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Open call for proposals

Request for EIT Food Accelerator Network Programme Implementing Participants 2027-2028

EIT Food/Request for FAN Implementing Participants/2026

EIT Food

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www.eitfood.eu/

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1. Introduction

1. About EIT Food - Vision and focus

Over the next decade, we will advocate for a bold transformation of Europe's food system, so that future generations can eat healthy, sustainable food. Through our community, we will fundamentally redesign the way food is produced, distributed, and consumed, so that by 2030 we have viable pathways to transformation at scale, and by 2035 we see tangible change across the food value chain.

Supported by the EU, we invest in projects, organisations and individuals that share our goals for a healthy and sustainable food system. Our innovation projects are delivered with a combination of industry, education and research partners to improve environmental and health outcomes by developing solutions that align with our missions:

1. Healthier Lives Through Food

We will make a material difference to quality of life by enabling more consumers to have better choices through access to affordable, healthier food products and actionable information.

2. Food System Resilience

We'll improve food security and safety for consumers everywhere by enabling and establishing resilient and dependable digitally enabled food supply chains.

3. Net Zero Food System

We will enable the transition to a net zero food system, measuring and quantifying the change through reduced CO2 equivalent emissions.

To support the delivery of its missions, EIT Food has defined three Priority Areas that focus innovation efforts on the most critical opportunities for transforming the food system:

- Resilient Agriculture: Innovations that enable more resilient and sustainable agricultural systems by improving resource efficiency, environmental outcomes, and long-term farm productivity.
- Protein Diversification: Innovations that support the development and adoption of diverse and sustainable protein sources to strengthen food security, increase consumer choice, and reduce environmental impact.
- Biotechnology: Innovations that apply biotechnology to develop new ingredients, products, and production methods that contribute to a more sustainable, resilient, and healthy food system

Aligned with these Priority Areas, the EIT Food Accelerator Network (EIT FAN) focuses on high-potential agrifood startups developing solutions within these domains. Through theme-based hubs, EIT FAN supports ventures that address critical food system challenges by validating technologies, accelerating market adoption, and connecting startups with industry partners, investors, and experts across Europe's agrifood innovation ecosystem.

2. Overview of key information on the call

Call ID	EIT Food/Request for FAN Implementing Participants/2026
Call opening and deadline for applications	Call opening: 24 August 2026 Deadline for applications: 26 October at 12:00 CET
Evaluation and implementation timeline (indicative)	Evaluation of proposals: from 27 October 2026 to 20 November 2026 Communication of results to applicants: 20 November 2026 *Following the communication of results, the selection and contracting process is expected to be finalized within three months.* Tentative start of the projects: January 2027 Tentative end of the projects: December 2028
Maximum EIT funding allocated to this call	The maximum EIT funding available under this Call is: • Up to EUR 480,000 for implementing partners that co-finance a Hub over a two-year period. • Up to EUR 240,000 for implementing partners that co-fund a Hub over a two-year period. Further information is provided in Section 4.3 of these Call Guidelines.
List of call documents	Application form as available on the submission platform: MyEITFood Portal Mandatory Budget template Other relevant documents available at call webpage in EIT Food Open Calls.
Topics to be addressed	Selection of additional Implementing Participants (Hubs) for the EIT Food Accelerator Network (EIT FAN) programme, for the following thematic focus areas defined for 2027–2028: **Circular Solutions for Food Systems** and **Nutrition Innovation & Food as Medicine**
Contact point Q&A	Alexandra Kyvik, EIT Food Accelerator Network Programme Manager – Alexandra.kyvik@eitfood.eu
Further information to interested applicants	Information session: September 23rd 2026, 12PM

3. Description of the subject matter of the call

1. Purpose and scope of activities

This call aims to select new Implementing Participants (Hubs) for the existing EIT Food Accelerator Network (EIT FAN) programme. Selected organisations will be responsible for delivering EIT FAN activities across Europe. Each Hub will scout, evaluate, train, and connect high-potential agrifoodtech startups in alignment with the programme's innovation, entrepreneurship, and impact goals.

The EIT Food Accelerator Network (EIT FAN) is a 2–3 month, theme-based acceleration programme delivered in a hybrid format through dedicated innovation Hubs across Europe. The programme supports high-potential agrifoodtech startups in

accelerating their growth by helping them validate their technology, improve commercial and investment readiness, and ultimately achieve successful market adoption.

Each selected Implementing Participant will be responsible for delivering the EIT FAN programme at their designated Hub and thematic focus area. This includes full-cycle innovation support for agrifoodtech startups – from scouting and evaluating applicants to delivering a hybrid acceleration programme and facilitating meaningful ecosystem connections.

Implementing Participants will identify and attract high-potential startups that align with the designated theme of their Hub, encourage them to apply, and lead or support a two-round evaluation process to select the most promising candidates. Once selected, startups will be onboarded into a structured programme that combines expert-led workshops, tailored mentoring, peer learning, and online and in-person networking activities aimed at supporting technology validation, business model development, corporate collaboration, and investment readiness.

Throughout the programme, Implementing Participants will provide continuous support to startups, leveraging their regional and thematic ecosystems to create targeted connections with corporates, investors, and other relevant stakeholders. They will also organise in-person events to enhance visibility and engagement, maintain consistent communication with their cohort, and ensure progress tracking and data collection. To ensure cohesion and quality across the EIT FAN network, all Implementing Participants are expected to adhere to shared delivery standards, engage in regular coordination with EIT Food, and remain adaptable to the programme's evolving strategic goals and formats.

The 2026 FAN Themes have been the following: FAN 2026 Themes.

The new themes for which we are looking new implementing partners are the following:

- Circular Solutions for Food Systems
- Nutrition Innovation & Food as Medicine

Applicants apply for one thematic focus area, each delivered through a designated Hub. The exact theme titles and their distribution across EIT FAN Hubs will be reviewed and confirmed by EIT Food prior to each programme year.

EIT Food reserves the right to amend the thematic scope of this call, including the number of themes, prior to the call closing date.

2. Main requirements for applicants

EIT Food is seeking experienced and impact-driven organisations to serve as Implementing Participants for the EIT FAN. Applicants should demonstrate a strong track record in supporting early-stage innovation and the ability to mobilise regional and thematic ecosystems around agrifood innovation. The ideal applicant is an organisation with:

- Proven experience in startup acceleration, incubation, venture support, or ecosystem building, preferably in the agrifoodtech or deep tech sectors;
- Demonstrated capacity to design and deliver structured programmes for a minimum of 10 startups that combine training, mentoring, expert guidance, and ecosystem engagement;
- The ability to deliver coaching and training services using either in-house resources or subcontracted experts, ensuring quality, relevance, and consistency across the programme;
- Strong operational and event management capabilities, including hybrid delivery of both online and in-person activities;
- Access to a broad network of relevant stakeholders, including corporates, investors, research institutions, and policymakers aligned with the selected thematic focus;
- Familiarity with EU-funded programmes, performance reporting, and budget accountability;
- A dedicated and competent team with the skills, expertise, and time capacity to deliver the activity;
- Capacity to coordinate closely and proactively with EIT Food and other Implementing Participants throughout the programme cycle.

- Demonstrated ability to secure and manage co-financing and/or co-funding arrangements to support the sustainable operation of the Hub, with a clear funding model and identified funding sources

3. Main requirements for project implementation

3.1. Project duration and implementation

The project duration is of 2 years, from January 2027 to December 2028.

The programme is delivered on an annual cycle, running from January to December, with the following key phases:

- January–March – Call for Startups;
- March–April – Startup Evaluation;
- April–September – Startup Needs Scanning, Onboarding & Programme Preparation;
- September–December – Programme Delivery.

The timeline for each programme year is confirmed during the implementing partners onboarding and planning process and may be adjusted to reflect strategic and operational needs.

Each Implementing Participant will be responsible for delivering a 2–3 month hybrid programme at their designated Hub. While each Hub will focus on a distinct thematic area, the core responsibilities are consistent across all locations and span the full innovation support cycle:

- Scouting & outreach: promote the EIT FAN call for applications across relevant channels, actively scout and engage high-potential startups aligned with the Hub's theme, and encourage and guide eligible startups through the application process.
- Application evaluation: pre-screen all submitted applications for eligibility and thematic relevance; support EIT Food in facilitating and co-organising Round One (written application review), including payment of the selected evaluators in this round; lead and deliver Round Two (startup interviews in a pitch + Q&A format), including evaluation, jury moderation and selection of finalists.
- Programme delivery & startup support: co-design and deliver a high-quality hybrid acceleration programme supporting technology validation, commercial readiness, investment readiness and corporate readiness – including onboarding of the cohort, workshops, structured networking, tailored 1:1 support, and at least two in-person engagements with the startup cohort, each lasting 2–3 days.
- Ecosystem engagement: facilitate tailored connections between startups and key stakeholders (corporates, investors, potential customers, research and technology partners) and organise in-person, Hub-themed event(s) to showcase the cohort.
- Monitoring, reporting & compliance: track startup progress and capture relevant data and evidence throughout the programme lifecycle; report on programme activities, impact, and use of funds in compliance with EIT Food's financial and administrative guidelines.
- Programme coordination: maintain regular coordination with EIT Food (e.g. participation in weekly Hub calls and joint planning sessions) and ensure strategic and operational alignment across all programme elements.

Quantitative delivery expectations (e.g. minimum hours of training, mentoring, number of networking events) will be defined by EIT Food prior to each programme year and agreed upon with all Implementing Participants as part of the onboarding process.

Grant recipients must comply with gender equality, diversity and inclusion principles in line with Annex 5 of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (Specific Rules, Values) and the EIT Gender Equality Policy and Action Plan 2025-2027. The recipients of EIT funding must take all measures to promote equal opportunities between men and women in the implementation of the

action and aim, to the extent possible, for a gender balance at all levels of personnel assigned to the action, including at supervisory and managerial level.

3.2. Co-financing requirements

EIT FAN is evolving towards a more financially sustainable delivery model to support its long-term future.

As part of this call, applicants are expected to demonstrate a credible financial sustainability strategy for operating a FAN Hub. Both co-financing and co-funding models are accepted, with co-financing being the preferred approach. Applicants should outline their proposed funding model and expected funding sources in their proposal.

Further details on the financial contribution models and eligibility rules are provided in **Section 4.3.**

3.3. Deliverables

Grant recipients must submit project deliverables. For this activity the deliverables include:

Deliverable	Description
Report on the execution of the programme in the Hub	Final report on the delivery of the EIT FAN programme at the Hub, to be submitted at the end of the implementation period.

Grant recipients have obligations on communication, dissemination and visibility rules. Please see Article 17 of the Model Grant Agreement and EIT Food's Brand Guidelines.

Grant recipients must adhere to EIT Food Intellectual Property´s (IP) Policy which complies with the IP provisions outlined in Article 16 of the Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement.

3.4. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

All EIT Food funded projects should achieve relevant Core Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). For the EIT Food Accelerator Network Programme KIC Added-Value Activity (KAVA), the main KPIs are:

KPI Code	KPI description
EITHE02.4	Marketed Innovations: number of innovations introduced on the market during the KAVA duration or at the latest within 18 months from the start of the project, with a documented sales revenue of at least EUR 10,000. Innovations include new or significantly improved products (goods or services) and processes sold.
EITHE06.1	Investment attracted by KIC-supported start-ups and scale-ups.
EITHE03.1	Supported Start-ups/Scale-ups: number of start-ups supported by KICs for at least 2 months in year N, provided the KIC's services contribute to the company's growth (e.g. mentoring, consultancy on access to finance and markets, product/service marketing, legal advice, internationalisation, matchmaking). Reported by country of registration of the venture.

In addition to the Core EIT KPIs, the EIT FAN programme also tracks internal performance indicators for each Implementing Participant (targets to be set at the beginning of each year):

(i) Programme satisfaction rate – percentage of satisfaction reported by participating startups regarding the quality and value of the Hub's delivery, measured via post-programme survey managed by EIT Food (70%)

(ii) Number of eligible applications submitted per Hub during the official application period, as an indicator of outreach and ecosystem engagement (suggested yearly target: minimum 30 eligible applications).

Please note: At the end of the funding period, EIT Food requires specific structured data and documentation to verify the achievement of KPIs. Grantees must report their KPI achievements through the grant management tool and ensure that all required structured data and supporting evidence is submitted in accordance with the guidelines provided (see EIT Food KPI Guidance Document for details).

3.5. Monitoring and reporting

The project will be monitored and may be audited. All Activities selected for funding undergo continuous monitoring by EIT Food to ensure effective progress and implementation in accordance with the Project Agreement.

EIT Food may request regular reporting of actual costs incurred with the subgrant, as well as regular reporting of KPIs and deliverables, together with the supporting documentation. The monitoring process may result in an amendment to the Activity workplan and/or budget, however the Financial Return Mechanism Agreement cannot be re-negotiated following the approval of the Activity.

In the case of under-performance, significant delay of implementation, misconduct, misalignment with the project specifications in the grant management system or any other reason jeopardizing the timely implementation of the Activity identified during the monitoring process, EIT Food reserves the right to discontinue or restructure the funding of the Activity at any point during the Activity duration.

A formal ex-post impact assessment within at least five years of the end of the activity and its outputs is required for each activity, including those implemented by third parties.

4. Financial aspects of the call

1. KIC funding and cost eligibility

The project runs from January 2027 to December 2028. The total maximum budget available under this call is EUR 960,000. The maximum funding available per participant is EUR 480,000 under the co-financing model and EUR 240,000 under the co-funding model (under the two-year project period). Further details on the funding available per participant under each model are provided in Section 4.3. Successful applicants will receive a subgrant from EIT Food to support the implementation of an EIT Food Accelerator Network (FAN) Hub.

The funding is implemented under EIT GA 101269771. There is a 6 million EUR limit per participants from Member States of the European Union (EU) and from Horizon Europe Associate Countries for the whole 3-year Grant Agreement. Legal entities from non- Horizon Europe Associate countries can participate in consortia but are limited to funding of 60 000 over 3 years for a Grant Agreement. In those limits are included all the EIT Funding awarded to an organization across all the activities and prizes for the 3-year grant agreement.

The Subgrant is based on actual costs and value for money. All costs, including co-funding, need to comply with Horizon Europe regulations regarding the eligibility of expenses. Please refer to Article 6 of the Model Grant Agreement and the Annotated Model Grant Agreement.

In addition to the Horizon Europe eligibility rules, proposals must comply with the following maximum thresholds:

- Subcontracting: A maximum of 30% of the total eligible budget may be allocated to subcontracting.

Participants are not permitted to award subgrants to third parties.

When subcontracting, participants must comply with the Horizon Europe procurement rules, particularly the principles of fair competition, equal treatment, transparency, best value for money, and avoidance of conflicts of interest.

2. Payment arrangements

EIT Food will disburse funding in instalments. A proportion of the Activity budget will be pre-financed based on the company size, with subsequent annual payments linked to the eligible costs reported by the recipient.

For more information, please see EIT Food Project Financing Policy.

3. Financial sustainability requirements

Under the strategic guidance of EIT Food and the EIT, EIT FAN has entered a transition towards a financially sustainable delivery model. This evolution aims to ensure the long-term continuity and impact of the programme beyond the current EIT funding framework.

As part of this call, EIT Food is seeking Implementing Partners that can demonstrate a credible and sustainable financial model for operating a FAN Hub. While both co-financing and co-funding are accepted, co-financing is the preferred approach. Co-financing enables external financial contributions to support the programme without reducing the KAVA grant allocated to the implementing partner, thereby strengthening the long-term sustainability of the network.

As part of their proposal, applicants should outline a preliminary financial sustainability strategy, including the expected funding sources and the mechanism through which they intend to meet the financial contribution requirements. EIT Food particularly encourages the mobilisation of co-financing from public institutions, foundations, banks, and other mission-aligned organisations, as this approach provides a more resilient and scalable foundation for the future of the EIT Food Accelerator Network.

Applicants may propose one of the following financial contribution models:

Option 1 – Co-financing (preferred model)

Under the co-financing model, applicants are expected to secure external financial contributions covering approximately 50% of the annual Hub operating costs (implementation, network coordination and subgrants to startups). For a Hub supporting 10–15 startups, the required co-financing contribution is expected to be approximately EUR 180,000–200,000 per year. This contribution should support the overall Hub operation, including programme implementation, network coordination, and startup subgrants, together with the EIT Food KAVA grant.

Co-financing contributions are paid directly to EIT Food and do not reduce the EIT Food grant allocated to the implementing partner.

The maximum EIT Food grant funding available under this model is EUR 240,000 per Hub per year (EUR 480,000 over the two-year project period).

Typical co-financing sources include:

- Public local, regional or European funding bodies;
- Foundations or other mission-aligned organisations;
- Implementing partner contributions acting as sponsors; and
- Corporate partnerships (e.g. EIT Food Entrepreneurship Programme Pass). Please refer to Annex 5. Framework for Corporate Financial Contributions Facilitated by EIT FAN Implementing Partners, for more information on this option.

Option 2 – Co-funding

Under the co-funding model, applicants are expected to provide approximately EUR 120,000 per year in co-funding, representing around 50% of the annual Hub programme implementation costs. Co-funding may be provided through the implementing partner's own resources and/or eligible external funding sources.

Co-funding is managed directly by the implementing partner and proportionally reduces the KAVA grant allocated by EIT Food.

The maximum EIT Food grant funding available under this model is EUR 120,000 per Hub per year (EUR 240,000 over the two-year project period).

Typical co-funding sources include:

- Public local, regional funding bodies; and
- Foundations or other mission-aligned organisations.

Other EU funding is not an eligible source of co-funding under this scheme (this cover but not limited to Erasmus or Horizon funding).

5. Call criteria

Following the deadline for submission, the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria checks will be performed for each proposal in line with the following criteria.

1. Admissibility

Please note that completing the following two steps is a mandatory prerequisite for submitting an application for EIT Food Calls.

- First, applicants must register their organisation on the EU Funding & Tenders Portal in order to obtain a unique nine-digit Participant Identification Code (PIC); if unsure whether a PIC already exists, organisations can verify their registration directly via the EU Portal.
- Second, applicants must register, access and complete their submission through the platform MyEITFood.eu.

Only proposals complying with the following conditions will be considered eligible for further evaluation:

Applications must be submitted in English before the call deadline, submitted using the forms provided inside MyEITFood.eu, complete and contain all parts and mandatory annexes and supporting documents.

Any proposals submitted after the deadline will be inadmissible.

Equal opportunity: The call is open to all applicants, including those without an existing partnership agreement with EIT Food. All members of the KIC Partnership (as defined in the Partnership Agreement) shall have equal opportunity to participate in this funding opportunity.

2. Entities eligible to participate and eligibility for funding

Any legal entity, regardless of its place of establishment, including legal entities from non-associated third countries is **eligible to participate**, provided that the conditions laid down in the Horizon Europe Regulation have been met (e.g. the entity is not under EU sanction, please refer to annex 2 and 3), along with any other conditions laid down in the specific call/topic.

To ensure broad geographical reach and diversity of European countries, the evaluation will give preference to countries without an existing EIT Food HUB (see criteria Geographical Fit under section 4.1.).

For this call, a 'legal entity' means legal person created and recognised as such under national law, EU law or international law, which has legal personality and which may, acting in its own name, exercise rights and be subject to obligations, or an entity without legal personality.

In accordance with the Horizon Europe Work Programme 2025[1], in order to be **eligible for funding**, the **applicant must be established in one of the eligible countries**, i.e.:

- the Member States of the European Union, including their outermost regions;
- the Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) linked to the Member States[2];
- countries associated to Horizon Europe[3];
- certain low- and middle-income countries[4].
- Legal entities, which are established in countries not listed above will be eligible for funding if their participation is considered essential for implementing the action by the EIT.

Call-specific eligibility criteria: Each Implementing Participant must be a legally incorporated entity in one of the eligible countries for a minimum of 1 year; Each application must: select one specific Hub theme as outlined in the call documentation; adhere to the EIT FAN programme delivery structure; demonstrate both thematic relevance and delivery capacity, including alignment with the selected theme, access to relevant networks, and the ability to scout, onboard, and support high-potential agrifoodtech startups; and acknowledge that EIT Food is the owner of the EIT FAN programme brand and agree to adhere to EIT FAN branding and communication guidelines.

Only proposals satisfying all the eligibility criteria shall pass on to the selection and evaluation stages.

Mono-beneficiaries and consortia are eligible to apply.

- Single organizations (mono-beneficiaries) capable of delivering the programme are encouraged to apply.
- If applying as a consortium, organisations must be at least two independent legal entities. For operational efficiency and to ensure a better experience for participating startups, EIT Food recommends applications with no more than two consortium members preferably based in the same country. Members should also meet at least two sides of the EIT Knowledge Triangle Integration (business-research-academia).

3. Award criteria

3.1 Award criteria, subcriteria and maximum scores

The following criteria and weighting will be used in the assessment of both the written application and the interview.

Excellence (20%)	Maximum score
Expertise & Track Record Demonstrated experience in supporting agrifoodtech startups through acceleration, incubation, venture building, or ecosystem development.	1-5

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/wp-call/2025/wp-14-general-annexes_horizon-2025_en.pdf

[2] Entities from Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT) are eligible for funding under the same conditions as entities from the Member States to which the OCT in question is linked. See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the portal for a complete list of OCTs.

[3] Please see the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the Funding and Tenders Portal for up-to-date information on the current list of and the position for Associated Countries: https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/programme-guide_horizon_en.pdf

[4] See the Horizon Europe Programme Guide on the Funding and Tenders Portal for a complete list of these countries.

Thematic Relevance Relevance of the applicant's expertise, network, and previous activities to the selected Hub theme and the needs of participating startups.	1-5
Inclusion, Diversity & Gender Dimension Quality of the applicant's approach to gender balance, diversity and inclusion within programme design and expected startup impact.	1-5
Impact (20%)	**Maximum score**
Ecosystem Connectivity Strength and relevance of the applicant's network across startups, corporates, investors, research organisations, and other ecosystem stakeholders relevant to the Hub theme.	1-5
Startup Value Generation Ability to create tangible value for participating startups through access to pilots, customers, investors, strategic partnerships, or other growth opportunities. As well as evidence of previous startup outcomes (investment raised, pilots, partnerships, market access, sales growth).	1-5
Quality and efficiency of the implementation (25%)	**Maximum score**
Programme Design Quality, coherence, and relevance of the proposed startup support programme, including workshops, mentoring, networking activities, events, and the suitability of proposed experts, mentors, and speakers.	1-5
Team and Operational Capacity Experience, complementarity, and readiness of the proposed delivery team (including co-applicants, where applicable) to implement the programme, fulfil reporting requirements, and coordinate effectively with EIT Food.	1-5
Value for Money Appropriateness, efficiency, and justification of the proposed budget in relation to the proposed activities and expected outcomes, based on a programme supporting a minimum of 10 startups.	1-5

Strategic fit **KIC Portfolio strategic fit and compliance with the financial sustainability principles and knowledge triangle integration (35%)**	**Maximum score**
Financial Sustainability Model Extent to which the applicant demonstrates that the required co-financing and/or co-funding has already been secured, supported by credible evidence, together with a realistic financial sustainability model for future programme delivery.	1-5
Portfolio Strategic Alignment Alignment of the proposed Hub with the objectives of the EIT Food Entrepreneurship portfolio, including opportunities for collaboration across programmes, contribution to portfolio-level outcomes, and integration of education, business, and innovation where appropriate.	1-5
Geographical Fit	1-5

The proposal contributes to a balanced geographical distribution of EIT Food Hubs across Europe, particularly by strengthening regional agrifood innovation ecosystems in EIT Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) countries and in countries where no EIT Food Hub currently exists.	

Each evaluation criteria will be scored from 1 to 5 using the following scoring system.

1	Poor	The criterion is inadequately addressed, or there are serious inherent weaknesses
2	Fair	Application broadly addresses the criterion but there are significant weaknesses
3	Good	Application addresses the criterion well, but several shortcomings are present
4	Very good	Application addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present
5	Excellent	Application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor.

The quality threshold for selection is a total weighted score of 3.5. The highest-scoring application per Thematic Area will be selected.

6. Evaluation procedure

1. Admissibility and eligibility, exclusion and selection stages

This funding opportunity follows the timeline below:

Call Open Date	24 August 2026
Call Deadline	26 October 2026
Evaluation	27 October to 30 October, 2026
Invitation to interviews, panels	2 November, 2026
Interviews/Panels	9-13 November, 2026
Communication to selected participants	20 November, 2026
Standstill period, Onboarding, Validation and Contracting	1-31 December 2026
Indicative start of project implementation	January 2027

2. Evaluation of proposals

All submitted applications will undergo an eligibility check and evaluation to determine their feasibility and suitability for funding opportunity.

During the eligibility check, if EIT Food identifies obvious or technical errors in a proposal, applicant will have the opportunity to correct or resubmit their proposal within three (3) calendar days following the call submission deadline. Such errors may include system malfunctions, typos, or missing supporting documents.

The correction window is intended to ensure that these issues do not unduly affect the evaluation of otherwise eligible proposals. Please note that this opportunity is strictly limited to rectifying technical errors and does not permit substantive modifications to the proposal content.

The evaluation of the written application will be conducted by 3 external evaluators and 1 internal evaluator, based on the criteria specified in section 5.4.1 (Award criteria, subcriteria and maximum scores). External evaluators score the award criteria Excellence, Quality and Efficiency of Implementation and Impact. Internal evaluators only score Strategic Fit. The internal evaluator score does not outweigh the external assessment.

After the initial review, the top 3 highest scoring proposals per thematic area will be invited to interviews, which will be conducted by the same evaluators, and will be based on the same criteria specified in section 5.4.1. After the interview, evaluators have the opportunity to revisit their scores.

All external evaluators have been selected in an open and transparent process. All evaluators, both internal and external, are trained extensively on the European Union´s Code of Conduct for Evaluators, namely on the importance of transparency, fair treatment of all applicants, confidentiality and how to avoid conflict of interest. Evaluators must contractually agree to recuse themselves in the event of a conflict of interest. EIT Food aims for representation of either women or men not falling below 40% as a parity threshold within evaluation committees.

Expert evaluators are obliged to use the Horizon Dashboard during the assessment and to provide evidenced justification on the assessment of the proposal's budgets.

3. Communication of evaluation results to applicants

3.1. Communication of evaluation results

Following the award decision, all applicants shall be informed of the result in writing. All applicants shall receive their assessment, in the format of evaluation summary report, including their score.

In case an applicant requests further clarification regarding the evaluation result, it may contact the KIC by email. Such requests will be replied within 15 days (this deadline may be extended by the KIC with due justification).

Successful proposals will be invited to the financial support agreement preparation stage/onboarding, the other proposals will be put on the reserve list or rejected.

3.2. Requirements for selected proposals

If the proposal is selected, the communication on the evaluation results may include a set of recommendations/conditions as a result of the outcome of the evaluation. These requirements may not entail a substantial modification of the proposal.

If the applicant fails to comply with the provided recommendations/conditions or does not respond in the time allocated, the EIT Food reserves the right to withdraw the conditional notification. Should this occur, the next proposal will be contacted following the ranking list.

Entities that have never been part of projects funded by the EIT Food and that do not have a PIC validated by the Research Executive Agency (REA) of the European Commission will be subject to a PIC validation process.

As part of the onboarding process, selected entities must:

- Sign and submit the Declaration of Size.
- Sign and submit the Financial Information Form.
- Register on EIT Food grants management platform.
- Additionally, EIT Food reserves the right to request the EIT Community Onboarding Service a Financial Assessment Capacity to check the financial capacity of any entity of a selected proposal. In such case, EIT Food may require:
    - an enhanced financial responsibility regime, i.e. joint and several liability for all subgrantees or joint and several liabilities of Affiliated Entities if any
    - prefinancing paid in instalments (multiple/additional prefinancing)
    - (one or more) prefinancing guarantees

  or

    - propose no prefinancing or
    - request that the entity be replaced or, if needed, might reject the entire proposal

In other words, if the assessment results are not satisfactory, EIT Food might reject the participation of this entity and will then check whether the proposal is still eligible.

For further information on the implementation of the project, please read the EIT Food Activity Implementation Guidelines for Participants.

3.3. Standstill period

The standstill period is a set time after funding selection for appeals, final administrative checks, and compliance in the award process.

The project cannot start before this period. The standstill period of 30 days applies to this call.

3.4. Appeal process

Applicants can submit an appeal within 15 days of receiving their result, if the evaluation of their proposal has not been carried out in accordance with the procedures set out in this document.

For more details, please refer to EIT Food Redress guidance.

4. Support

If you have any questions about this call, please contact the call manager Alexandra Kyvik at alexandra.kyvik@eitfood.eu.

Please visit our website for any updates to this call and information about upcoming events to support your application. You will also find our list of Frequently Asked Questions.

7. EIT Food Legal Framework & Legal Documents to be signed

1. Contracting

Selected applicants will receive a second communication with instructions regarding the completion of the following documents, as well as agreeing to EIT Food´s conflict of interest policy:

To be signed between the participant and EIT Food:

1. Framework Agreement
2. Kava Contract

Annexes

1. Annex 1 - Information on the EIT

1. European Institute of Innovation and Technology

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is a **European Union body** with a legal personality and a wide legal capacity accorded to legal persons under national law. The EIT was created in 2008 by the European Union (EU) to enhance Europe's global competitiveness by fostering collaboration between businesses, research institutions, and higher education organizations.

The EIT is governed by Regulation (EU) 2021/695 (EIT Regulation), which aligns the EIT's mission with the EU's priorities and the objectives of Horizon Europe on evolving research, innovation, economic growth, job creation, global competitiveness, sustainable growth, higher education and entrepreneurship, by means of the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs), which address specific societal challenges and are established and supported by the EIT.

The EIT Strategic Innovation Agenda (SIA) 2021-2027 is aligned with Horizon Europe and lays down the priority fields and the strategy of the EIT for future initiatives, capacity to generate the best innovation added-value, objectives, key actions, mode of operation, expected results, impact, as well as an estimate of the resources needed for the duration of Horizon Europe.

Horizon Europe Regulation

The Horizon Europe Regulation (EU) 2021/695 foresees that the EIT takes part in the implementation of the Horizon Europe Programme in accordance with its strategic objectives for the period 2021 to 2027, as laid down in the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the EIT, and taking into account the strategic planning of Horizon Europe.

EIT and Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) relations

The EIT Regulation defines KICs as large-scale Institutionalised European Partnerships of higher education institutions, research organisations, companies and other stakeholders in the innovation process in the form of a strategic network, regardless of its legal form, based on joint mid- to long-term innovation planning to meet the EIT's challenges and contribute to attaining the objectives established.

According to the EIT Regulation, and without prejudice to the partnership agreements and grant agreements between the EIT and each KIC, the KICs have substantial autonomy to establish their internal organisation and composition, as well as their agenda and working methods, provided that they result in progress towards achieving the objectives of the EIT and the KICs, taking into account the strategic planning of Horizon Europe and the strategic direction of the EIT set out in the SIA and by the Governing Board.

2. Contractual framework between the EIT and the KICs

The long-term relations between the EIT and each KIC are based on a **seven-year Partnership Agreement** (PA)[5] laying down the general terms and conditions under which the KIC operates as an Institutionalised European Partnership. Subject to positive performance, interim review and outcome of comprehensive assessment of the KIC, the PA can be extended for another period of a maximum of seven years.

The EIT signed a framework partnership agreement with EIT Food on 1 March 2018, with retroactive effect as of 1 January 2018.

[5] Model Partnership Agreement: Partnership Agreement

The **Grant Agreement** (GA)[6] is the contractual instrument laying down the provisions concerning the implementation of the KIC activities (KIC Business Plan, Cross-KIC activities, etc.) through grants, on an annual or multi-annual basis of up to three years with the KICs. Business plans describe the main objectives and expected results and actions taken by the KICs.

The Grant Agreement 2026-2028 between the EIT and EIT Food entered into force on April 7th 2026, with effect from the action start date of 1 January 2026.

Contractual framework between the KIC and the subgrantees

In accordance with the Grant Agreement (Annex 5), the KIC launches calls (i.e. open calls or KIC partnership calls) in order to select projects or award prizes. The KIC awards a "financial support to third parties" (i.e. the so called "subgrants" and "prizes") for the implementation of these projects and signs **subgrant agreements** ("Financial Support Agreements") with the selected entities or consortia.

2. Annex 2 - EU restrictions on participation

1. EU restrictive measures

Entities subject to EU restrictive measures under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)[7] as well as Article 75 TFEU[8], are not eligible to participate in any capacity, including as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any).

Special rules also apply to entities covered by Commission Guidelines No 2013/C 205/0522[9].

2. Legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine

Given the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the involvement of Belarus, there is currently no appropriate context allowing the implementation of the actions foreseen in this programme with legal entities established in Russia, Belarus, or in non-government controlled territories of Ukraine. Therefore, even where such entities are not subject to EU restrictive measures, such legal entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity. This includes participation as beneficiaries, affiliated entities, associated partners, third parties giving in-kind contributions, subcontractors or recipients of financial support to third parties (if any). Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis for justified reasons.

With specific regard to measures addressed to Russia, following the adoption of the Council Regulation (EU) 2024/1745 of 24 June 2024[10] (amending Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014) concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine, legal entities established outside Russia but whose proprietary rights are directly or indirectly owned for more than 50% by a legal person, entity or body established in Russia are also not eligible to participate in any capacity.

[6] Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement: general-mga_horizon-euratom_en.pdf
[7] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map
[8] Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map
[9] Commission guidelines No 2013/C 205/05 on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11)
[10] OJ L 229, 31.7.2014, p. 1–11

3. Measures for the protection of the Union budget against breaches of the principles of the rule of law in Hungary

Following the Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2022/2506, as of 16 December 2022, no legal commitments can be entered into with Hungarian public interest trusts established under the Hungarian Act IX of 2021 or any entity they maintain. Affected entities may continue to apply to calls for proposals and can participate without receiving EU funding, as associated partners, if allowed by the call conditions. However, as long as the Council measures are not lifted, such entities are not eligible to participate in any funded role (beneficiaries, affiliated entities, subcontractors, recipients of financial support to third parties, etc.). In case of multi-beneficiary grant calls, applicants will be invited to remove or replace that entity in any funded role and/or to change its status into associated partner. Tasks and budget may be redistributed accordingly.

4. Restrictions for the protection of European communication networks

The protection of European communication networks has been identified as an important security interest of the Union and its Member States[11]. For further information, please refer to the Horizon Europe, Work Programme 2025, General Annexes, B – Eligibility on page 14[12].

3. Annex 3 - Exclusion criteria

Applicants will be excluded from participation in the Call and from the award if they are in one of the situations referred to in Article 138(1) of the EU Financial Regulation. Applicants that are subject to EU administrative sanctions (i.e. exclusion) or are in one of the following exclusion situations that bar them from receiving EU grants can NOT participate:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
- they are in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts);
- they are guilty of grave professional misconduct (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- they are guilty of fraud, corruption, having links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- they have shown significant deficiencies in complying with their main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant);
- they are guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No 2988/9534 (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant); or
- they have created under a different jurisdiction an entity with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the grant).

[11] European Council conclusions of 1 and 2 October 2020 (EUCO 13/20), point 11; Council Conclusions on the significance of 5G to the European Economy and the need to mitigate security risks linked to 5G, 14517/19.

[12]

- have misrepresented the information required as a condition for participating in the procedure or have failed to supply that information; or
- were previously involved in the preparation of documents used in the award procedure where this entails a breach of the principle of equality of treatment, including distortion of competition, that cannot be remedied otherwise.

As evidence, the applicants (i.e. the Coordinator and all the proposed partners participating in the applicant consortium) will have to submit a **declaration of honour on exclusion criteria and absence of conflict of interest**. Failure to provide adequate documentation may result in the exclusion of the applicants concerned.

Successful applicants will go through the legal entity validation process of the **Onboarding Service of the KICs (i.e. a shared service led by EIT Urban Mobility KIC)**. If not provided in the application, the Onboarding Service will request registration documents and a signed Declaration of honour from the successful applicant. The validation may also include a check of the successful applicants by the EIT in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) of the European Commission.

4. Annex 4 – Other terms and conditions

1. Acceptance of the call conditions

EIT Food reserves the right to make reasonable amendments and additions to the call conditions. Amendments and additions to the call conditions shall be valid only before the submission deadline, and if made available to all potential applicants at the same time on the call page of the EIT Food Calls webpage.

EIT Food may declare the call unsuccessful in case no applications are received, if the applications do not meet the admissibility, eligibility, exclusion and selection criteria, or if none of the applications reach the thresholds laid down in this call text.

By submitting the application form, the applicant agrees to the present call conditions. Applicants agree that they have no legal entitlement to funding.

2. Cancellation of the call

EIT Food reserves the right to cancel the call at any time before the signature of the Financial Support Agreement(s) without the obligation to compensate applicants, in particular where its objectives can no longer be met, provided that the applicants are informed in a transparent manner in writing as follows:

- if the cancellation takes place before that award: on the call page of the EIT Food Calls webpage,
- if the cancellation takes place following the communication of the results to the applicants, during the standstill period, or anytime before the signature of the Financial Support Agreement: in writing directly to the selected applicants.

3. Data protection

EIT Food ensures that any processing of personal data shall be performed in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016, on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and in accordance with Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation). As a data subject, you have the right of access, the right to rectification, the right to erasure, the right to restrict processing, the right to data portability, the right to object, and the right not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated processing.

The collected personal data will be used solely for the evaluation of the applications and the conduct of the call process.

Personal data will be deleted 5 years after the announcement of the results of the call in case of unsuccessful applications and 7 years for successful applicants.

By submitting your application to this call, you consent that EIT Food will collect, transfer, process, store, and delete your data in accordance with the aforementioned conditions.

1. Confidentiality

EIT Food undertakes to use any confidential information shared by the applicants solely for the purposes of the evaluation process.

Confidential information shall mean data and/or information (in any form) that is proprietary to, or possessed by, the applicants and not generally known to the public, or that has not yet been revealed whether in tangible or intangible form, that is identified as confidential in writing or when disclosed orally.

Confidential information included in the application form must be expressly labelled by the applicant as such in the form. As regards confidential information expressly labelled as such in the call process, EIT Food undertakes to (i) not disclose them in any way and any form, without the prior written authorization of the applicant; and (ii) not to use them for purposes other than those strictly necessary for participation in the call.

Confidential information may be shared among EIT Food and its subsidiaries (e.g. KIC Co-Location Centres) solely for the purposes of the call process. EIT Food undertakes to impose this confidentiality obligation on its employees and the employees of its subsidiaries and its collaborators, as well as on independent experts and all subjects who, by virtue of participating in the conduct of the call, including as members of the Evaluation Committee, may have access to such confidential data and information.

The applicants agree that data and information regarding the selected projects' implementation (e.g. success stories) not labelled as confidential may be disclosed in connection with the activities of EIT Food.

4. Avoidance of conflict of interest

EIT Food is committed to ensure the avoidance of conflict of interest (regarding all actors) and comply with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination and sound financial management.

Measures to avoid potential Conflict of Interest or unequal treatment of applicants are ensured including through appropriate conflict of interest declaration and assessment process, established written communication channels and independent and fair complaints/redress procedures.

In case an applicant becomes aware of a potential conflict of interest affecting the conduct of the call process, it shall notify the EIT Food of the conflict of interest without any delay.

5. Ethics and values

The proposal must comply with:

- ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and
- applicable EU, international and national law, including the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Supplementary Protocols.

No financial support/EIT funding can be granted, within or outside the EU, for activities that are prohibited in all Member States. No financial support/EIT funding can be granted in a Member State for an activity which is forbidden in that Member State.

Please refer to the financial support agreement for further requirements.

6. Intellectual property rights

Applicants retain full and exclusive ownership of their prior information and intellectual property rights. By submitting their application, applicants affirm that they hold ownership or have legally secured the right to use all elements of the innovative product or service included in their application.

Applicants agree to indemnify and hold harmless EIT Food and/or any assignee or affiliate from any third-party allegations or claims of intellectual property rights infringement by the product or service of applicants. Applicants shall have the right to further develop, use and license their intellectual property rights for creating, making, marketing, and distributing products, services, and technology. Applicants agree to respect the IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) Rules (Article 16) of the General Model Grant Agreement and Article 10 of the Financial Support Agreement (Common Subgrant Agreement Model).

7. Withdrawal of the funding – Recovery of undue amounts

EIT Food may withdraw the funding after its award and recover all payments made in line with the provisions of the Financial Support Agreement, including in the following cases:

- in case the applicant committed substantial errors, irregularities or fraud;
- in case the applicant committed serious breach of obligations under the Financial Support Agreement or during its award (including non-compliance with the call conditions, submission of false information, failure to provide required information, etc.)
- it is established that the awarded applicants were not eligible or should have been excluded.

8. Checks, reviews, audits and investigations

EIT Food retains the right to initiate checks, reviews and audit on an applicant that has been awarded funding, in order to verify compliance with the requirements of the call conditions and of the legal and contractual framework referred to above.

EIT Food may request any information and data from applicants that have been awarded funding for 5 years after completion for these purposes, as well as in relation to monitoring by the EIT.

In accordance with the Grant Agreement between the EIT and the KIC as well as the Financial Support Agreement, the EIT and/or the Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) and the Court of Auditors may carry out checks, reviews, audits and investigations in relation to the call and the implementation of the projects.

9. Applicable law

The present call is governed by the applicable European Union legal framework(i.e. in particular the EIT Regulation[13], the EU Financial Regulation[14], the Horizon Europe Regulation[15]), supplemented if necessary by the national law of Belgium.

The applicants agree to observe the obligations outlined in the Partnership Agreement and the Grant Agreement signed between the EIT and EIT Food. Applicants agree to comply with the terms of the Model Financial Support Agreement between successful applicants and EIT Food, available here.

10. Settlement of disputes

All disputes arising out of or in connection with this Agreement, which cannot be solved amicably, shall be finally settled before the courts of Brussels.

[13] Regulation (EU) 2021/819
[14] Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509
[15] Regulation (EU) 2021/695

5. Annex 5 – Framework for Corporate Financial Contributions Facilitated by EIT FAN Implementing Partners

1. Purpose

This Annex establishes the framework under which an EIT Food Accelerator Network (EIT FAN) implementing partner may facilitate financial contributions from corporate partners that are recognised as co-financing for the implementation of the respective EIT FAN Hub.

The framework aims to enable implementing partners to leverage their local corporate networks while ensuring that all corporate engagement is coordinated, transparent, and aligned with EIT Food's commercial strategy and programme governance.

2. Guiding Principles

Corporate engagement under this framework shall be governed by the following principles:

Fair Access: All corporate engagement with EIT Food startup activities shall take place through the Entrepreneurship Pass or other EIT Food-approved corporate engagement mechanisms.

Complementary Funding: Corporate financial contributions are intended to complement, and not replace, existing programme funding.

Transparency: Corporate contributions, engagement mechanisms, and respective roles and responsibilities shall be clearly documented. EIT Food will inform implementing partners of any updates to approved corporate offerings, engagement mechanisms, and relevant corporate leads.

Programme Integrity: Startup selection, programme design, and delivery shall remain independent, merit-based, and free from undue corporate influence.

Approved Engagement Mechanisms: Implementing partners may only offer or promote corporate engagement opportunities that have been approved by EIT Food.

3. Corporate Engagement Process

Corporate engagement shall follow the process outlined below.

1. Lead Generation: Implementing partners may identify and introduce potential corporate partners through their regional and sector networks, particularly organisations with a strategic fit for the respective EIT FAN Hub or broader EIT Food entrepreneurship activities.

2. Qualification: EIT Food shall assess each corporate opportunity to determine its strategic relevance, eligibility, and alignment with EIT Food's commercial priorities and approved engagement mechanisms.

3. Joint Outreach: Corporate outreach may be undertaken jointly, with EIT Food leading the commercial positioning and value proposition, while implementing partners provide local market knowledge, existing relationships, and contextual support where appropriate.

4. Proposal Development: Any commercial proposal, including the applicable financial contribution and engagement model, shall be prepared or formally validated by EIT Food to ensure consistency in pricing, contractual terms, and programme offering.

5. Negotiation and Agreement: Commercial negotiations shall be led by EIT Food. Any agreement with a corporate partner shall require formal approval by EIT Food prior to execution.

6. Delivery and Relationship Management: Following execution of the agreement, implementing partners may support programme delivery and corporate engagement activities where appropriate. EIT Food shall retain overall responsibility for corporate relationship management, contractual oversight, and reporting.

4. Recognition of Corporate Contributions as Co-financing

Where an implementing partner introduces a corporate organisation that subsequently enters into a commercial agreement with EIT Food, the financial contribution generated through that agreement may be recognised as part of the implementing partner's financial co-financing contribution towards the respective EIT FAN Hub.

The amount recognised shall not exceed 50% of the total eligible programme cost, in accordance with the applicable EIT Food funding rules.

Where a corporate partner renews or extends its engagement in subsequent programme years, the corresponding financial contribution may continue to be recognised as co-financing for the respective EIT FAN Hub, subject to the applicable funding rules and the continuation of the commercial agreement.

History of Changes

Version	Publication Date	Changes
Version 1.0	24.08.2026	Original Version
Version 2.0	02.09.2026	Amended webinar date
Version 3.0	04.09-2026	Corrected co-funding requirements
Version 4.0	16.09.2026	Changed Strategic Fit Score