

Request for Proposal (RfP)

AGORA

June 2025

Deadline for offer submission: 11 July 2025

1. Context

EIT Manufacturing is one of the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KIC) focused on promoting entrepreneurship, innovation, and education in the domain of manufacturing. EIT Manufacturing brings together leading organisations along the entire value chain from smaller companies to larger industry, excellent academic and research institutions, as well as public sector organisations, to promote the transformation of manufacturing towards a sustainable, people-centric, resilient European industry, by removing barriers to innovation, promoting talent and education, leveraging enabling technologies and exploiting big data.

EIT Manufacturing is an association under the law 1901 created in 2019. Along with the EIT Manufacturing there are eight other Knowledge Innovation Communities (“KICs”) with the aim to lead the action and create services across Europe, improving the competitiveness of European companies.

With this Request for Proposal (RfP) EIT Manufacturing (EITM) is seeking proposals from technical suppliers to provide a white label Software-as-a-Service to run EIT Manufacturing’s social network and open innovation platform AGORA (<https://agora-eitmanufacturing.eu>). Specifically, the supplier will provide cloud-based hosting, platform maintenance, updates and improvements as well as support, ongoing and if required, for setup and migration of existing content and data.

Launched in 2021, AGORA aims to bring the pan-European manufacturing industry together online and foster relevant business connections through expert-led and community events, sharing of insights and collaboration in thematic communities, and tailored matchmaking based on sector, technology and other manufacturing interests. The community has currently over 3,500 individual members from over 1,800 different organisations. Four global administrators from EIT Manufacturing manage the platform,



alongside c. 50 group administrators across as many active groups that are either public or private, visible or hidden.

Following lessons from four years of operation, AGORA aims to refocus on its core value proposition of enabling and facilitating online networking and matchmaking in the manufacturing industry, both autonomously among members and curated by administrators, e.g. through specific events or time-bound connection, consultation and ideation activities. Suppliers are therefore required to demonstrate, in particular, how members can easily find and connect with each other, and how administrators can facilitate activities and measure KPIs related to this aim.

2. Work Scope & Deliverables

EIT Manufacturing is seeking a technical supplier for its social network and open innovation platform AGORA. The selected supplier will be responsible for the following key areas:

1. Platform management, maintenance and technical developments:

- a. Provide a white-label platform tailored to AGORA's branding and requirements (see Annex 2), supporting setup and migration of existing content and data if required
- b. Manage the software, ensuring AGORA is operational and accessible at all times
- c. Perform regular maintenance and updates to keep platform secure and up-to-date
- d. Apply technical enhancements of platform to continuously improve user experience and functionality on AGORA
- e. Collaborate with AGORA team to identify and implement custom solutions/integrations
- f. Monitor platform performance and address any issues promptly

2. Security and compliance:

- a. Implement robust security measures, aligned with industry best practice and evidenced by certifications (e.g., ANSSI in France), to protect user data and platform integrity
- b. Conduct regular security audits and vulnerability assessments
- c. Ensure compliance with GDPR and all relevant data protection and accessibility regulations

3. Cloud and domain hosting:

- a. Facilitate reliable and secure cloud hosting services for the AGORA platform, ensuring data is ideally stored exclusively in Europe
- b. Maintain the <https://agora-eitmanufacturing.eu> domain and renewal processes on EIT Manufacturing's behalf

4. Administrator support and training:

- a. Provide training materials and sessions for AGORA administrators at setup if required
- b. Provide ongoing technical support to AGORA global administrators at minimum, but ideally also group administrators and users, including troubleshooting and issue resolution



Please see Annex 2 on technical requirements for detailed information on must-have and nice-to-have user, administrator and security features of the platform.

Deliverables

1. **Initial setup and migration (if required):**
 - a. Initial setup and configuration of the platform, in line with requirements in Annex 2
 - b. Successful migration of the existing AGORA platform to the supplier's infrastructure within max. 2-3 months, without service interruption
 - c. Training materials and session schedules for AGORA administrators (and users, if applicable) at setup
2. **Regular maintenance, security and updates:**
 - a. Regular communication detailing updates, fixes, and performance improvements
 - b. Regular/on-demand security, compliance and audit reports outlining any identified vulnerabilities and actions taken
 - c. Immediate notification and resolution of any security incidents
3. **Custom technical developments:**
 - a. Detailed project plans for specific custom developments, including timelines
 - b. Functional and tested features deployed to the production environment
4. **Cloud and domain hosting:**
 - a. Management of cloud hosting and domain renewal, ensuring all data stored and processed within GDPR rules, ideally based in Europe only
5. **Support and training:**
 - a. Training/help materials for ongoing use by AGORA administrators (and users, if applicable)
 - b. Dedicated supplier contact and regular check-ins with AGORA team, as agreed between EITM and supplier

3. Budget

The budget for this project is a maximum of **EUR 250,000**. The supply contract will be signed for an initial period of one (1) year, with automatic renewal for equal one-year periods to ensure continuity of the project, which is intended to be developed over a **three to four year period**.

To help suppliers to provide a budget breakdown, please note the following assumptions:

1. 2026: 4000 members, 4 global administrators, 40 groups
2. 2027: 5000 members, 4 global administrators, 50 groups
3. 2028: 6000 members, 4 global administrators, 60 groups

Please note: EIT Manufacturing is not obligated to procure services up to the maximum specified amount.



4. Timeline

The deadline to submit the offer is **11 July 2025**. The **indicative** timeline for the Request for Proposals is as follows:

Activity	Responsible	Date
RFP Opening	EIT Manufacturing	10 June 2025
Submission of Proposals	Suppliers	11 July 2025
Evaluation and notification of award	EIT Manufacturing	25 July 2025
End of the Standstill	EIT Manufacturing	4 August 2025
Estimate Date for Contract Signature	EIT Manufacturing/Suppliers	December 2025

5. Proposal Requirements

Interested organisations are invited to submit a detailed proposal consisting of the following:

1. **Proposal document** outlining how you intend to approach this platform project and can meet our needs based on scope, deliverables and technical requirements outlined in Annex 2, including:
 - a. Plan and timeline for initial setup and migration, if required, including info/materials required from EITM
 - b. Key features of the platform and descriptions/illustrations of user journeys for onboarding, matchmaking and event organisation/participation in particular
 - c. Scalability and approach to continuous and custom technical developments
 - d. Analytics and types of KPIs supported
 - e. Data security, vulnerability management and performance practices
 - f. Training, support and possible advisory services provided
 - g. Detailed costs (one-off and recurring) for a three-year period and pricing model
 - h. Team and references, incl. successful examples of platform use for similar use cases
2. **Tenderer's declaration of honour** – see Annex 1, which needs to be completed.
3. **Technical requirements** – see Annex 2 for detailed list of must-have and nice-to-have user, administrator, data and security requirements. Suppliers must at minimum fill in column F to confirm whether the requirement is available or not, and can add further details in columns G and H as needed.



6. Proposal Submission Procedure

All offers shall be submitted within the above-mentioned deadline to the following link: <https://eit-manufacturing.prioritize.linksquares.com/new-task?token=eqfghK7TdycO3ZdVaPfVqgS5gx2LiEf2ImaueYxnGfUzCJhpKHMNjUwW1oN-KF7i>

To start your application, please follow the outlined “step-by-step”:

1. Click on the link above and then click on “Procurement - Make a request for the Legal Team related to Procurement Procedures”.
2. Fill out the Task Name with this description: “RfP - **AGORA**”.
3. Fill out the Requestor Name with your name.
4. Fill out the Requestor E-mail with your e-mail address.
5. Leave the following fields blank since they are not mandatory: Task type, Deadline and Priority.
6. Fill in the field “Describe Task” with the message you wish to convey to our team and/or any details and comments you have regarding your proposal. If you have none, simply write the name of the RfP: “RfP - **AGORA**”.
7. Click on attachments and upload your Commercial Proposal as an attachment.
8. After completing the above-mentioned information, click on “Submit Task” to finalise your application. Please note that you will not receive any confirmation in your e-mail. However, you should ensure that this message appears to you on the screen after submitting your proposal: “Task created successfully”.
9. If you have any questions, please contact us at the following email address:
procurement@eitmanufacturing.eu

Please note: All tenderers are requested to include the following with their submission - a detailed price list for individual tasks, an estimate of the typical working time required for each task, and references from previous engagements in similar projects.

Disclaimer of Liability for Technical Failures:

EIT Manufacturing shall not be held liable for any technical failures, interruptions, or glitches occurring in its digital tool designated for receiving proposals in the Request for Proposals (RfP) as mentioned in the link above, irrespective of the underlying reasons. EIT Manufacturing assumes no responsibility for any loss or damage resulting from such technical issues.

Verification of Proposal Receipt:

In case of any doubt or uncertainty regarding the submission status, the supplier is obligated to take appropriate measures to confirm the receipt of their proposal, utilizing the communication channels and tools made available by EIT Manufacturing for such verification. It is the sole responsibility of the supplier to verify the successful submission and receipt of their proposal through the available means provided by



EIT Manufacturing. By participating in the proposal submission process, the supplier acknowledges and accepts that EIT Manufacturing disclaims any liability related to technical failures affecting the digital tool and that the supplier is accountable for ensuring the successful transmission and receipt of their proposal.

4. Evaluation of Proposals

Timely received proposals submitted by the tenderers will be examined, evaluated, and compared in accordance with the following criteria and the contract shall be awarded to the highest ranked tenderer. The decision will be made according to the “Best Value for Money” principle. The award criteria will be the following:

- **Technical requirements completeness and relevance (40% of decision weight)**
 - User functionalities
 - Administrator functionalities
 - Data, security and performance
- **Cost-effectiveness (40% of decision weight)**
 - Overall cost proposal for three-year period
 - Pricing model
- **Overall project plan, support and references (20% of decision weight)**
 - Presentation of supplier, fit-for-purpose solution and support
 - Relevance and strength of references

An Evaluation Committee of at least 3 (three) people will be established and supervised by EIT Manufacturing. Each bid will be evaluated and ranked according to the criteria above.

The compliance with the principles of transparency, non-discrimination, equal treatment, and absence of conflict of interest will be ensured.

The successful and unsuccessful tenderers will be informed in writing (via email) about the result of the award procedure. In case the winning tenderer is unable to enter into the contract, EIT Manufacturing may decide to contract the supplier receiving the second highest ranking.

Upon request from the tenderer concerned, EIT Manufacturing will as quickly as possible, and in any event within 15 calendar days from receipt of a written request, inform:

- any unsuccessful candidate of the reasons for the rejection of its request to participate,
- any unsuccessful tenderer of the reasons for the rejection of its tender, including, if this is the case, its decision that the works, supplies or services do not meet the performance or functional requirements,



- any tenderer that has made an admissible tender of the characteristics and relative advantages of the tender selected as well as the name of the successful tenderer or the parties to the awarded contract,
- any tenderer that has made an admissible tender of the conduct and progress of negotiations and dialogue with tenderers.

The information referred to above may be withheld where the release of such information would be contrary to the public interest, would prejudice the legitimate commercial interests of an economic operator, or might prejudice fair competition between economic operators.

Should there be a suspicion that the provider will not be able to perform according to the price offered, EIT Manufacturing has the right to ask for explanations and may reject the tender where the evidence supplied does not satisfactorily account for the low level of price or cost proposed.

Complementary Note on the Evaluation Process:

After the initial evaluation of submitted proposals, it is possible that the potential top-ranked suppliers may be shortlisted for participation in a Pitch Session or in a set of interviews. It is important to emphasise that the evaluation will be conducted in strict accordance with the criteria outlined in the published Request for Proposal (RfP).

The primary objective of the Pitch Session or Interviews is to facilitate a deeper understanding of the received proposals, provide an opportunity to elaborate on specific details, and allow the EIT Manufacturing to get to know the team of professionals better. During this session, the shortlisted suppliers will have the chance to present their proposals, clarify any questions, and discuss how your firm can best meet the needs of EIT Manufacturing.

Further details regarding the Pitch Session or Interviews, including dates and logistics, will be communicated to the shortlisted suppliers following the initial evaluation of proposals.

7. Complaint Procedure

Tenderers believing that they have been harmed by an error or irregularity during the award process may file a complaint respecting the deadline mentioned. Appeals shall be addressed to EIT Manufacturing only via the following email address procurement@eitmanufacturing.eu. The tenderers have **10 (ten) days** to file their complaints from the date of receipt of notification of the results.

In their application to EIT Manufacturing, the complainant shall explain what procedural aspects they consider having been violated along with any recommendations or remarks. Such charges need to be



supported with data and facts and, if possible, – documentation. An appeal whose sole purpose is to obtain a second evaluation for no reason other than that the complainant disagrees with the final award decision is to be rejected.

8. Negotiations & Clarifications

Negotiations can be held in the following cases:

- if it is identified that the scope of services issued by EIT Manufacturing is not detailed enough, incomplete or some areas are lacking crucial information to complete the procedure for direct awards;
- if EIT Manufacturing has the intention to reduce the offered prices to find the best value for money;
- if all submitted prices are above the planned budget and it is everyone's interest to finish the procedure with success – in that case, price negotiation can take place. During a price negotiation, all tenderers are called to lower their prices by the same deadline in a written form;

EIT Manufacturing can organise as many rounds of negotiation as it is needed during the procedure to reach the highest quality of proposals and the best price.

Whenever possible, the negotiations should be carried out in writing, however, in special cases, video conferences or even live negotiations can be organised. EIT Manufacturing also reserves the right to invite the tenderers to an individual meeting before the final award of the contract to clarify details and ambiguities.

In case of obvious or perceived errors or omissions in the request for proposals, Tenderers can request additional information or clarifications by the deadline provided in the above time frame through email at procurement@eitmanufacturing.eu

Upon receipt of the bids, they will be reviewed, and additional details will be requested from the tenderers as needed. The requests and answers are to be submitted written by e-mail. Where information or documentation to be submitted by tenderers is incomplete or erroneous or where specific documents are missing, EIT Manufacturing staff may request the party concerned to submit, supplement, clarify or complete the relevant information or documentation within three (3) days.

Bid preparation costs are not reimbursable and must be borne by the tenderers.

EIT Manufacturing owns all bids received in this request for proposals. Proprietary information of



vendors in the bids will be kept strictly confidential. The offers and the contract may be submitted for audits.

9. Contract

The final award does not yet constitute the Contract. The Contract will be concluded at the time of signature by the Supplier and EIT Manufacturing. The winning supplier will be sent the contract to be signed (indicating the deadline by which the signed contract should be returned to EIT Manufacturing).

The invoicing will be based on a mutually agreed schedule; it will be detailed in the contract. The contract is estimated to be signed by December 2025 and will have a maximum duration of 4 years, including potential renewals.

The tenderer agrees that the total value of the contract to be signed with EIT Manufacturing for the mentioned period will in no way exceed the bid (the amount contained in the offer) of the tenderer.

The awarded supplier will be asked to sign Standard Contractual Clauses (SCC) if no other GDPR compliant safeguards exist, and the supplier is in a country for which the EU Commission has not issued an adequacy decision.

10. Confidentiality Obligations

All information, whether written or oral, exchanged between the parties involved in this Request for Proposals (RfP) process, hereinafter referred to as the "Parties" shall be considered confidential and proprietary.

The Parties agree not to disclose, provide access to, or otherwise make available any confidential information to any third parties, including but not limited to individuals, companies, or organisations, who are not directly involved in the RfP process, without the express written consent of the disclosing Party.

"Confidential Information" shall encompass, without limitation, all data, documents, proposals, discussions, designs, specifications, financial information, technical data, trade secrets, and any other information disclosed by one Party to the other during the RfP process.

The obligations of confidentiality shall not apply to information that is:



- a) Publicly available at the time of disclosure or subsequently becomes publicly available through no fault of the receiving Party.
- b) Already in the possession of the receiving Party prior to disclosure and not subject to an existing confidentiality obligation.
- c) Disclosed to the receiving Party by a third party with the legal right to do so without breaching any confidentiality obligations.
- d) Required to be disclosed by law, court order, or governmental regulation, provided that the disclosing Party is promptly notified and given the opportunity to seek a protective order.

Any Party found in breach of this confidentiality clause shall be subject to legal measures, including litigation, injunctive relief, and monetary damages, as deemed appropriate by the disclosing Party.

The obligations of confidentiality as set forth in this clause shall survive the termination or completion of the RfP process and shall remain in effect for a period of 5 (five) years, unless both Parties mutually agree in writing to terminate this confidentiality agreement.

This confidentiality clause shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of France. Any legal action arising out of or in connection with this clause shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of Paris, France.

11. Cancellation of the Proposal Procedure

In the event of cancellation of the proposal procedure, EIT Manufacturing will notify tenderers of the cancellation. In no event shall EIT Manufacturing 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 Manufacturing has been advised of the possibility of damages.

The tenderer 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'). S/he should inform the EIT Manufacturing team immediately if there is any change in the above circumstances at any stage during the implementation of the tasks.

The supplier cannot be an EIT Manufacturing Partner or Activity Partner. Any bid from such an economic operator will be rejected.

Tenderers will be excluded if:



- a) they are being wound up, are having their affairs administered by the courts, have entered into an arrangement with creditors, have suspended business activities, are the subject of proceedings concerning those matters, or are in any analogous situation arising from a similar procedure provided for in national legislation or regulations; they have been convicted of an offence concerning their professional conduct by a judgment which has the force of res judicata;
- b) they have been guilty of grave professional misconduct proven by any means which the EIT Manufacturing can justify;
- c) they have not fulfilled obligations relating to the payment of social security contributions or the payment of taxes in accordance with the legal provisions of the country in which they are established or any other country of the EU;
- d) they have been the subject of a judgment which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity detrimental to the EU' financial interests;
- e) following a procurement procedure or grant award procedure financed by the EU budget, they have been declared in serious breach of contract for failure to comply with their contractual obligations.

The tenderers must not be in a situation of a conflict of interest, and they have sufficient economic and financial capacity, technical and professional capacity, and legal and regulatory capacity to perform the requested services. Additional evidence or declarations might be requested by the contracting authority.

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

This Request for Proposal (RfP) does not create any entitlement or expectation for tenderers to enter into a contract with EIT Manufacturing. EIT Manufacturing is under no obligation to award or conclude a contract with any supplier, including the selected tenderer, either now or in the future. Furthermore, EIT Manufacturing reserves the right to cancel or withdraw this procurement process at any time, without incurring any liability.

