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Request for proposals

Seedbed TeamUp 2026-28

EIT Food – Making Food Innovation Happen

Knowledge & Innovation Centre on Food, part of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)

V1.0 – 10th March 2026

<http://www.eitfood.eu>

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2. Overview of EIT Food

EIT Food is Europe's leading food innovation initiative, working to make the food system more sustainable, healthy and trusted.

The initiative is made up of a consortium of key industry players, startups, research centres and universities from across Europe. It is one of nine Innovation Communities established by the European Institute for Innovation & Technology (EIT), an independent EU body set up in 2008 to drive innovation and entrepreneurship across Europe.

EIT Food aims to collaborate closely with consumers to develop new knowledge and technology-based products and services that will ultimately deliver a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle for all European citizens.

For more information about our company please visit the following website: www.eitfood.eu

3. Scope of work

3.1. Background

In 2021, EIT Food launched TeamUp, a new programme to support strong team formation in innovative agrifood startups in the countries included in [EIT's Regional Innovation Scheme](#). The Programme is designed for:

- Tech founders – people with innovative agrifood technologies/solutions who struggle to commercialise them and lack business expertise
- Business professionals – people with business skills, entrepreneurial experience and impact ambition to build a successful agrifood startup

At the core of TeamUp is co-founder matchmaking: helping tech talent connect to commercial talent to create solid, resilient teams with complementary skills but shared values and ambition. Once a match is formed, it is up to participants to define the roles each will play – co-founder, business developer, CTO, CEO, marketing manager, etc. We provide support along the way through deep coaching and connections, education and practical content, plus, for the best teams, the award of monthly stipends during later stages of the programme and prizes to the best projects at the end to help them take the next step towards success.

TeamUp began as part of the EIT Regional Innovation Scheme, but it now forms a part of Seedbed, our main initiative for early-stage food & agriculture startups. This change reflects our strategy of encouraging business creation across Europe at the ecosystem level by addressing the capability and support gaps that limit opportunities in certain areas or for certain groups.

By 2028 TeamUp will have supported around 50 new teams, each with the potential to transform our food system. These startups will be based on patentable or protectable technology, science or defensible innovations in any area relevant to the global food and agriculture system. (The sourcing and protection of any intellectual property or technology will be the responsibility of the startup).

The Programme aims to help ambitious co-founders in food & agriculture to meet, connect and bring great agrifood technologies and innovations to the market. The ventures the Programme supports should create measurable impact across our core Missions and Themes.

3.2. Programme structure & content

The Programme consists of three stages:

3.2.1. Stage 1: Matchmaking

The tech founders and business professionals meet each other and explore their potential cooperation. TeamUp facilitates the matchmaking process through an online platform to help participants find a co-founder or a team member who shares their vision and values. The participants who successfully team up and present an interesting and potentially viable project proposal are invited to the Exploration phase. Up to 15 teams are selected by EIT Food for the next stage.

3.2.2. Stage 2: Exploration

The newly-formed teams begin a 3-month Exploration phase during which they are expected to create, test and validate the value proposition, business model and go-to-market strategy of their agrifood solution. The teams also continue exploring and developing the relationship between the co-founders/team members.

In this phase, TeamUp provides teams with entrepreneurship training, a platform to plan and manage customer discovery and validation interviews, and business and team-building coaching. They also receive financial support (a €2,000 monthly stipend per team) for these three months.

The teams must submit an assignment and achieve a minimum level of validation outreach in order to receive their stipend.

3.2.3. Stage 3: Graduation

At the end of the Programme, all teams present their learnings and pitch their plans for growth to the expert panel. The panel will choose the most promising teams to receive funding from EIT Food. Grants range from €10,000 to €40,000 and are delivered under a SAFE scheme.

All the training delivered in the three Programme stages must be aligned to the competency framework of EIT Food described at <https://learning.eitfood.eu/>. This will be done to receive the internal qualification of a “labelled education programme”. The candidate experience in high education initiatives will be relevant.

The ultimate objective measured by Key Performance Indicators is Start-ups created of/for innovation who achieve minimum private investment or revenue goals. This is the number of start-ups established in a specific year as a result based on the output(s) of Innovation/ Research related KAVA(s), or start-ups created for the purpose of an innovation project to organise and support the development of an asset (but not later than three years after completion of the KAVA).

TeamUp also expects the following outcomes:

- Newly created teams were able to identify market opportunities and create an early-stage startup roadmap by analysing market insights and doing proper customer discovery research. This will be delivered by:
 - Weekly training sessions on specific topics: Target Groups, Business model validation, Negotiation Skills, Customer Discovery, Finding the right market niche, Analysing market based on primary research, Startup Creation.
 - Individual Coaching sessions: each team will have 5 individual sessions of business coaching with a selected expert in early-stage startup creation

- Newly-created teams were able to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of their startup team and create a balanced team based on that. This is delivered by:
 - Sessions of Team Building, negotiation skills.
 - Individual Coaching sessions: each team will have 5 individual sessions of team coaching with a selected expert in the early-stage startup team creation.
- Newly created teams were able to create a professional pitch deck covering the key aspects of operating a startup.

Please find more about the described activity on the official webpage of the programme: <https://www.eitfood.eu/projects/teamup>. You can also find additional updates about the programme at the LinkedIn page: <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/venture-building/>

3.3. Tasks, Activities & Deliverables

- Programme planning – helping with the 2025 TeamUp retrospective programme analysis and 2026-2028 Programme planning; analysis of the 2025 results and feedback of the 2025 TeamUp edition.
- Scouting for Technologies and Technical & Commercial Co-founders
 - Scouting across Europe for technologies, (including deep tech solutions) that have the potential to transform the agrifood system in line with the Missions and Themes of EIT Food
 - Connecting with RTOs, TTOs, universities, engineering schools and other engines for the creation of innovation in Food & Agriculture
 - Strategic input to a communications campaign and dissemination in Southern and Central & Eastern European regions to encourage technologists to apply
 - Seeking out experienced entrepreneurs with a passion for working in the agrifood system and finding their next project
- Selection - Select which entrepreneurs and technologists are accepted into the Programme; designing and implementing a rigorous methodology for selecting the participants on the Programme
- Matchmaking - with a pool of at least 40 tech founders and 40 business professionals, we want to create c. 15 solid matches/teams to continue in the later phases; designing and implementing an exceptional strategy to match tech founders with business professionals with alignment in values, interests, business skills etc.; designing and scheduling workshops for teams
- Exploration - Supporting newly formed teams with Business Coaches and Team Building Coaches during the 3 month phase; designing and implementing a series of training sessions and coaching opportunities for the newly formed teams to explore and validate the business' potential and their team dynamics; supporting and advising teams on outreach to set up and run interviews with chosen customer segments, onboarding teams to a suitable online platform to plan, document and analyse interviews (the platform will be chosen and paid by EIT Food), designing and implementing activities that builds a 'cohort' of newly formed teams, so they are working together and learning from one another; designing and scheduling workshops for teams
- Graduation - Organising the pitching competition and support the jury panel to decide who will receive the funds; designing and implementing a methodology that shows the likelihood of a team's success.
- Follow on - Designing and delivering an ongoing alumnus offer that continues to support the ventures and maintains the group, supporting EIT Food Alumni activities; Following the selection of which teams will officially launch, providing ongoing support to those teams to ensure they continue to develop and apply to other EIT Food programmes
- Continuous activities - Maintain a proper activity in social media of the Programme; Designing content and maintaining the communication with the community with communication plan

3.4. Organisation of Work

The selected provider will be expected to work with a high degree of autonomy. EIT Food Seedbed team will be involved in key stages and checkpoints, but all day-to-day management of the processes, timelines and interactions with the participants and any subcontractors will be the responsibility of the provider.

3.4.1. Programme Content

The creation of content for activities and workshops and training sessions will be the responsibility of the Provider, with oversight and approval from EIT Food Seedbed. The Provider will be responsible for providing any internal or external moderators, facilitators, speakers and trainers for all sessions.

The Provider will be responsible for choosing and managing a suitable platform for the Matchmaking process and subsequent communication between teams. The Provider will also be responsible for the online tools used for webinars, training sessions etc.

EIT Food Seedbed will select and pay for an online platform to help teams plan, conduct and analyse online interviews for the Customer Discovery and Validation activities they will carry out during the Exploration phase.

3.4.2. Coaching

During the Exploration phase, teams will receive 5 sessions of coaching from a Business Coach and 5 sessions from a Team Building & Team Dynamics Coach. These coaches may be recruited by EIT Food or by the Provider.

In previous editions, the management of the coaching sessions (scheduling, data collection and sharing, time tracking etc) has been the responsibility of the Provider, whilst the payment of fees to coaches was handled by EIT Food.

As part of this RFP process we are considering handing over the payment of fees also to the Provider to make the process simpler and quicker for the coaches, EIT Food and the Provider.

Please include this option in your submission. To properly evaluate this we ask to see these coaching fees and any processing or handling costs shown as a separate, optional item in the Costs section of the Proposal submitted.

3.4.3. Programme management

EIT Food Seedbed will oversee the programme and collaborate with the Provider for planning activities and ensuring that the programme remains on-track but the Provider is responsible for running the programme day-to-day and for ensuring a consistently high level of quality throughout.

Additional value activities: the Provider may propose additional processes, tools and ideas that could ensure the programme can be delivered with greater efficiency and reduced administrative overhead. These activities should be considered as “optional extras” in addition to all core programme delivery activities. In the proposal they should be clearly marked as optional and clearly costed as line items.

3.5. Planning & Timing

Time is tight for the start of this programme and the Provider should propose a plan to get up and running as fast as possible. Ideally we would like to see work on TeamUp starting in April 2026. The expected date for final selection of winning TeamUp projects from the first cohort would be the first two weeks of January 2027.

4. Proposal Process

4.1. Participation

Participation in this proposal procedure is open to all tenderers.

4.2. Submission of proposal

	Date
RFP Published on EIT Food Website	11 th March 2026
Deadline for requesting clarification from EIT Food	18 th March 2026 at 13:00
Deadline for submitting proposals	26 th March 2026 at 13:00
Intended date of notification of award	31 st March 2026
Intended date of contract signature	5 th April 2026

Proposals must be emailed in English:

Contact name: for the attention of Ian Collingwood

E-mail: ian.collingwood@eitfood.eu

The proposal shall contain:

- the technical response to the service requested (point 3)
- the financial offer (the price for the services.) The Financial offer shall be expressed in Euros, VAT shall be indicated separately.

Responses should be concise and clear. The tenderer's proposal will be incorporated into any contract that results from this procedure. Tenderers are, therefore, cautioned not to make claims or statements that they are not prepared to commit to contractually. Subsequent modifications and counter-proposals, if applicable, shall also become an integral part of any resulting contract.

The tenderer confirms that the individual submitting the natural or legal entity's proposal is duly authorized to bind its entity to the proposal as submitted. The tenderer also confirms that it has read the instructions to tenderers and has the experience, skills and resources to perform, according to conditions set forth in this proposal and the tenderers' proposal.

4.3. Validity of the proposals

Tenderers are bound by their proposals for 90 days after the deadline for submitting proposals or until they have been notified of non-award.

The selected winner must maintain its proposal for a further 60 days to close the contract.

Proposals not following the instructions of this Request for Proposal can be rejected by EIT Food.

4.4. Requests for additional information or clarification

In case the tenderers require additional information or clarifications, these should be addressed to the person indicated below. All communication between EIT Food and tenderers is only possible in writing, all requests will be done and answered by e-mail only. All questions should be sent prior to deadline for requesting clarification as specified in Section 4.2. In case of complex or high value procurements, EIT Food may arrange a clarification session of which it will inform all tenderers.

Contact name: for the attention of Ian Collingwood

E-mail: ian.collingwood@eitfood.eu

EIT Food has no obligation to provide clarification.

4.5. Costs for preparing proposals

No costs incurred by the tenderer in preparing and submitting the proposal are reimbursable. All such costs must be borne by the tenderer.

4.6. Clarification related to the submitted proposals

After submission of the proposals, they shall be checked if they satisfy all the formal requirements set out in the proposal dossier. Where information or documentation submitted by the tenderers are or appears to be incomplete or erroneous or where specific documents are missing, EIT Food may request the tenderer concerned to submit, supplement, clarify or complete the relevant information or documentation within an appropriate time limit. All communication between EIT Food and tenderers is only possible in writing, all requests will be done and answered by e-mail only.

4.7. Negotiation about the submitted proposal

After checking the administrative compliance of the tenderers, EIT Food reserves the right to negotiate the contract terms with the tenderers. In this negotiation EIT Food may ask all tenderers to adjust the proposal or specific sections of the proposal within an appropriate time limit. In case of negotiation, EIT Food shall provide further information about the proceedings and timing.

4.8. Evaluation of proposals

The quality of each proposal will be evaluated in accordance with the below mentioned award criteria. The award criteria will be examined in accordance with the requested service indicated in Section 3 of the document.

Award criteria

1. Provider organisation's experience of projects with comparable budget/level of effort, number of stakeholders/participants, multi-country delivery and similar programme delivery format. Equivalent experience will be accepted. (Maximum: 15 points)
2. Individual team members competences and experience of projects with similar size, scope and focus. References/case studies; named roles and availability dates for team members should be provided (maximum: 20 points)
3. Provider's ability to work autonomously in planning, delivery and reporting (maximum: 20 points)
4. Ability to deploy the necessary resources and experienced team needed to deliver this project (maximum: 15 points)

Total technical score: 70 points maximum

5. Price or total cost: lowest offered total price shall receive the highest score; the score for other offers shall be calculated in relation to that in linear equation (maximum: 30 points)

Total financial score: 30 points maximum

Total maximum score: 100 points

The results of the award procedure will be communicated in writing (via e-mail) to the successful and unsuccessful tenderers.

4.9. Appeals/complaints

Tenderers believing that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may file a complaint. Appeals should be addressed to EIT Food. The tenderers have 5 calendar days to file their complaints from the dispatch of the award notification e-mail

4.10. Signature of contract

Please refer to Annex 1 for the template contract that shall apply to this procedure. Any changes desired by the tenderer in the provisions contained in the body of this Service Agreement must be communicated to EIT Food as part of the proposal of such tenderer. Any such changes will be considered as part of the evaluation of the proposal of each tenderer

Within 5 days receipt of the contract from EIT Food, the winning tenderer shall sign and date the contract and return it to EIT Food. Upon receipt, EIT Food shall countersign and return one signed copy of the contract to the winning tenderer.

4.11. Cancellation of the proposal procedure

In the event of cancellation of the procurement procedure, EIT Food will notify tenderers of the cancellation. In no event shall EIT Food be liable for any damages whatsoever including, without limitation, damages for loss of profits, in any way connected with the cancellation of a proposal procedure, even if EIT Food has been advised of the possibility of damages.

4.12. Ethics clauses / Corruptive practices

EIT Food reserves the right to suspend or cancel the procedure, where the award procedure proves to have been subject to substantial errors, irregularities or fraud. If substantial errors, irregularities or fraud are discovered after the award of the Contract, EIT Food may refrain from concluding the Contract.

The supplier shall take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the contract is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests'). The supplier should immediately inform EIT Food if there is any change in the above circumstances at any stage during the implementation of the tasks.

4.13. Annexes

Annex 1: Contract Template. The Contract Template is provided for information purposes only and might be subject to considerable modifications.

Annex II: Declaration of Honour