Mantra.

Guidelines for Applicants

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1. MANTRA in a nutshell

MANTRA (Sustainable and Innovative Manufacturing by Ensuring Digital, Green, and Social SME Transformation) is a three-and-a-half-year Horizon Europe project funded under the call topic HORIZON-CL4-2024-RESILIENCE-01-41 ('Innovate to Transform' Support for SMEs' Sustainability Transition). The project, which began on 1 November 2024 and will run until 30 April 2028, brings together a consortium of 8 partners from 7 countries with a total budget of €5 million. Approximately €2.5 million is allocated to a cascade funding mechanism that supports EU manufacturing SMEs.

In line with the EU's 2030 vision for manufacturing which emphasizes competitiveness, sustainability, resilient ecosystems, and the ability to meet rising environmental and social demands, MANTRA is set to guide the transformation journeys of 50 manufacturing SMEs.

MANTRA aims to drive the green and digital transformation of European manufacturing SMEs through the adoption of advanced technologies and social innovation.

The manufacturing industry, led by SMEs, drives Europe's economy but is also the highest-emitting sector. Achieving sustainability goals requires SME engagement. The COVID-19 crisis accelerated digital adoption, enabling efficiency and circular economy practices. Geopolitical and energy challenges further highlight the urgency of this transition.

MANTRA will support a group of 50 manufacturing SMEs with a financial support of a €50,000, with a dedicated process in which they learn and unlock their digital and technological potential within a sustainable business model that ensures more resource-efficient, and circular processes and infrastructures.

2. What Does MANTRA aim to achieve?

The MANTRA project aims to accelerate the green and digital transition of European manufacturing SMEs by promoting advanced technologies and social innovation. It will establish a scalable, EU-wide capacity-building and demonstration program, offering SMEs tailored support, expert networks, and financial assistance to develop sustainable business models.

The project prioritizes traditional manufacturing SMEs with low adoption levels of advanced technologies to enhance their competitiveness and resilience. MANTRA covers all manufacturing sectors, focusing on five key subsectors based on factors like size, turnover, and environmental impact.

Please note that, although the Machinery subsector was initially identified as one of the target manufacturing subsectors of MANTRA, it is not included in the 2nd Open Call, as it was already strongly represented during the 1st Open Call. Therefore, this second call focuses on the remaining manufacturing subsectors in order to ensure a more balanced sectoral distribution among supported SMEs.

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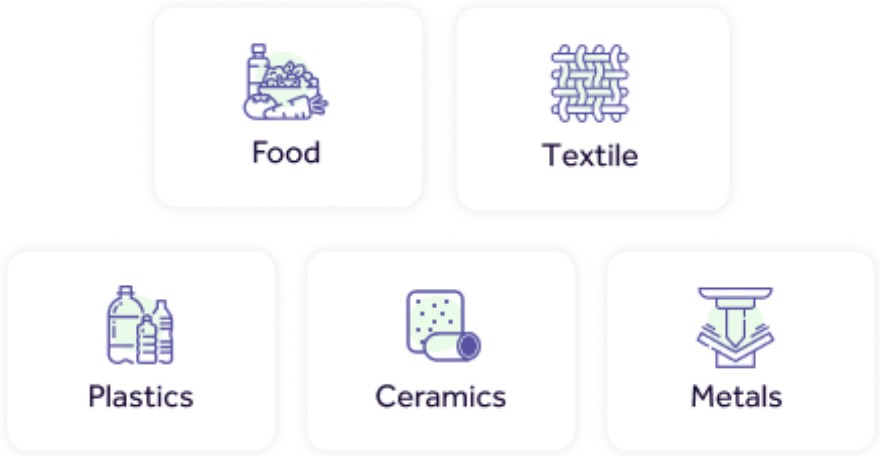

Figure 1. Manufacturing subsectors supported by MANTRA

Support will be provided for the adoption of 16 EU-priority advanced technologies (including advanced materials, advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, big data, cloud technologies, connectivity, industrial biotechnology, Internet of Things, micro and nanoelectronics, mobility, photonics, robotics, and security), with an emphasis on those most relevant to each SME's competitiveness and sustainability. Only applications demonstrating a clear impact pathway will be eligible for support.

MANTRA's key objectives include:

1. A digital support centre for SME collaboration and transformation.
2. A due diligence toolbox to assess SMEs' readiness for green and digital transition.
3. Scalable capacity-building programs to provide tailored advisory services.
4. A technology marketplace to connect traditional and tech-savvy SMEs.
5. Financial support (grants of €50,000) for SMEs to implement transformation plans.
6. A community for SME collaboration, peer-learning, and best practice exchange.
7. A go-to-market strategy ensuring long-term impact and replication of results.
8. EU-level awareness and cooperation through large-scale dissemination efforts.

3. How can MANTRA empower Manufacturing SMEs for a Sustainable Future?

MANTRA empowers manufacturing SMEs by providing targeted, practical support that enables them to adopt advanced technologies and integrate sustainability into their core operations. Through a comprehensive and scalable approach, MANTRA addresses the specific challenges faced by traditional SMEs - such as limited resources, low technology uptake, and fragmented support - by combining, expert guidance, peer-learning opportunities and financial assistance.

Keyways MANTRA empowers SMEs include:

- **Tailored capacity building:** SMEs receive personalised advice and training through a structured process that builds their digital and green competencies.

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- **Access to expertise:** SMEs are matched with tech-savvy partners through a dedicated marketplace and co-creation processes, enabling them to identify and implement solutions best suited to their needs.
- **Systematic readiness assessment:** a due diligence toolbox helps SMEs understand their current digital and sustainability status and define clear, impactful transformation pathways.
- **Inclusive and scalable support:** by prioritising low-tech and women-led SMEs across all manufacturing sectors, MANTRA ensures equitable access and a broad impact, contributing to a more resilient and sustainable European industry.
- **Long-term integration:** MANTRA not only supports short-term adoption but fosters a community and strategy for long-term replication, encouraging SMEs to continuously innovate and remain competitive in a rapidly evolving market.
- **Financial empowerment:** financial support up to €50,000 to procure external services help SMEs implement transformation plans.

4. Who is MANTRA Consortium?

MANTRA consortium is composed of 8 partners from 7 EU countries with proven and wide experience in technical, business and innovation support to SMEs, possessing all the tools and methodologies needed to help EU SMEs in their transition to become green and digital.

zabala INNOVATION

www.zabala.es

RINA

www.rina.org

INESCTEC

www.inesctec.pt

BABELE CREATE TOGETHER

www.babele.co

secpho

www.secpho.org

eit Manufacturing SOUTH

Co-funded by the European Union

www.eitmanufacturing.eu

Greenovate! EUROPE

https://greenovate-europe.eu

CETIM

www.cetim-engineering.com

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5. MANTRA's journey

To achieve its objectives, MANTRA operates in close collaboration with key European innovation and sustainability networks, ensuring seamless support for SMEs in their green and digital transformation. By building on existing initiatives, MANTRA takes a step further by offering tailored training, technical assistance, networking opportunities, and direct financial support to help SMEs implement their transformation strategies.

MANTRA support is structured in two (2) consecutive and complementary phases:

Phase	Duration	Main activities	Financial support
Phase A – Advisory Services	6 months	Assessment, matchmaking, roadmap definition, coaching and technical support	Free of charge
Phase B – Implementation	6 months	Procurement of external services and implementation of the transformation roadmap	Up to €50,000

A. Technical Support (free of charge) | Advisory Services provided by MANTRA experts

Dedicated innovation and capacity-building support is provided to SMEs, at no cost, to assess their readiness to transform their business models and increase their resilience. This phase includes assessments, a matchmaking process, expert advisory services, and the definition of a transformation roadmap.

B. Financial Support | Procurement of External Technical Services

Following the advisory phase and initial assessments, SMEs receive financial support through MANTRA open calls to implement the recommendations identified during Phase A. This support will be used for the procurement of external services necessary to execute the defined transformation roadmap.

Each project selected under this open call will follow the two-phase MANTRA journey described above, with a total indicative duration of twelve (12) months:

i. an initial 6-month phase dedicated to technical assessment and advisory services provided by MANTRA experts, free of charge; and

ii. a subsequent 6-month phase focused on the implementation of the recommended actions, supported through financial assistance for the procurement of external services (see Section 7.3).

While each SME represents a specific case and may have a different level of readiness, from a project management and coordination perspective — both for the consortium and for the SMEs — it is useful to follow a clear and common timeline.

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The following figure is structured in two consecutive phases: Phase A (Assessment, Match-making Process and Sustainable Advisory Services – 6 months) and Phase B (Financial Support and Implementation – 6 months). It includes the main steps to access free-of-charge technical support and subsequent financial support.

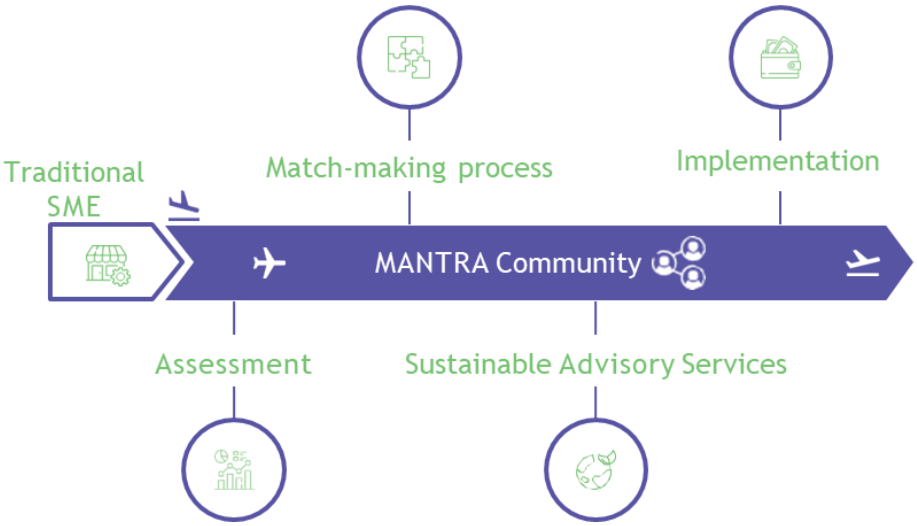

Figure 2.MANTRA's journey.

MANTRA Community
Training and coaching programmes and materials, P2P learning, webinars, workshops, etc.

Assessment
Replicable self-assessment plan for green and digital transformation readiness.

Match-making process
Co-creation labs to foster cooperation between tech-savvy SMEs and traditional SMEs.

Sustainable Advisory Services
Services are provided to SMEs to support the uptake and implementation of advanced technologies and social innovation.

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Implementation
Financial support of up to EUR 50,000 is available exclusively for the procurement of external services, such as consultancy, prototyping, testing, digitalisation, sustainability, and specialised technical support provided by organisations such as DIHs, EENs, ECCPs, OITBs, and similar entities. Internal costs of the SME (e.g. personnel, equipment, travel, or operational costs) are not eligible.

6. Description of the Open Call

Quick Guide for Applicants

Topic	Key information
Who can apply?	Manufacturing SMEs from eligible sectors located in EU Member States
Financial support	Up to €50,000 lump-sum
MANTRA journey	6 months advisory support + 6 months implementation
What is funded?	External services supporting the transformation roadmap
Main focus	Green, digital and social transformation
Technologies	At least one ATI technology must be integrated
Submission deadline	30 September 2026 – 17:00 CET
Submission platform	https://app.mantra-project.eu/application-definition/853

2nd Open Call Timeline

Launch of the 2nd Open Call	15 June 2026
Deadline of the 2nd Open Call	30 September 2026 17:00 CET
Selection process	October 2026
Notification of successful applicants	November 2026
Formalisation of Sub-Grant Agreement	November-December 2026
Expected launch date of sub-projects	December 2026-January 2027

The timeline provided above is indicative and may be subject to change, in particular with regards to the evaluation and selection process, which may be adjusted without prior notice.

Objective of the Open Call

The objective of this call is to select the manufacturing SMEs that will receive support to define and implement their MANTRA Journey plan, with the aim of becoming more sustainable and innovative. Through this initiative, selected SMEs will enhance their capacity to adopt advanced technologies and social innovation for sustainability, by collaboration with tech-savvy SMEs and accessing services provided by EU specialised business support networks and organizations (MANTRA financial support).

Scope of the call

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Proposals should focus on a **proposed transformation project** that is realistic, impactful, and embedded in the SME's strategy for long-term sustainability and growth through the uptake of advanced technologies. Applicants' concept must contribute to the green and digital transformation of the SME ensuring reducing environmental impacts while enhancing the competitiveness and resilience of the business. Projects should align with circular economy principles and take into account inclusive, socially responsible practices.

Open Call steps

The following steps outline the process through which manufacturing SMEs can apply for and participate in the MANTRA open call:

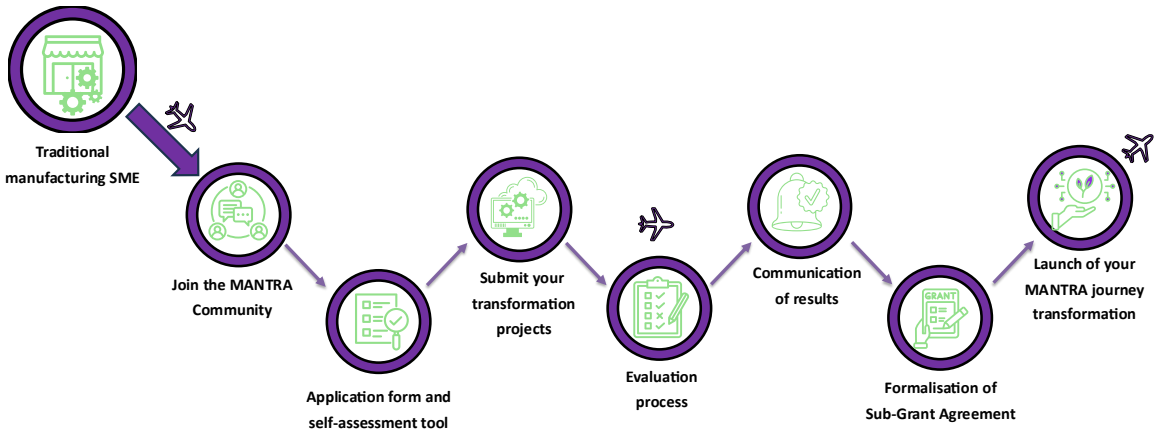

Figure 3. MANTRA 2nd Open Call summary.

- **Step 1- Join the MANTRA Community**: register to become a member, access exclusive resources, explore content shared by peers, and participate in the Open Call (this step is mandatory). Registration is available via the MANTRA platform at the following: Community Platform and Open Calls - mantra-project.eu
- **Step 2 – Prepare your application:** complete both the application form, available on the platform, and the self-assessment tool.

  Application form collects information about your company, such as its profile, contact details, NACE code, proposed transformation project, support and services required from MANTRA to launch your journey transformation: Manufacturing SMEs - mantra-project.eu.

  Self-assessment tool is a questionnaire-based tool designed to help companies evaluate their green and digital readiness, including aspects such as sustainability practices, innovation maturity, and transformation roadmaps. The tool is accessible via the MANTRA website: mantra-project.eu and the direct link: https://mantra.cetim.fr. Upload your self-assessment pdf into your application.

- **Step 3- Submission of your transformation project**: submit your full proposal in English, along with the signed Declaration of Honour and any supporting document, via the MANTRA platform.
- **Step 4-Evaluation process:** The evaluation process consists of 3 steps

  1- **Eligibility check**: Proposals will be verified for compliance with the admissibility and eligibility conditions by the MANTRA Evaluation Committee, composed of representatives

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from the MANTRA consortium with expertise in manufacturing, innovation, sustainability, business support, advanced technologies, and project evaluation.
2- **Evaluation and first screening:** Eligible proposals will be evaluated and ranked by the MANTRA Evaluation Committee against the defined award criteria.
3- **Final Evaluation:** The highest-ranked proposals (up to 50) will undergo further assessment by three (3) independent external experts, who will assign individual scores. Based on these scores, the MANTRA Evaluation Committee will establish the final ranking and select the proposals for funding.

- **Step 5- Notification of successful applicants:** applicants will be notified via email and the MANTRA platform. Successful applicants will receive a Notification Letter and an Evaluation Summary Report (ESR) with feedback on their proposal.

  Proposals may fall into one of the following categories:
  - **Accepted:** invited to prepare the sub-grant agreement
  - **Reserve list:** may be invited later if places become available
  - **Rejected:** not selected
- **Step 6- Formalization of Sub-Grant Agreement:** selected applicants will be invited to prepare and sign a Sub-Grant Agreement with the MANTRA consortium.
- **Step 7- Launch of green, digital and social journey transformation:** once the agreement is signed, SMEs will officially start their transformation journey with support from MANTRA. Beneficiaries will gain access to tailored services, expert guidance, and collaborative opportunities to implement their green, digital, and social innovation projects

All proposals must be submitted exclusively through the MANTRA platform, as it is the only officially recognized channel for applications. It's important to note that late submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances, so applicants are strongly advised to complete their submissions before the deadline. Once an application is submitted, no changes or resubmissions will be allowed.

This second call for proposals has a maximum budget allocation of €1,250,000 dedicated to supporting up to 26 SME as they carry out their MANTRA Journey.

7. Eligibility criteria

The following eligibility criteria, related to the applicants, funding, and proposals apply.

7.1. Applicant's eligibility

To qualify for MANTRA's technical and financial assistance, SMEs must meet the following eligibility requirements

- **Legal Entity**

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Applicants must be registered SMEs according to the European Commission definition (Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC) or local regulations if more restrictive in terms of employee count and turnover.

- **Financial Support**

The maximum financial support amount per beneficiary is €50,000 (lump-sum). Each SME can receive funding only once. While multiple proposals may be submitted, only one per SME will be selected. Unsuccessful applicants may resubmit in the second call if they were not accepted in the first one.

- **Geographical Scope**

Applicants must operate within an EU Member State. SMEs from Horizon Europe Associated Countries are not eligible.

- **Language requirement**

English is the official language of the MANTRA Open Calls. Applications must be submitted in English, and participating SME representatives must be able to communicate in English.

- **Eligible sectors**

Only SMEs within the following NACE C Codes (Manufacturing Subsectors) are eligible to apply.

Applicants must provide official documentation demonstrating that their registered economic activity corresponds to one of the eligible NACE codes listed below. This documentation must clearly indicate the NACE classification under which the company is registered.

Applications that do not include valid proof of NACE classification, or whose activity does not match the eligible sectors, will be considered ineligible.

Table 1. Manufacturing Subsectors eligible for MANTRA

Food
C10 - Manufacture of food products
C11 - Manufacture of beverages
Metals
C25 - Manufacture of fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment
C24 - Manufacture of basic metals
Plastics
C22 - Manufacture of rubber and plastic products
Ceramics
C23 Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products
Textiles
C13 Manufacture of textiles
C14 Manufacture of wearing apparel
C15 Manufacture of leather and related products of other materials

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- **Self-assessment requirement**

Applicants must complete and upload the MANTRA Self-Assessment report, which evaluates their green and digital transition readiness (https://mantra.cetim.fr). Please refer to Annex I – MANTRA Self-Assessment Tool Guidance for instructions on how to access and complete the assessment.

- **Legitimacy and honourability**

Applicants must submit **the official Declaration of Honour from MANTRA**, confirming they are not subject to exclusion criteria under Articles 136 and 141 of the EU Financial Regulation. The mandatory template is available on the project website and must be duly completed and signed.

- **Absence of conflict of interest**

Applicants must declare that they do not have any actual or potential conflicts of interest in the MANTRA selection process or project duration. If a conflict exists, it must be disclosed for potential mitigation.

- **Submission process**

Applications must be submitted exclusively through the MANTRA platform within the call's duration (see Section 6.Description of the Open Call). Only the uploaded documents will be considered, and all information must be accurate, complete, and verifiable.

Failure to meet any of these criteria will result in ineligibility for the MANTRA Open Call.

7.2. Eligible projects

To qualify for MANTRA support, SME projects must align with the following criteria:

1. Business Transformation

Projects must demonstrate a credible and evidence-based transformation pathway, contributing to one or more of the following areas:

Raw Materials: use of recycled materials, substitution of critical raw materials, or second-life solutions.

Safe & Sustainable by Design: development of materials and products that are non-toxic, environmentally friendly, and enhance circular value chains.

Circular Economy: Strengthening cross-sector cooperation to create resilient and circular supply chains.

Clean Energy & Efficiency: adoption of technologies that optimize energy use, integrate renewables, and reduce carbon emissions.

Supply Chain Resilience: strategies to improve flexibility and adaptability in supply chains to withstand disruptions.

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2. Digital Transition

Projects must integrate at least one of the 16 advanced technologies defined by the Advanced Technologies for Industry (ATI) supported by MANTRA. The full list and description of the eligible ATI technologies are provided in Annex II – Advanced Technologies for Industry (ATI).

3. Environmental Impact

Eligible projects must contribute to at least one of the following sustainability goals:

- Reduction in waste generation and raw material consumption
- GHG emissions reduction and energy savings
- Increased recycling rates and improved quality of recovered materials
- Reduction of hazardous chemical use
- Other environmental benefits proposed by the applicant

4. Socio-Economic Impact

Projects must also generate tangible economic and social benefits, such as:

- Investment in business transformation and new technologies
- Growth in turnover/sales
- Job creation (FTE)
- Upskilling & reskilling through training and peer-learning activities

Only applications that clearly demonstrate measurable impact in these areas will be eligible for MANTRA support.

7.3. Financial Support

Following the initial assessments, which includes assessment, matchmaking activities, and advisory services provided by MANTRA technical experts, beneficiaries will receive financial support to implement the recommended actions during Phase B.

Of course, while MANTRA experts will recommend the initial external services to be carried out in Phase B, Phase A will be conducted through ongoing dialogue with the beneficiary, with the aim of reaching a consensus to ensure the transformation is implemented in the most appropriate way.

Reporting and supporting documents

MANTRA financial support is not based on the reimbursement of actual costs incurred by the beneficiary. Therefore, SMEs are not required to submit detailed financial claims, timesheets or cost breakdowns as part of the reporting process. Reporting will focus on the implementation of the transformation roadmap, the services contracted from the MANTRA catalogue, the deliverables produced and the achievement of the agreed KPIs. Nevertheless, beneficiaries must keep all relevant supporting documentation, such as contracts, invoices, proof of payment and deliverables, available in case of checks, reviews or audits.

7.3.1. Eligible Activities

During Phase B (Financial Support and Implementation phase), beneficiaries may use the MANTRA financial support to procure external services necessary to implement their transformation roadmap.

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As outlined in section 8.1.4 MANTRA implementation services for SMEs, eligible activities may include:

- Feasibility studies
- Prototyping
- Pilot testing
- Demonstration activities
- Procurement of specialised consultancy services
- Coaching services

7.3.2. Eligible Cost | Use of the Financial Support

The financial support must be used exclusively to procure external services.

Beneficiaries are required to select service providers from the MANTRA catalogue, which will be:

- Provided by the MANTRA Consortium or technical experts during the advisory phase, and

Available through the link*:* https://app.mantra-project.eu/login

Eligible providers must be part of recognised EU business support networks or centres, such as:

- Enterprise Europe Network (EEN)
- European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)
- Open Innovation Test Beds (OITB)
- European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH)

Exception: Proposing a New Provider

If it is not possible to select a provider from the MANTRA catalogue, due to force majeure or the specific needs of the transformation process, the beneficiary may propose an alternative provider.

This proposal must:

- Include a clear justification
- Be submitted for approval to the MANTRA Steering Committee
- Be approved by MANTRA Steering Committee before signing any agreement with the provider

7.1.3. Non-Eligible Costs

The financial support is strictly limited to the procurement of external services related to the eligible activities described above.

Therefore, the following costs are not eligible under any circumstances:

- Personnel costs (e.g. salaries, internal staff time)
- Travel and accommodation expenses
- Equipment purchase, infrastructure, or installation costs

Any cost not directly linked to the procurement of external services from approved providers will be considered ineligible.

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8. Selection Criteria

To be considered for MANTRA support, your proposal must follow a clear structure and provide specific information. This section helps you understand what your proposal should include and how it will be evaluated

8.1. Structure of the proposal

The proposal must be submitted in English through the MANTRA Digital Platform and should include the following sections:

1. **SME Description**: basic information regarding the entity applying to the open call.
2. **Proposed transformation project**: Applicants must complete the corresponding sections of the Application Form Template available on the MANTRA platform, providing a detailed description of the proposed transformation project, including objectives, technologies involved, expected impacts, planned activities, implementation approach, and requested support.

   Link: https://app.mantra-project.eu/application-definition/853

   Main approach of the project: description of the environmental, digital, business and social approaches of the project.
3. **Attachments**: any additional documents required.

8.1.1. Proposal at a Glance

This first part of your proposal is a **brief overview**. It should include:

- A short description of your SME and its location.
- A summary of your proposed business transformation project, including:
  - Main goals
  - Expected impacts
  - Planned actions
  - Roles of involved partners
- The type of advanced technology you will use.
- The estimated size of your project (budget in €).
- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) you aim to achieve.

8.1.2. Project description, impacts and MANTRA support requested

This is the **main part** of your proposal. Please include the following:

1. **SME Description**
   - Identify your manufacturing subsector using the NACE Code (C).
2. **Project Description**
   - Explain your project idea.

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- Highlight its degree of innovation (e.g., Technology Readiness Level).
- Specify which advanced technology (from the ATI list) you'll use.
- Show how your project will contribute to the environmental and socio-economic impacts listed below.

3. **Requested MANTRA Technical Support**
   - Phase A - Describe what type of technical support you need from MANTRA (e.g., services, expertise).
4. **Requested MANTRA Financial Support**
   - Phase B – (Expect) Anticipate the type of external services ** (e.g., services, expertise). When possible, refer to the list available on the MANTRA Platform.
5. **Investment Size**
   - Applicants must provide an indicative estimate of the total investment required for the proposed transformation (i.e. the overall investment expected to be mobilised as a result of the MANTRA support).

     This estimate does not need to be final or fully detailed, but it should be consistent with the technical scope described and based on reasonable assumptions used to assess the project's feasibility and expected impact.

     A brief explanation of how the costs have been estimated should be included. Where relevant, applicants should provide a breakdown of the main cost components or actions.

     Applicants must also explain how the MANTRA support contributes to mobilising further investments.
6. **Readiness Level**
   - Share any preparation you've already done (e.g., plans, studies, permits).
7. **Main Approach of the Project**
   Clearly explain your strategy, based on the following four aspects:
   - **Digital approach**: Describe how the project integrates digital technologies, including the use of advanced, innovative, or emerging solutions, and explain how these will improve processes, products, or services.
   - **Business approach**: Explain the expected impact on the company's performance, including growth potential, revenue generation, market positioning, competitiveness, and job creation or retention.
   - ***Environmental approach****: Outline the expected environmental benefits of the project, such as resource efficiency, reduction of emissions or waste, and contribution to sustainability objectives.*
   - ***Social approach****: Describe how the project contributes to social value, including alignment with relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), improvements in working conditions, skills development, inclusion, or broader societal benefits.*

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Applicants should ensure that these four dimensions are coherent and mutually reinforcing within the overall transformation strategy.

8. **Expected Impacts**

Describe the **expected results** of your transformation using **KPIs.** You must include **at least one environmental** and **one socio-economic impact** from the tables below:

Table 2. Expected environmental impacts (the project must contribute to at least one).

What are the minimum environmental impacts for each transformation journey?	
≥ 30%	Reduction of waste generated
≥ 20%	Reduction of primary raw materials consumption
≥ 25%	GHG emissions reduction
≥ 30%	Primary Energy Savings
≥ 20%	Increase recycling rates (improving quantity and quality of recovered raw materials)
≥ 25%	Reduction in use of chemicals likely to be (eco) toxic, bio-accumulative or mobile
≥ 25%	Other environmental benefits defined by the applicant

Table 3. Expected socio-economic impacts (the project must contribute to at least one).

What are the minimum socio-economic impacts for each transformation journey after 3-5 years?	
≥ 0.5 M€	Foreseen investment to adopt business transformation, including adoption of advanced technology
≥ 10-15%	Turnover or sales
≥ 2-4	New jobs (FTE)
≥ 2-4	Foreseen number of training courses or peer-learning activities for upskilling and/or reskilling

9. **Expected economic savings and pay-back time** (if applicable)

- Estimate the cost savings your project may achieve.
- Provide justified pay-back time for the investment.

8.1.3. MANTRA available advisory services for SMEs

As part of your project proposal, you may request specific advisory services to be delivered during Phase A of your MANTRA journey by the MANTRA experts free of charge. These services will be provided during the first 6 months of the project and are designed to help SMEs accelerate their green and digital transformation. Below is a simplified overview of the main categories of support you can access.

- ***Consultancy and Advisory Services***

- Tech adoption

Support for SMEs to implement Socio-technical solutions (e.g. AI, IoT, and robotics for process optimization, energy efficiency, and emissions reduction). Includes services for testing and implementing digital solutions for energy efficiency, emissions tracking, and process optimization before full deployment.

- Proof of concept

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Assistance in defining technical and market feasibility, interpreting results to guide go/no-go decisions.

- Technology transfer

Discuss the alignment of the project with the company's key strategic goals, including the identification of the main barriers to adoption, the incorporation of proposed changes, and the design of demonstrations and pilot validations.

- Design management

Support SMEs in structuring and guiding their design processes strategically. This includes aligning design with business goals, integrating sustainability or circular economy principles, in coordination of design activities across teams (with external consultants), align product design with business strategy, optimize user experience.

- Designing pilot process and prototyping

Design and set up pilot lines or experimental setups, run feasibility tests, interpret technical results, and recommend adjustments for scaling. Connect SMEs to testbeds or fabrication services.

- Investment readiness

Assist with business planning, financial modelling, due diligence prep, and aligning the business model with investor expectations.

- Circular business model canvas (BMC)

Mapping of current and future models, identification of circular opportunities, and integration of resource efficiency and reuse into value propositions, supply chains, and revenue streams.

- New business model

Analysis of market and competitor data, co-development of revenue strategies, exploration of new value chains, and validation through customer feedback and iterative testing.

- Social innovation

Identification of community needs, design of inclusive business models or services, evaluation of social impact, and securing of funding for socially driven innovation.

- Lean manufacturing

Evaluation of production processes to identify inefficiencies and waste, followed by proposed tools and staff training to maintain improvements.

- Market entry and expansion strategy development

Conduct market research, regulatory analysis, competitor benchmarking, channel strategy, and local partnership identification to support entry or scaling in target markets.

- Innovation road mapping

Creation of a strategic roadmap that outlines innovation priorities over time, gathering input from stakeholders, assessing market and technology trends, and define development phases and milestones

- Intellectual Property Rights

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Support services to help SMEs identify, protect, and manage intellectual property assets such as patents, trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets. Includes IPR audits, guidance on filing procedures, freedom-to-operate analysis, and advice on IP strategy to maximize competitive advantage and innovation potential. May involve training and connection to legal or patent experts.

- Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), Social Life Cycle Assessment (s-LCA), or Life Cycle Costing (LCC)

Conduct assessments using ISO standards, compile data across the value chain, quantify impacts, and deliver actionable insights to improve sustainability performance.

- GHG emission calculation

Perform scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions analysis using tools and recognized protocols, develop reduction strategies, and assist with reporting (e.g., ISO 14067 or GHG Protocol)

- Energy audit and/or energy consumption analysis

Advice on onsite audits, analyse consumption patterns, recommend efficiency upgrades, and quantify potential savings.

- ***Regulatory guidance and compliance support***

- Adaptation to standards

Guidance on compliance with technical standards (e.g., ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 50001), conduct gap analyses, develop documentation, and support audits and certification processes (if applicable)

- Adaptation to environmental rules

Interpretation of relevant regulations (e.g., REACH, RoHS, EU Taxonomy), conduct compliance checks, advise on reporting obligations, and assist with permitting.

- ***Training and capacity building***

- Skill development and specific training

Expert-led sessions on energy efficiency, waste reduction, product life cycle assessment, and decarbonization strategies. Industry-specific programs with digital tools for carbon footprint tracking and emissions reduction planning. Some initiatives also provide continuous technical support and mentoring programs to assist companies in implementing best practices in sustainability and digital transformation.

- ***Networking and partnership opportunities***

- Matchmaking with technological or social partners

Platforms for SMEs, researchers, and industry leaders to collaborate on circular economy initiatives, digital transformation, and sustainable production. Matchmaking events, working groups, and knowledge-sharing forums. Includes innovation hubs and sector-specific events to foster collaboration between companies, research centres, and policymakers.

When preparing your proposal, make sure that you identify the services most relevant to your project and explain how these services will support your business transformation. Refer to the catalogue of services on the MANTRA Digital Platform for more details.

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8.1.4. MANTRA implementation services for SMEs

Selected SMEs will be awarded a grant of up to €50,000 to support the implementation of their transformation roadmap during Phase B of the MANTRA journey.

The grant may be used to procure external services supporting the implementation of the project. The eligible categories of services are listed below, together with a short description of each one. These descriptions should be used as the reference for the services selected by the applicant and therefore are not repeated elsewhere in this section.

Some specific categories of services that could be procured with the grant include:

- **Specialised consultancy, advisor and/or coaching services**: tailored expert support addressing specific SME needs, such as digital strategy, environmental compliance, innovation management, or change leadership.
- **Prototyping, pilot testing and/or demonstration**: design, test, and showcase new solutions before scaling.
- **Feasibility studies***:* evaluation of the practicality, sustainability, and economic impact of proposed digital and green transformation initiatives.
- **Use of testing facilities**: access infrastructure to trial and validate/optimize technologies.
- **Adaptation of business processes**: redesign operations to align with transformation goals. Aiming of increasing efficiency, reducing environmental impact, and enhancing competitiveness
- **Digitalization & emerging technologies**: Support for the selection, implementation, and integration of advanced digital tools and systems.
- **Funding & investment support**: identify and access suitable financial opportunities.
- **Integrated support & multi-service platforms**: combined services delivered in a coordinated approach.
- **Market development & promotion**: expand market reach and visibility of offering.
- **Networking & collaboration**: engage with innovation clusters and networks.
- **Policy & advocacy**: support in navigating and engaging with policy frameworks.
- **R&D and innovation**: develop, test, and implement innovative solutions.
- **Sustainability & green transition**: implement sustainable practices and green technologies.
- **Training and skills development**: enhance capabilities through targeted training.

Please indicate which services you would like to procure for the part of the implementation of your transformation project and explain how they will contribute to achieving your transformation goals. You may propose other external services not explicitly listed above but that is relevant to the successful implementation of your transformation journey. For each of the services you would like to procure, please provide an estimation of the cost allocation. In the Table 4 below, you find an example of how you should provide this information in the Application Form.

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Table 4. Example of cost allocation per service category.

Service	Is the service requested? Yes/No	Description of how the service will be used	Estimated cost allocation (total must NOT exceed 50.000)
Specialized consultancy, advisor and/or coaching services	YES	Expert support for industrial requirements translation, safety-by-design alignment, architecture review, and integration planning.	20.000
Prototyping, pilot testing and/or demonstration	YES	prototype development and field demonstration, including pilot setup, calibration, operational testing, iteration, and evidence collection.	15.000
Feasibility studies	NO		
Use of testing facilities	NO		
Adaptation of business processes	NO		
Digitalization & emerging technologies	YES	Digitalization & emerging technologies | YES/NO | Integration of advanced digital technologies to improve processes, automation, monitoring, and data management.	5.000
Funding & investment support	NO		
Integrated support & multi-service platforms	NO		
Market development & promotion	NO		
Networking & collaboration	NO		
Policy & advocacy	NO		
R&D and innovation	YES	Validation of technical methodology and robustness improvement	15.000
Sustainability & green transition	NO		
Training and skills development	NO		
Other	NO		

8.1.5. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to include in the proposal

To evaluate the **expected impact** of your business transformation project, you must provide **KPIs**. These indicators help assess both the **environmental** and **socio-economic** outcomes of your project.

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When submitting your proposal, please make sure to:

- Include only the KPIs that are relevant to your project.
- Quantify each KPI in absolute terms (e.g., tons, euros, number of jobs, hours) and in percentage (% change).
- Describe your calculation method clearly, including the source of the data used (e.g., previous years' data, studies, or official benchmarks).

Your proposal must contribute to at least one environmental and one socio-economic impact listed below.

Environmental KPIs

These indicators assess how your project will improve sustainability and resource efficiency.

Table 5. Description of Environmental impacts

Environmental Impact	Description	Unit of measure
Reduction of waste generated	Quantity of SME's wastes reduced, identifying the typology of waste reduced (according to European Waste Catalogue[1]).	% of reduction related to 1 year of activity.
		Ton of waste reduction related to 1 year of activity.
Reduction of primary raw materials consumption	Decrease in use of virgin raw materials (e.g. metals, minerals, fossils, fuels and biomass) in production processes, favoring secondary or recycled materials, according to Circular Economy Action Plan[2].	% of reduction related to 1 year of activity.
		Ton of primary raw materials consumption related to 1 year of activity.
GHG emissions reduction	SME's GHG emission reduction, determined according to GHG Protocol[3] calculation methods or other equivalent suitable EU or international standard	% of reduction related to 1 year of activity.
		Ton of CO_2e reduced related to 1 year of activity.
Primary Energy Savings	Primary Energy Savings related to SME consumption, determined according to calculation method acceptable for compliance with art. 7 of the Energy	% of energy saving related to 1 year of activity.
		Ton of oil equivalent (toe) of primary energy saved related to 1 year of activity.

[1] European Commission. (2014). *Commission Decision of 18 December 2014 amending Decision 2000/532/EC on the list of waste pursuant to Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council*. Official Journal of the European Union, L 370, 44–86. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32014D0955

[2] European Commission. (2020). *Circular economy action plan: For a cleaner and more competitive Europe*. Publications Office of the European Union. https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/9dc6aa01-39d2-11eb-b27b-01aa75ed71a1

[3] World Resources Institute & World Business Council for Sustainable Development. (2004). *The Greenhouse Gas Protocol: A corporate accounting and reporting standard (Revised Edition)*. https://ghgprotocol.org/sites/default/files/standards/ghg-protocol-revised.pdf

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Environmental Impact	Description	Unit of measure
	Efficiency Directive[4] or other equivalent suitable EU or international standard.	
Increase recycling rates	Improving quantity and quality of recovered raw materials[5]: improvement in both quantity (mass of material recovered) and quality (degree of purity and usability) of recycled materials, contributing to circular economy goals	% of increase related to 1 year of activity, specifying the recovered raw material typology.
		Ton of recovered raw material increasing related to 1 year of activity.
Reduction in use of chemicals likely to be (eco) toxic, bio-accumulative or mobile	Reduction in the consumption of hazardous chemicals that have the potential for environmental and human health harm, based on regulatory lists such as REACH's Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC) or similar.	% of reduction related to 1 year of activity.
		Ton or liters reduced related to 1 year of activity.

Socio-Economic KPIs (Expected After 3-5 Years)

These indicators evaluate the broader business, employment, and training impacts of your transformation.

Table 6. Description of socio-economic impacts.

Socio-economic impacts after 3-5 years	Description	Unit of measure
Foreseen investment	Foreseen investment to adopt business transformation, including adoption of advanced technology: this refers to the projected financial resources that the SME plans to allocate for implementing changes in its business operations. This includes the integration of advanced technologies.	€ of Investment
Turnover or sales	Total revenue generated by the SME from its business activities, typically measured over a specific period. It represents the income from selling goods or services before any expenses are deducted	€ of income
New jobs (FTE)	FTE stands for Full-Time Equivalent. This metric indicates the number of new full-time positions created by the SME, within the transformation journey and after 3-5 years.	number of new jobs intended to be created

[4]Labanca, N., & Bertoldi, P. (2016). *Energy savings calculation methods under Article 7 of the Energy Efficiency Directive* (EUR 27663 EN). Publications Office of the European Union. https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC99698/report%20on%20eed%20art%207%20-%20publishable.pdf

[5] European Environment Agency. (2024, December 5). *Measuring the quality of recycling*. https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/measuring-the-quality-of-recycling

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Socio-economic impacts after 3-5 years	Description	Unit of measure
Training or peer-learning activities	Foreseen number of training courses or peer-learning activities for upskilling and/or reskilling: this refers to the anticipated number of educational or training programs that the SME plans to offer to its employees. These programs aim to enhance employees' skills (upskilling) or teach them new skills (reskilling) to adapt to changing job requirements or technological advancement.	N° of courses and n° of hours, specifying the topic and the typology of activities

9. How your proposal will be evaluated

The evaluation of your proposal will follow a three (3)-step process:

9.1.1. Eligibility Check

Proposals will be verified for compliance with the admissibility and eligibility conditions by the MANTRA Evaluation Committee.

9.1.2. Evaluation and first screening

Eligible proposals will be evaluated and ranked by the MANTRA Evaluation Committee according to the defined award criteria for this stage. Each proposal will be assessed independently by two MANTRA experts from different organisations to ensure objectivity and consistency in the evaluation process.

The first screening phase aims to identify proposals with a strong alignment with MANTRA objectives, a credible and feasible transformation pathway, and the potential to generate measurable green, digital, and social impacts for the SME.

Particular attention will be given to the responses provided in the questions highlighted in purple throughout the application form, as these are intended to support the assessment of strategic fit, project readiness, implementation capacity, and contribution to the MANTRA triple transition.

The evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

Criterion	Description	Score Range	Weight
1. Use of advanced technologies and innovation potential	Relevance of the proposed technologies, innovation potential, and contribution to the transformation pathway.	0–5	25%
2. Project quality and implementation strategy	Clarity of the problem addressed, credibility of the proposed solution, feasibility of implementation, and coherence of the use of MANTRA and external services.	0–5	30%

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3. Contribution to the triple transition and expected impact	Contribution to green, digital and social transformation, including credibility of KPIs and expected impacts.	0–5	30%
4. SME capacity and commitment	Readiness, implementation capacity, team commitment, and engagement with the transformation process.	0–5	15%

Total Score: 20– (weighted)

Only the highest-ranked proposals (up to 50) will proceed to the final evaluation stage.

9.1.3. Final Evaluation

As previously mentioned, the highest-ranked proposals (up to 50) will be assessed by three (3) independent external experts, who will assign individual scores. Based on these scores, the MANTRA Evaluation Committee will establish the final ranking and select the proposals for funding.

These experts will be contracted by the consortium and required to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) before accessing any application materials. Each evaluator will receive the complete proposal package and will have four working weeks to carry out the evaluation.

Then, he/she will score the proposal with a mark from 1 to 5 (with 0.5 resolution) on each of the five areas of evaluation, shown in the table Table 7. Following the approach adopted in the evaluation of Horizon project proposals, the marks are to be given according to the following scale:

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

Below are summarized the five areas of evaluation and the potential scoring:

Table 7. Potential Scoring of the five areas of evaluation.

AREAS OF EVALUATION			POTENTIAL SCORING
	Project execution and MANTRA support	When analysing this section, evaluators will specifically assess the overall description, in particular the level of readiness of the proposed actions and the coherence of the requested MANTRA support.	*From 1 to 5*
	Digital approach	When analysing this section, evaluators will specifically assess innovation potential and is beyond the state of the art (e.g., focus on emerging technologies, low penetration on the specific sector).	*From 1 to 5*

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AREAS OF EVALUATION			POTENTIAL SCORING
	Business approach	Industrial relevance, potential impact (turnover, employment, market size, IP management, sales, return on investment and profit), ambitions and business view, among others.	*From 1 to 5*
	Environmental approach	When analysing this section, evaluators will specifically assess the robustness and level of ambition of the expected environmental impacts and alignment with Green Deal objectives. The KPIs calculated by the applicant will be evaluated considering also in quantitative terms the impacts to be achieved.	*From 1 to 5*
	Social approach	When analysing this section, evaluators will specifically assess the alignment with the Sustainable development Goals (SDGs). The KPIs calculated by the applicant will be evaluated considering also in quantitative terms the impacts to be achieved.	*From 1 to 5*

A minimum score of 3 out of 5 per criterion is required for a proposal to be considered for selection. A total minimum threshold score of 17.

In addition to the scores, each evaluator could assign more "bonuses" to each proposal, whose presence will be considered in the elaboration of the final ranking. These bonuses are related to the following topics:

Table 8. Additional points ("bonus") description.

BONUS CATEGORY	CRITERIA	SCORE
Innovation (from 0 to 1)	Not innovative	0
	Innovative (technologies demonstrated in a few cases of specific manufacturing subsectors)	0.5
	Highly innovative (lower TRL technologies or not)	1
Pathway Maturity (from 0 to 1)	Entry-level proposal	0
	Conceptual design-level proposal	0.5
	Deployment-level proposal	1
Quality of Supporting Documents (from 0 to 1)	No supporting documents or no added value	0
	Documents provide sufficient added value	0.5
	Documents provide significant added value (especially in English)	1
Equal Opportunities (Gender Representation)	SME legal representative (or similar role) is a woman. Additionally, a significant percentage of the SME's workforce are women.	1

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Evaluation criteria

Proposals will be scored on:

- **Project readiness**: Feasibility, timeline, and preparation.
- **Strength of the approach**:
    - Digital: use of digital technologies (e.g., AI, IoT).
    - Business: strategy, investment plan, scalability.
    - Environmental: sustainability outcomes.
    - Social: inclusion, training, job creation.

Minimum Impact Requirements: must show at least one measurable environmental and one measurable socio-economic impact (based on defined KPIs).

Ranking, Tie-breaking Rules and Final Selection

Following the completion of the evaluation process, a final score will be established for each proposal. This score will be calculated as the average of the scores awarded by the three independent evaluators for each evaluation criterion.

Applications will then be ranked according to their overall score. Applicants whose score falls below the minimum threshold of 17 points will not be considered eligible for the grant. Likewise, if an applicant scores below the minimum threshold for any individual evaluation criterion, the application will not proceed further.

Additional bonus points, up to a maximum of 4 points, may be awarded based on the following aspects:

- High innovation level
- Maturity of the transformation pathway
- Quality of documentation
- Promotion of gender equality

The maximum possible score is 29 points. Proposals will be ranked in descending order according to their final score.

In the event that two or more proposals obtain the same final score, the following tie-breaking criteria will be applied sequentially:

1. **Higher score in Project execution and coherence of the MANTRA support requested**
2. **Higher score in the Business approach**
3. **Higher score in the Environmental approach**
4. **Higher score in the Digital approach**
5. **Higher score in the Social approach**

If a tie persists after applying all the above criteria, the final decision will take into account first sectoral diversity and then geographical distribution to ensure a balanced and impactful portfolio.

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9.1.5. Communication to applicants

After the evaluation process has been concluded, applicants will be informed of the results via email. In addition, the MANTRA website will publish the list of selected applicants.

Applicants who are not selected will receive an Official Communication outlining the reasons for their exclusion.

All applicants are strongly encouraged to check their spam or junk mail folder.

10. Data protection

As part of the evaluation and selection process, MANTRA will gather personal and business-related data from applicants. The MANTRA Facilitating Platform is responsible for handling this data in strict adherence to the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). The MANTRA platform's security protocols and operational procedures are designed to safeguard the confidentiality and integrity of the collected information. To proceed with their application, all applicants must agree to the terms and conditions of the MANTRA platform. Additionally, MANTRA will only request the essential information required for the assessment and implementation of the funding program, ensuring that data collection remains limited to what is strictly necessary. Please refer to https://babele.co/terms-of-use/ to check MANTRA platform data privacy policy and security measures.

11. Helpdesk contact information

For any questions or clarifications related to the MANTRA call for SMEs, please contact the Helpdesk at: **info@mantra-project.eu.**

The MANTRA Helpdesk team is available to assist you with any inquiries regarding the process, eligibility, information requirements, or technical issues. Please allow up to 2 business days for a response.

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NOTE

This template is designed to assist applicants in preparing the application form for the MANTRA 2nd call. It serves only as an example. The applications must be built and submitted through the online MANTRA application form available through the following link MANTRA application and also available via MANTRA website: https://mantra-project.eu/.

We recommend that applicants submit their proposals well in advance of the specified deadline to ensure that all required fields are completed and that their submissions are accepted.

Application Form Template

1. SME description

1.1 Company Name

1.2 Company Subsector

- ☐ *Food (C10, C11)*
- ☐ *Textile (C13, C14, C15)*
- ☐ *Plastics (C22)*
- ☐ *Ceramics(C23)*
- ☐ *Metals (C24, C25)*

Please indicate your official NACE code:

Please note that the supporting NACE registration document must also be uploaded at the end of the application form.

1.3 Country of Operation

1.4 Company Size

☐ *The company qualifies as an SME according to the EU definition. (SME status should be checked by applicants using the EU SME self-assessment questionnaire)*

1.5 Website:

1.6 VAT number:

1.7 Address:

1.8 Contact person:

Name and surname

Email

Telephone number (optional)

Is the legal representative (or equivalent role) of this SME a woman?

☐ Yes

☐ No

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1.9 Legal representative (or equivalent role) of the SME:

Name and surname

Email

Role

2. *Proposed transformation project (score 1 to 5)*

In this section, please provide a description of your business transformation proposal including objectives, technologies[6] involved and expected impacts, the actions foreseen, the roles and responsibilities of the involved actors, investment size. Please take into account here the information obtained in your self-assessment

2.1 Proposal at a Glance

Provide a brief overview of your proposed business transformation project.

Max. 1000 characters

2.1.1 Current challenges and need for transformation (Criterion 2 – Project quality and implementation strategy)

What are the main challenges your company currently faces in terms of digitalisation and sustainability, and why is this project needed now?

Max. 1000 characters

2.2.1 Project idea and degree of innovation

Max. 4000 characters

[6] https://ati.ec.europa.eu/

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Provide a description of your business transformation project and how it will be implemented. Highlight the degree of innovation involved (this may include metrics such as the Technology Readiness Level (TRL). Also, outline the key barriers or challenges you anticipate for its implementation

2.2.2 Technology involved

Which technology involves your proposal (select one or more options)

- ☐ *advanced materials*
- ☐ *advanced manufacturing*
- ☐ *artificial intelligence*
- ☐ *augmented and virtual reality*
- ☐ *big data*
- ☐ *blockchain*
- ☐ *cloud technologies*
- ☐ *connectivity*
- ☐ *industrial biotechnology*
- ☐ *Internet of Things*
- ☐ *micro and nanoelectronics*
- ☐ *mobility*
- ☐ *nanotechnology*
- ☐ *photonics*
- ☐ *robotics*
- ☐ *security*
- ☐ *Other*

2.2.2.1 Existing technology provider

Does your company currently work with a technology provider that will be involved in the implementation of this transformation project?

☐ Yes
☐ No

If yes, please indicate the name of the technology provider(s):

_____

Please briefly describe their role in the project:

_____

2.2.3 Will your business transformation lead to any of the following results?

If so, please explain how.

Max. 2000 characters

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EXPECTED RESULTS	
Raw Material	Substitution of (critical) raw materials, second life and recycling.
Safe and sustainable by design approach	Chemicals, materials and products designed, produced, and used in a way which does not harm people and the environment. The applicants are expected to result (when applicable) in one of the following solutions: a) *New sustainable-by-design materials or products with enhanced functionalities and applications in manufacturing process;* b) *New or sub substitute materials that provide solutions for clean, toxic/pollutant free environment;* c) *Solution to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation along the value chain to establish resilient and circular value chains.*
Circular Economy-circular value chains	Solutions to strengthens cross-sectorial cooperation along the value chain to establish resilient and circular value chains. The applicants are expected to result (when applicable) in one of the following solutions: a) *New sustainable-by-design materials or products with enhanced functionalities and applications in manufacturing process;* b) *New or sub substitute materials that provide solutions for clean, toxic/pollutant free environment;* c) *Solution to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation along the value chain to establish resilient and circular value chains.*
Clean and affordable energy and energy efficiency	Implementation of innovative technologies and strategies to optimize energy consumption, integrate renewable energy sources, and enhance efficiency, leading to reduced energy costs, lower carbon emissions, and increased sustainability in industrial processes.
Supply chain resilience	Implementation of strategies and practices to enhance the supply chain's flexibility, adaptability, and resilience, enabling it to quickly respond and recover from disruptions

2.3 Investment size

Please clearly distinguish between the following:

a) Total investment for the transformation project
Provide an estimate of the total investment required to implement your proposed transformation project (including own resources and any additional funding sources, if applicable).
(Max. 500 characters)

Max. 1000 characters

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b) Use of MANTRA financial support (up to €50,000)

Explain how the MANTRA grant will be used to procure external services supporting your transformation project. The described use must be aligned with eligible activities (e.g. consultancy, prototyping, pilot testing, demonstration).

Max. 1000 characters

2.4 Readiness of the proposed action (Criterion 2 – Project quality and implementation strategy; Criterion 4 – SME capacity and commitment; Criterion 4-SME capacity and commitment)

Description of work already carried out (planning done, feasibility studies completed, licenses/permitting obtained, draft contracts or technical/economic proposals available, etc.), if applicable.

Max. 1000 characters

Project maturity stage

Please indicate the current stage of your project:

☐ Idea
☐ Concept defined
☐ Pilot tested
☐ Ready to implement

2.5 Implementation capacity (Criterion 4 – SME capacity and commitment)

Briefly describe how your company will organise the implementation of the project (e.g. internal team involved, roles, and any relevant experience or resources available).

Max. 1000 characters

3. *Main approach of the project:*

The proposal should clearly define the project's main approach, and its credibility. It is specified that a credible pathway for business transformation refers to a well-defined, realistic, and evidence-based approach that demonstrates how the SME's proposed activities will lead to measurable and sustainable improvements in the targeted impact areas. Indeed, the evaluation phase will analyse the four approaches, where applicable to the specific project.

3.1 Environmental approach (score 1 to 5)

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Define the expected environmental outcomes of your project, emphasizing their robustness and level of ambition. Demonstrate the credibility of your environmental impacts by providing quantitative and qualitative evidence where possible.

Max. 2000 characters.

3.1.1 Will your transformation contribute to any of the following environmental impacts in 1 year of activity (see full description in Guidelines for Applicant)? (Criterion 3 – Contribution to the triple transition and expected impact)

Impact	Yes/No	Quantification (% / absolute value)	Explanation
Reduction of waste generated			
Reduction of primary raw materials consumption			
GHG emissions reduction			
Primary Energy Savings			
Increase recycling rates (improving quantity and quality of recovered raw materials)			
Reduction in use of chemicals likely to be (eco) toxic, bio-accumulative or mobile			
Other environmental benefits defined by the applicant			

*3.2 **Digital approach (score 1 to 5)***

Describe the digital and technological aspects of your project, highlighting its innovation potential beyond the current state of the art. Focus on the use of advanced or emerging technologies, particularly those with low penetration in your sector. Explain how these technologies contribute to the specific transformation and offer a competitive advantage. The evaluation will consider the technological novelty of your approach, the relevance and application of advanced or emerging tech, and the significance of the innovation within your industry context.

Max. 2000 characters.

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3.3 Business approach (score 1 to 5)

Describe the business dimension of your project, demonstrating its industrial relevance and potential for market impact. Outline your business ambitions and vision, including how the project is expected to contribute to growth in terms of turnover, employment, market expansion, and return on investment (you can provide information on market size, competitive positioning, sales strategy, intellectual property (IP) management and profit expectations). If applicable, include expected economic savings and estimated payback time.

Max. 2000 characters.

3.4 Social approach (Criterion 3 – Contribution to the triple transition and expected impact)

Explain how your project promotes inclusion, diversity, gender equality, and any broader benefits for society

Max. 2000 characters.

Will your transformation contribute to any of the following socio-economic targets after 3-5 years?			
Impact	**Yes/No**	**Quantification**	**Explanation**
3.4.1 Foreseen investment to adopt business transformation, including adoption of advanced technology (≥0.5 M€)		M€	
3.4.2 Turnover or sales (≥10-15%)		%/€	
3.4.3 New jobs (≥ 2-4 FTE)		FTE	
3.4.4 Foreseen number of training courses or peer-learning activities for upskilling and/or Reskilling (≥ 2-4)		N°	
3.4.5 Other			

4 Requested MANTRA support

Please indicate which consortium advisory and support services you would like to request from MANTRA. Select up to 3 services you believe will best support the implementation of your proposed transformation project. These services are

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designed to assist with various aspects of project execution, ensuring you have the guidance and resources needed to successfully achieve your objectives. The final selection and configuration of services provided for each applicant will be determined during the comprehensive assessment of the selected beneficiaries.

Category	Name	Description
Consultancy and advisory services	**Tech Adoption**	Support for SMEs to implement Socio-technical solutions (e.g. AI, IoT, and robotics for process optimization, energy efficiency, and emissions reduction). Includes services for testing and implementing digital solutions for energy efficiency, emissions tracking, and process optimization before full deployment.
	Proof of concept	Help define technical and market feasibility and interpret results to guide go/no-go decisions.
	Technology transfer	Identify suitable technologies, facilitate licensing agreements, mediate between research institutions and companies, and manage the integration of new technology into existing operations.
	Design management	Support SMEs in structuring and guiding their design processes strategically. This includes aligning design with business goals, integrating sustainability or circular economy principles, in coordination of design activities across teams (with external consultants), align product design with business strategy, optimize user experience.
	Designing pilot process and prototyping	Design and set up pilot lines or experimental setups, run feasibility tests, interpret technical results, and recommend adjustments for scaling. Connect SMEs to testbeds or fabrication services.
	Investment readiness	Assist with business planning, financial modeling, due diligence prep, and aligning the business model with investor expectations.
	Circular business model canvas (BMS)	Map current and future models, identify circular opportunities, and integrate resource efficiency and reuse into the value proposition, supply chain, and revenue streams.
	New business model	Analyze market and competitor data, co-develop new revenue strategies, add new value chains, and validate models through customer feedback and iterative testing.
	Social innovation	Identify community needs, design inclusive business models or services, evaluate social impact, and help secure funding for socially driven innovation.
	Lean Manufacturing	Evaluate existing production processes to identify inefficiencies and sources of waste (e.g., overproduction, downtime, excess inventory). Then propose tools and solutions to reduce waste and train staff to track and maintain improvements.

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Category	Name	Description
	Market entry and expansion strategy development	Conduct market research, regulatory analysis, competitor benchmarking, channel strategy, and local partnership identification to support entry or scaling in target markets.
	Innovation road mapping	Creation of a strategic roadmap that outlines innovation priorities over time, gathering input from stakeholders, assessing market and technology trends, and define development phases and milestones
	Intellectual property rights	Support services to help SMEs identify, protect, and manage intellectual property assets such as patents, trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets. Includes IPR audits, guidance on filing procedures, freedom-to-operate analysis, and advice on IP strategy to maximize competitive advantage and innovation potential. May involve training and connection to legal or patent experts.
	Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), Social Life Cycle Assessment (s-LCA) or Life Cycle Costing (LCC)	Conduct assessments using ISO standards, compile data across the value chain, quantify impacts, and deliver actionable insights to improve sustainability performance.
	GHG emission calculation	Perform scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions analysis using tools and recognized protocols, develop reduction strategies, and assist with reporting (e.g., ISO 14067 or GHG Protocol)
	Energy Audit and/or Energy consumption analysis	Conduct onsite audits, analyze consumption patterns, recommend efficiency upgrades, and quantify potential savings.
Regulatory guidance and compliance support	**Adaptation to standards**	Guide compliance with technical standards (e.g., ISO 9001, ISO 14001, ISO 50001), conduct gap analyses, develop documentation, and support audits and certification processes (if applicable)
	Adaptation to environmental rules	Interpret relevant regulations (e.g., REACH, RoHS, EU Taxonomy), conduct compliance checks, advise on reporting obligations, and assist with permitting.
Training and Capacity building	**Skill development and specific training**	Expert-led sessions on energy efficiency, waste reduction, product life cycle assessment, and decarbonization strategies. Industry-specific programs with digital tools for carbon footprint tracking and emissions reduction planning. Some initiatives also provide continuous technical support and mentoring programs to assist companies in implementing best practices in sustainability and digital transformation.

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Category	Name	Description
Networking and partnership opportunities	**Matchmaking with technological or social partners**	Platforms for SMEs, researchers, and industry leaders to collaborate on circular economy initiatives, digital transformation, and sustainable production. Matchmaking events, working groups, and knowledge-sharing forums. Includes innovation hubs and sector-specific events to foster collaboration between companies, research centres, and policymakers.

5. Services to be procured with the grant

Please for the indicated services explain how they will contribute to achieving your transformation goals. You may propose other external service not explicitly listed above but that is relevant to the successful implementation of your transformation journey.

Service	Is the service requested? Yes/No	Description of how the service will be used	Estimated cost allocation (total must NOT exceed 50.000)
Specialized consultancy, advisor and/or coaching services			
Prototyping, pilot testing and/or demonstration			
Feasibility studies			
Use of testing facilities			
Adaptation of business processes			
Digitalization & emerging technologies			
Funding & investment support			
Integrated support & multi-service platforms			
Market development & promotion			
Networking & collaboration			
Policy & advocacy			

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R&D and innovation			
Sustainability & green transition			
Training and skills development			
Other			

Max. 1500 characters

Files to upload: Declaration of Honour

MANTRA Self-Assessment pdf file

Supporting documents

NACE registration document

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Annex I- MANTRA Self-Assessment Tool guidance

1.Purpose of the Self-Assessment Tool

As part of the MANTRA application process, all applicants are required to complete the MANTRA Self-Assessment Tool and upload the generated PDF report together with their proposal.

The self-assessment is designed to help SMEs evaluate their current level of readiness for green, digital, and social transformation. It supports companies in identifying strengths, gaps, priorities, and opportunities for improvement across several dimensions related to sustainability, innovation, digitalisation, and resilience.

The self-assessment also serves as an initial input for the MANTRA advisory process and the definition of the transformation roadmap during Phase A of the MANTRA journey.

2. Access to the Self-Assessment Tool

The MANTRA Self-Assessment Tool is available online at: https://mantra.cetim.fr

Applicants must complete the assessment and upload the resulting PDF report as part of the application package submitted through the MANTRA platform.

3. Instructions for Completing the Self-Assessment

The self-diagnostic tool allows companies to explore the different levers through which they can improve their environmental, digital, and organisational performance.

Applicants should:

- answer all questions as objectively as possible;
- assess both their current situation and future ambitions;
- complete all sections of the assessment before submission.

There are no right or wrong answers. The objective is to provide a realistic overview of the company's current maturity level and transformation ambitions.

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Figure 4. Example of the MANTRA Self-Assessment interface and maturity scale.

The tool allows users to:

- save progress and continue later if needed;
- complete the different sections in any order;
- review and update answers before finalising the assessment.

The self-assessment will be considered complete once all sections and indicators have been filled in.

4. Submission Requirements

Applicants must:

1. Complete the self-assessment online;
2. Generate the PDF report;
3. Upload the PDF report together with the application form and supporting documents through the MANTRA platform.

Applications submitted without the self-assessment report may be considered incomplete.

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5. Use of the Self-Assessment within MANTRA

The information provided through the self-assessment will support:

- the evaluation of the SME's readiness and transformation needs;
- the identification of relevant advisory services;
- the matchmaking process with experts and service providers;
- and the development of the SME's transformation roadmap during Phase A.

The self-assessment is therefore an important element of the MANTRA journey and should reflect the company's real situation and objectives as accurately as possible.

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Annex II- Advanced Technologies for Industry (ATI)

1. Advanced Technologies within MANTRA

- To support the green, digital, and social transformation of manufacturing SMEs, MANTRA promotes the adoption and integration of Advanced Technologies for Industry (ATI), as identified by the European Commission.
- Projects submitted to MANTRA must integrate at least one advanced technology contributing to the SME transformation pathway and the expected environmental, digital, social, or business impacts.
- MANTRA combines the adoption of advanced technologies with social innovation approaches, recognising that sustainable transformation also depends on skills, organisational change, collaboration, and new business models.

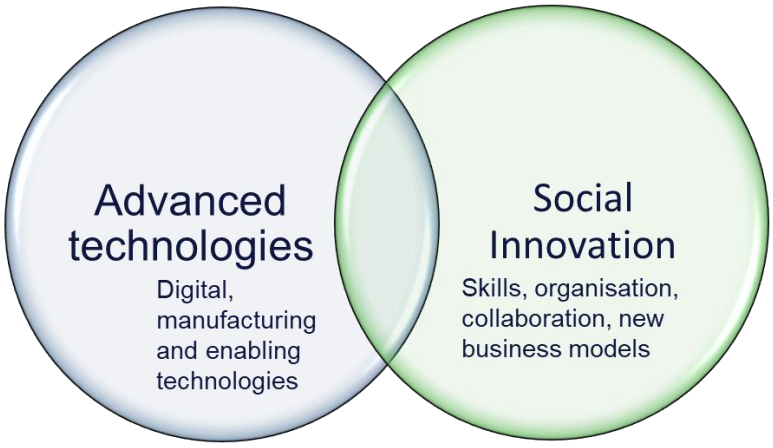

Figure 5. **MANTRA approach combining advanced technologies and social innovation.**

2. Eligible Advanced Technologies

- The following ATI categories are considered eligible within the MANTRA framework:
  1. Advanced Manufacturing Technology
  2. Advanced Materials
  3. Artificial Intelligence
  4. Augmented and Virtual Reality
  5. Big Data
  6. Blockchain
  7. Cloud Computing
  8. Connectivity
  9. Industrial Biotechnology
  10. Internet of Things (IoT)

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11. Micro- and Nanoelectronics
12. Mobility
13. Nanotechnology
14. Photonics
15. Robotics
16. Security

- Applicants must select at least one of these technologies in the Application Form and explain how the proposed technology contributes to the transformation journey of the SME.

3. ATI Technologies and SME Transformation

- The use of ATI technologies within MANTRA is expected to contribute to:
  - improved manufacturing efficiency and productivity;
  - reduction of environmental impacts and resource consumption;
  - increased resilience and competitiveness of SMEs;
  - enhanced monitoring, automation, and decision-making;
  - and the development of new sustainable and digital business models.
- MANTRA particularly encourages projects combining technological adoption with organisational innovation, skills development, and collaboration across the value chain.

4. ATI and Social Innovation

- MANTRA recognises that successful transformation is not based exclusively on technology adoption.
- For this reason, the project also promotes social innovation aspects such as:
  - skills development and upskilling;
  - organisational transformation;
  - collaboration and co-creation;
  - new business models;
  - and inclusive and sustainable industrial practices.

The combination of advanced technologies and social innovation is considered a key enabler for the long-term sustainability and resilience of European manufacturing SMEs.

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