



CONNECT-NM

Coordination of the European
Research Community on Nuclear
Materials for Energy Innovation

A EURATOM Cofund Action



Co-funded by
the European Union

Open Call Guide for Proposers

28/04/2025



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Introduction

This document is the guide for project proposers. It contains practical information about how to submit a proposal. It is complementary to the other call reference documents:

- CONNECT-NM Open Call Announcement: *short document announcing the call and summarizing the participation conditions*
- CONNECT-NM Open Call Work-Programme: *document that explains the topics on which Project proposals can be presented within each research line (RL), including objectives, scope, expected output and outcome, expected impact*
- CONNECT-NM Project Idea Template: *template (Word and RTF format) to be used to submit Project Ideas in the first phase of the submission procedure*
- CONNECT-NM Open Call Procedures: *reference document that describes in detail the procedures applied in the various steps of the Open Call for Projects*
- CONNECT-NM Project Proposal Template: *template to be used to submit full Project Proposals in the second phase of the procedure, including separate templates for the proposal text, the financial information (Excel and csv) and the Letter of Intent that each participant should sign upon proposal submission (Word and RTF format)*
- CONNECT-NM Project Proposal Evaluation Criteria and Scoring System: *version for proposers (information purposes)*

All these documents will become progressively available in the [“Call-for-project-documents” directory](#) of the [CONNECT-NM website](#).

How to submit a Proposal

The proposal submission procedure is done in two steps:

- Phase 1: Project Ideas submission and brokerage event
- Phase 2: Full Project Proposals submission

Phase 1: Project Idea submission and brokerage event

A project idea describes succinctly the objectives, methodology, expected results, alignment with the work-programme and expected outcome/impact. It also provides a first list of participants and a first assessment of the expected costs organised by cost categories.

1 Preparation of a Project Idea

- Read the Open Call documents and strategic research agenda of the Partnership.
- **Preferably by February 28, send an email to the Management Support Office (MSO) of CONNECT-NM (info@connect-nm.eu)** to inform them of your intention to submit a Project Idea, indicating the name (acronym) and prospective title of your Project Idea. At the same time, register as a user to the CONNECT-NM repository [here](#). The MSO will create a folder with the name of your Project Idea in the directory dedicated to the first submission phase of the restricted area of the CONNECT-NM website and assign you the right permits. This folder will be accessible to the Project Idea Leader in writing mode until the Project Idea submission deadline.

- After having read the sections “Project requirements per Research Line” of the Open Call Work Programme, select up to three research lines to which your Project idea will be contributing among 1) Knowledge and data management 2) Advanced materials development and manufacturing 3) Materials and component qualification: testing, standardisation and design rules 4) Non-destructive examination and materials health monitoring 5) Advanced materials modelling and characterisation.
- Build an initial consortium.
- Prepare your Project Idea with your consortium using the Project Idea template provided. Proposers using generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the preparation of the proposal are fully responsible for the content of the proposal (even the parts produced by the AI tool) and must indicate which AI tools were used and how they were utilized.

2 Submission of a Project Idea

Submit your Project Idea by March 21, 2025, at 23.59 (CET) by uploading an electronically signed PDF file of the Project Idea in the Project Idea folder created in the restricted area of the CONNECT-NM website.

Electronic submission via the CONNECT-NM repository is mandatory, applications sent by email, post or any other channels will not be accepted.

Please consider that the CONNECT-NM website may be overloaded close to the deadline. It is therefore recommended to upload the final version of the Project Idea enough in advance to respect the deadline.

3 Assessment of the Project Ideas

The consistency of the Project Ideas with the call content and with predefined general eligibility criteria, including national eligibility checks, overlaps with other proposals, will be assessed by the Executive Board. On a case-by-case basis, evaluators who may have conflicts of interest will be excluded from the specific discussion of that Idea.

Non-binding advice on proposal merging, modification or withdrawal will be given. Advice on which Research Line to choose will be given as well. Some proposals may receive a non-binding recommendation not to proceed to the second phase. This will ensure that the proposals that go to the second phase are all eligible and competitive and overall cover the various Research Lines and materials of interest in a balanced way.

4 Brokerage Event

A Brokerage Event will take place online between April 8 and 10, 2025 to facilitate networking and enable the contribution of new valuable partners to the Consortium of the proposed Project Ideas in view of preparing the full proposal. The exact dates and times will be communicated when the number of Project Ideas likely to be submitted is known.

At this event, you will present your Project Idea stressing the aspect of capacities that are required to achieve the relevant objectives (without necessarily discussing aspects that the consortium may prefer to keep confidential) and exchange with CONNECT-NM management, research line coordinators and advisors, as well as potential participants.

Other participants will briefly describe their competencies and capabilities to contribute to the CONNECT-NM Research Lines.

Phase 2: Full Project Proposal submission

A full Project Proposal is based on one or several Project Idea(s) evaluated in the first stage of the submission and discussed in the Brokerage Event. New projects are not eligible if they have not been submitted as project ideas in phase 1.

A proposal is organised in excellence, impact and implementation sections, as the project idea. It provides the details of the objectives, methodology and expected results, the impact of these results, the breakdown and schedule of work packages and tasks and the contribution of all participants. It also addresses in a light way the interaction of the Proposal with the Partnership concerning ethical and gender aspects, education and training, access to infrastructures, open science, dissemination and data management, consistently with the Partnership plans on these aspects and. It includes the budget of the activities for all partners according to standard EC categories. Finally, signed letters of commitment for all partners are provided.

1 Preparation of the full Project Proposal

- **Send an email to the MSO of CONNECT-NM (info@connect-nm.eu) by May 23, 2025 at 17.00 (CET) to inform them of your intention to submit a full Project Proposal.**

This email should include:

- the acronym and full name of the Project Proposal
- the acronym(s) of the Project Idea(s) on which the proposal is based
- the research line to which the proposal is going to be submitted (you need to select one and only one research line to which your proposal will be assigned, possibly following the recommendations given in the Project Idea assessment)
- a 100-word summary of the proposal
- the name and email address of three potential reviewers
- If not done in the Project Idea phase, register as user to the CONNECT-NM repository on <https://www.connect-nm.eu/wp-login.php?action=register>.
- The MSO will create a folder with the name of your Project Proposal in the directory dedicated to the second submission phase of the restricted area of the CONNECT-NM website and assign you the right permits. This folder will be accessible to the Project Proposal Leader in writing mode until the Project Proposal submission deadline.
- If applicable and if you wish to do so, complete your consortium with partners that contacted you during/after the Brokerage Event.
- Prepare your proposal using the template provided. Proposers are encouraged to consider the feedback received as a result of the assessment of the Project idea.

2 Submission of the full Project Proposal

Submit your full project proposal by July 7, 2025, at 23.59 (CET) by uploading to your Project Proposal folder the documents as follows:

- A pdf file of the full Project Proposal electronically signed by a person at the Project Leading Organisation holding the legal authority to commit the organisation's human and financial resources.
- A pdf file of the financial part of the Project Proposal, also signed electronically by the legally authorised representative at the Project Leading Organisation, along with the Excel

or CSV version of the same file (i.e., two separate files, one signed pdf and one in Excel or CSV format).

- The Letters of Commitment for all partners of the proposal, each provided as a separate pdf file signed electronically by a person legally authorised to commit the organisation's human and financial resources.

Electronic submission via the CONNECT-NM repository is mandatory, applications sent by email, post or any other channels will not be accepted.

Please allow enough time to obtain the signed documents and take into account that the CONNECT-NM website may be overloaded close to the deadline. It is therefore recommended to prepare the letters of commitment and to send the proposal for signature early enough so that the proposer can upload the signed version of the Proposal and its annexes before the deadline.

Evaluation, ranking and selection of the full Project Proposals

Evaluation and ranking

An Evaluation Committee (EvaCo) comprised of up to nine selected independent experts endorsed by the General Assembly and remunerated for their work will manage the Project Proposal evaluation procedure with impartiality. The EvaCo will distribute the proposals to independent reviewers, obtaining three completed reviews for each Project.

The reviewers may be chosen from the pool of names indicated by the proposers in the first phase or second phase or not, at the total discretion of the EvaCo.

Based on the reviews and corresponding scores, the EvaCo will be in charge of ranking the submitted full Project proposals in order of scores, both per Research Line and overall, primarily based on the scores assigned by the reviewers to each proposal. The ranking should be completed during the first half of November 2025 at the latest.

The EvaCo will produce an internal report that describes the review procedure, summarising for each proposal positive and negative aspects, as justification for the ranking.

Selection of the Project Proposals for funding

Based on the ranking proposed by the EvaCo, the General Assembly (GeA) of the Partnership, which includes representatives of all Beneficiaries, makes the ultimate decision about how many projects can be funded and which ones will be selected.

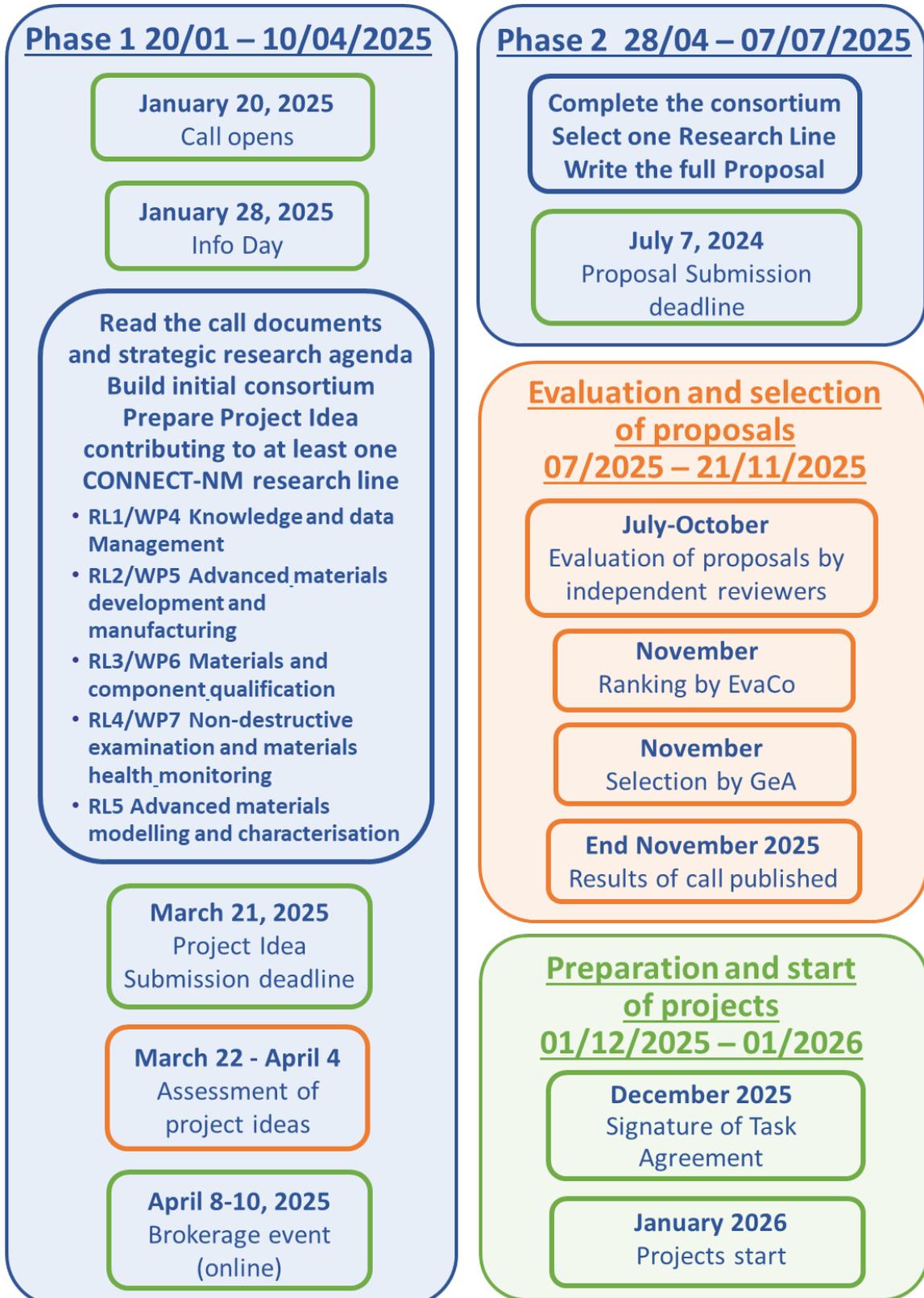
Following the decision of the General Assembly, the leaders of the Project Proposals will be formally notified by the Coordinator about the acceptance for partial funding or the rejection of their Project Proposal before the end of November, 2025. The result of the selection will be made public through the CONNECT-NM website.

The proposing consortia of Project Proposals that are not granted financial support by the Partnership have the right to decide to pursue the Project with their own means.

Preparation of Project launch

Prior to the start of the selected Projects, a Task Agreement will be signed between the Coordinator and the Project Leading Organisation on behalf of all Project partners in the Project Consortium (target date: before December 19, 2025). This Task Agreement will be based on the full Project proposal (used as Annex after suitable modification) and will detail the subtask breakdown, the internal milestones and internal deliverables, as well as the Project budget. The Task Agreement will also indicate the official starting date of the Project (in January 2026) and the duties of the Project Leader in terms of reporting, as well as the general connection between the Project and the Partnership, concerning funding (pre-financing and instalments) and services offered by the latter.

Visual Guide of the Proposal Submission and Evaluation Process



Project Consortium and Project Leader

Consortia must be comprised of a minimum of three independent legal entities from two different EU Member States or countries associated with the Euratom Research and Training Programme. Once this condition is met, the call is otherwise open to research partners from all over the world (excluding persons, groups and entities that are subject to EU financial administrative sanction or are in an exclusion situation).

Participants can be Beneficiaries, Affiliated Entities or Associated Partners that are already part of the CONNECT-NM Consortium, as well as organisations that are currently not in the Partnership Consortium, but can qualify as one of these categories, or as Third Parties if no other status is possible.

The Project Leading Organisation must be a Beneficiary or an Affiliated Entity. It is advised that it is already a member of the CONNECT-NM Consortium before Project submission. It is also possible for an organisation not yet in the CONNECT-NM Consortium to be a Project Leader, provided that such an organisation can qualify as an Affiliated Entity of one Beneficiaries and can be therefore included in the Consortium with this status via a post-call amendment of the Grant Agreement.

Project Funding and Open Call Budget

The funding rate of Projects in CONNECT-NM is 50% of the eligible costs for which reimbursement will be claimed. Project consortia or specific partners in consortia may decide to receive less than this amount if they can rely on sufficient national, regional or institutional funding to provide the matching funds for the activities of the Project.

The maximum amount of EC grant per Project is 900kEUR. Proposers, however, can ask for a higher amount, which might be accorded if the quality of the proposal is outstanding, and compatible with the financial possibilities of the Partnership.

The budget of this call of CONNECT-NM is 13.500.000 EUR (EC contribution).

For all information, please contact

CONNECT-NM SECRETARIAT

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Visit CONNECT-NM website at: <https://www.connect-nm.eu/>



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