



ANNOUNCEMENT FOR SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

2024 Call for Exploratory Research Projects Under the MIT Portugal Program

NOVEMBER 2024

MIT Portugal



The present **Announcement for a Call for Proposals** (ACP) is intended for Exploratory Research Projects (PeX) in the scope of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Portugal Program, submitted through a competitive procedure, as announced at <https://www.fct.pt/>. The Call is subject to the terms set by the Regulation for Projects Exclusively funded by National Funds, hereinafter designated by [FCT Projects Regulations](#), published in Regulation No. 999/2016, in its current wording, i.e., amended and republished by Regulation No. 5/2024 and corrected by the Declaration of Rectification No. 366/2024/2, published in the Diário da República, 2nd series, No. 100, of May 23, 2024.

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1. AIMS AND PRIORITIES

The consolidation and reinforcement of the National System of Science and Technology (NSST) constitute a priority of the national policy for science and technology. It aims to increase the national and international competitiveness of science and technology, and its contribution to innovation and transfer of knowledge and at complying to the global aspirations defined in the *Agenda 2030: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. In this context, it is particularly relevant the promotion and strengthening of the scientific and technological institutions through the participation of research teams in Projects.

Considering these goals, and assuming broad cooperation between NSST entities and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), FCT is launching this Exploratory Research Call to fund applications oriented towards scientific research in a holistic approach through integrated and multidisciplinary projects with a vision of scale evolution, in the following thematic areas:

- Climate Science & Climate Change
- Earth Systems: Oceans to Near Space
- Digital Transformation in Manufacturing
- Sustainable Cities

The PeX should take an “exploratory approach”, i.e., adopt a research theme in one of the emerging areas of the [MIT Portugal Program](#) that can be identified as a future research area, with high impact for Portugal as a living laboratory in the development and validation of new solutions, and that promotes the competitiveness of the Portuguese economy.

The application should aim to develop research activities between Portuguese universities and the MIT towards the development of intelligent solutions, promoting knowledge/research value, promoting the sustainable thinking, integrating human factors and technology, and stimulating multidisciplinary approaches.

The research plan must mention in which terms the MIT research team will contribute to the project.

All applications must fully comply with the terms of reference defined in the **[Terms of Reference for the 2024 Call for Exploratory Research Projects under the MIT Portugal Program](#)**.

2. SUPPORTED ENTITIES

The following non-entrepreneurial Portuguese entities of the R&I are individual or co-promotion beneficiaries:

- i. Higher education institutions, their institutes and R&D units;
- ii. State, international or associated Laboratories with head office in Portugal;
- iii. Non-profit private institutions whose main objective is R&D activities, including Collaborative Laboratories (CoLab) and Centres for Technology and Innovation (CTI);
- iv. Other non-profit private and public institutions developing or participating in scientific research activities.

Funding for the MIT research team participating in the project will be provided directly by MIT.

3. CRITERIA FOR SUPPORTING PROJECTS

The call aims to support R&D projects framed into Exploratory Research Projects (PeX) type. These are scientific or technological research projects that explore ideas or concepts with significant originality and/or innovative potential. PeX should value impact, i.e., propose potential solutions to real-world problems, going beyond scientific production.

Projects may be presented “individually” (only one beneficiary) or in “co-promotion” (two or more beneficiaries). Projects in co-promotion must be led by an entity listed in no. 2 of this Announcement.

The submitted projects must:

- be led by a research group from an institution listed under no. 2 of this Announcement;
- have the participation of a MIT research team with a MIT researcher with Principal Investigator status in the project's Research Team.

The project consortium may include, on the Portuguese side, Collaborative Institutions, that may also invest in the exploratory research project and whose participation is likely to bring relevant expertise to the project. However, such entities will not be funded under this call.

This call exclusively funds the participation of Portuguese research teams from entities as listed in no. 2 of this Announcement.

R&D projects with strong ongoing collaboration between Portuguese and MIT teams of seed projects will be privileged. This collaboration must be confirmed by a letter in which a PI of an ongoing MIT seed project expresses intent to collaborate with the Portuguese PI.

The project should have a maximum duration of **12 months**, renewable for a maximum of 3 months, in duly justified cases.

The maximum funding per project is **€ 50,000 (fifty thousand euros)** for the Portuguese Institutions. Funding for the MIT research team participating in the project will be provided by MIT.

4. FORM OF SUPPORT AND FUNDING RATE

The funding to be granted under this call is non-reimbursable in accordance with number 1 of Article 7 of the [FCT Projects Regulations](#). The projects will be fully financed by National funds through the FCT budget, applying the option of simplified costs in the form of a *lump sum*. The contribution is paid upon presentation of evidence and results that demonstrate the effective completion of the project as contractually agreed.

Regardless of the project's approved funding amount, the initial advance payment is 75% of the approved funding. The remaining amount, up to the approved funding for each project, is paid upon project completion, through a final reimbursement payment method.

For budget definition purposes, refer to the terms defined in the "[Methodology for Applying Simplified Costs - Lump Sums](#)", as well as to Articles 8 and 9 of the FCT Project Regulations.

In the scope of this ACP, a fixed rate of 25% is applied to the estimated direct eligible costs, and the expenses for the adaptation of buildings and facilities are limited to a maximum of 10% of the project's total eligible expenses.

5. BUDGET ALLOCATION

The budget allocation for this call is **€ 400,000 (four-hundred thousand euros)**, for eligible Portuguese institutions, for projects starting in 2025.

Considering the maximum amount of eligible funding per project, the Program expects to support up to 8 (eight) exploratory research projects through this Call. However, the actual number of exploratory projects funded will depend on the quality and merit of the submitted applications.

Selected projects will receive up to **€ 50,000 (fifty thousand euros)** to fund activities carried out by the Portuguese teams.

6. PROJECTS AND BENEFICIARIES ELEGIBILITY CRITERIA

The eligibility conditions for projects and beneficiaries are those indicated in the [FCT Projects Regulations](#), articles no. 5 and 6:

6.1 Project

- Applications which have been submitted in previous editions of the same call with an ongoing decision process are not allowed to apply;
- Applications selected for funding by FCT or other funding agencies are not accepted;
- Multiple applications of the same projects are not accepted:
 - In different scientific areas of the same call;
 - In different calls in which there is temporal overlap within the submission of applications;
 - In the case of applications to calls with different theme scopes, and which take place in different periods of application submission, the funding recommendation within one of them is a condition for exclusion from the decision process of the remaining ones;
- Related applications from the same team, submitted to the FCT or other funding agencies, must be declared at the time of application.

“Multiple applications” are proposals that fully or partially share the work plan.

6.2 Principal Investigator in Portugal

- Must have a physical allocation to the project;

- Must have a Doctoral degree. The document certifying the doctoral degree must be presented during the contracting stage;
- Should also have an employment contract or grant contract with the Principal Contractor. In the absence of such a link, at the time of the Acceptance Document a written agreement between the parties must be submitted, according to point c) of item 1 of Article 6 of FCT Projects Regulations;
- Can only submit one proposal as PI in this call;
- Who had a final scientific report rejected within two years before the opening of the call, for reasons attributable to them, is not allowed to submit an application;
- Cannot be in a situation of unjustified non-fulfilment of the regulatory requirements regarding the presentation of reports on scientific execution, of projects concluded and financed through FCT, and in which acted as PI.

6.3 Members of the Research Team in Portugal

- Shall be dedicated to the project, according to their participation.

6.4 MIT Research Team

- Must be led by a researcher with Principal Investigator status. This participation must be confirmed by means of a “Collaboration Letter” to be submitted with the application.

6.5 Principal Contractor

- Must be one of the national entities of the R&D system listed in no. 2 of this Announcement;
- Cannot be associated with an application if standing in an unjustified situation regarding the return of funding transferred to the Principal Contractor in previous projects with the same Principal Investigator.

The members of the MIT Portugal Program governance structure (Governing Committee, External Review Committee and Program Directors) are not allowed to participate as PIs, team members, or consultants.

7. SELECTION METHODOLOGY

An international panel of independent reviewers, affiliated to foreign institutions, will carry out the evaluation. The selection and ranking of projects are based on the Merit of the Project (MP) using the following criteria, which are described in greater detail in the *Guide for Peer Reviewers* and in the *Terms of Reference for the 2024 Call for Exploratory Research Projects under the MIT Portugal Program*:

- A. Scientific merit (A1) and innovative nature (A2) of the project from an international standpoint;
- B. Scientific merit of the PI and research team (B1), including impact of the project's execution in the development of the PI's career and/or research (B2);
- C. Feasibility of the workplan and the expected indicators (C1), as well as the budget adequacy (C2);

The **Merit of the Project (MP)**, is calculated according to the following formula:

$$\text{MP} = 0.40 (0.50 \text{ A1} + 0.50 \text{ A2}) + 0.35 (0.60 \text{ B1} + 0.40 \text{ B2}) + 0.25 (0.50 \text{ C1} + 0.50 \text{ C2})$$

Each criterion is scored using a 9-point scale system (1 – minimum; 9 – maximum) with decimal numbers. The final score of MP is rounded to two-decimal places.

If information made available in the application does not allow for evaluating a given criterion, then the respective criterion will receive a score of 1.0 (one).

For a proposal to be eligible for funding, a minimum score of MP equal to or higher than 7.00 points is required.

All the applications will be ranked by the panel in decreasing order of the MP score. At least, one proposal per thematic area (listed in point 1 of this announcement) will be recommended for funding, as long as its score is higher than 7.00 points.

In case of ties (projects with the same MP score), the ratings assigned to criteria A2, B1, A1, B2, C1 and C2 will be used sequentially and in decreasing order to provide the final ranking of the projects.

8. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications must be presented to FCT, in English, from **December 2, 2024 to January 22, 2025, at 17:00 Lisbon time**, using a specific on-line form and submitted through [myFCT platform](#).

The PI, the core elements, as well as the remaining elements of the Portuguese research team, are responsible for submitting an updated version of their **CV in English on the [CIÊNCIAVITAE platform](#)**.

The Statement of Commitment for the Principal Contractor will be available on [myFCT platform](#), for agreement by the head of the Principal Contractor or someone appointed by him, following the deadline for submission of applications and up to **February 5, 2025 at 17:00 (Lisbon time)**.

Applications are composed by the on-line form and the following documents, also submitted electronically:

- a **“Collaboration Letter”** by at least one MIT faculty or researcher with principal investigator status, describing their scientific responsibility in the project;
- Timeline file of the project tasks.

9. NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL ACCESS POLICY

FCT promotes a policy of non-discrimination and equal access, thus no applicant may be privileged, benefited, damaged, or deprived of any right or exempted from any duty. This includes ancestry, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family situation, economic situation, education, origin or social condition, genetic heritage, reduced work capacity, disability, chronic disease, nationality, ethnicity or race, land of origin, language, religion, political or ideological beliefs or trade union affiliation.

10. APPLICABLE LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

The call is governed by this Announcement, by the [FCT Projects Regulations](#), approved by Regulation No. 999/2016, in its current wording, i.e., amended and republished by Regulation No. 5/2024 and corrected by the Declaration of Rectification No. 366/2024/2, published in the Diário da República, 2nd series, No. 100, of May 23, 2024, and by other applicable national and community legislation.

FCT recommends a timely reading of all the documentation supporting the application, namely, the FCT Projects Regulations, the Application Guide, the Terms of Reference for the 2024 Call for Exploratory Research Projects under the MIT Portugal Program, the Guide for Peer Reviewers, CIÊNCIAVITAE Guide and the Ethics Self-Assessment Guide available at www.fct.pt/.

11. PROTECTION OF PERSONAL DATA

In the context of this call, personal data is collected, and its processing is carried out in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), approved by Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council, dated April 27, 2016, and Law 58/2019 of August 8, 2019, ensuring the implementation of the GDPR in the Portuguese legal framework.

12. CONTACT POINT

For inquires of **scientific nature**, please contact the MIT Portugal program at: info@mitportugal.org.

For specific information related to the **application submission**, please contact: concursoprojetos@fct.pt.

Madalena Alves

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