA area.	• Local public authority • Regional public authority • National public authority • Sectoral agency • Interest groups including NGOs • Higher education and research • Education/training centre and school • SME • International organisation, EEIG • General public (including local communities) **Indicators:** • Participations in joint actions across borders (RCO 81) • Organisations cooperating across borders (RCO 87) • Jointly developed solutions (RCO 116) • Joint strategies and action plans taken up by organisations (RCR 79) • Solutions taken up or up-scaled by organisations (RCR 104)