

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

2025 Call for Exploratory Research Projects under the Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program

DECEMBER 2025

Carnegie Mellon 
Portugal



Announcement for Proposal Submissions

This Announcement for Proposal Submissions is aimed at Exploratory Research Projects within the scope of Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program, submitted under a call for proposals, with terms disseminated at www.fct.pt, prepared under 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.

1. Aims and Priorities

The consolidation and reinforcement of the National System of Science and Technology (NSST) are key priorities of the national science and technology policy. These efforts aim to enhance national and international competitiveness in science and technology, foster innovation, and facilitate knowledge transfer. They also align with the global aspirations outlined in the United Nations' Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, promoting and strengthening scientific and technological institutions through the active participation of research teams in projects is particularly significant. 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.

The 2025 Call for Exploratory Research Projects (ERPs) is designed to assist teams of researchers from the NSST entities, the Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and industry partners in bootstrapping high-impact potential research activities of strategic relevance for the [Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program](#) (CMU Portugal). The Call encourages recent Ph.D. graduates that are faculty at Portuguese Universities or researchers with an appointment in Portuguese research institutions to submit a research proposal.

Considering these goals FCT launches the Exploratory Research Call for funding projects that aim to stimulate and promote Portugal's international competitiveness and innovation capacity in Science and Technology (S&T), in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

The proposals should be high-risk/high-reward and show promise and a strategy for significant future expansion of the project's goals. ERPs are aimed at formulating and launching the basis for longer-term projects, *i.e.*, they will not be required to achieve, within their scope, the fully developed and ambitious results that will be typical of longer-term projects. However, the proposals must be very concrete on the activities and outcomes that the consortium proposes to carry out and achieve within the ERPs scope and clearly link them to its longer-term objectives. The ERPs should value impact, *e.g.*, by building systems that address real-world problems beyond just research papers.

Under this Call, the Program is seeking proposals, namely in ICT, focusing on the opportunities provided by the data economy as a driver of growth and change.

2. Supported Entities

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

- Higher Education Institutions, their Institutes, and R&D units;
- State or international Laboratories with head offices in Portugal;
- Non-profit private institutions whose main objective is R&D activities, including Collaborative Laboratories (CoLab) and Centers for Technology and Innovation (CTI);
- Other non-profit private and public institutions developing or participating in scientific research activities.

The participating researchers from Carnegie Mellon University will be funded by the program's CMU counterpart, through Amendment No. 10 to the Research and Education Collaboration Agreement between FCT and CMU.

3. Type and modality of Projects to be funded

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.

The submitted proposals must include:

- One or more Portuguese research institutions from different entities as identified in no.2;
- One partner CMU faculty team.

The project consortium may include Collaborative Institutions, that may also invest in the exploratory project, bringing relevant competencies to the project. However, such entities will not be funded by this Call.

This Call will only fund resources and activities attributable to research teams of eligible Portuguese beneficiaries (supported entities).

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

The maximum funding per project for Portuguese beneficiaries is:

- 70.000 euros for consortia with more than one Portuguese research institution;
- 50.000 euros for projects with a single Portuguese research institution.

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

4. Form of support and Funding rate

National funds will finance the projects through the FCT budget.

The funding to be granted under this call, for Portuguese teams, shall be non-reimbursable, 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 for the project is 75% of the approved funding. The remaining amount, up to the approved funding for each project, is paid upon closing of the scientific and financial components of the project, through a final reimbursement payment method.

Within the scope of this call, the indirect costs are a fixed rate of 25% of all the estimated direct eligible costs. The expenses for the adaptation of buildings and facilities are limited to a maximum of 10% of the project's total eligible expenses.

For budget definition purposes, refer to the terms defined in the "[Methodology for Applying Simplified Costs – Lump Sums](#)," as well as to Articles no. 8 and 9 of the [FCT Projects Regulations](#).

5. Budget allocation

The budget allocation for this call is **€ 400.000 (four hundred thousand euros)**, for projects starting in 2026.

Considering the maximum amount of eligible funding per project, the Program expects to support up to 8 (eight) exploratory research projects through this Call.

The participating researchers from Carnegie Mellon University will be funded independently by the CMU Portugal Program at Carnegie Mellon University. The CMU Portugal Program will fund the participating CMU research teams' activities at Carnegie Mellon University at a level similar to the Portuguese team.

6. Projects and Beneficiaries' eligibility criteria

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

6.1 Project

- a) Applications submitted, whether fully or partially, in any language other than English will not be considered.
- b) Applications that have been selected for funding by FCT or by other funding agencies are not allowed to apply;
- c) Multiple applications of the same project are not accepted:

- In the present call.
- In different calls in which there is temporal overlap within the submission of applications.
- In the case of applications to calls with different thematic areas, and which take place in different periods of application submission, the funding recommendation within one of the calls is a condition for exclusion from the decision process of the remaining ones.

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

- d) Related proposals, from the same team, submitted to FCT or to other funding agencies should be declared in the application.

6.2 Principal Investigator (PI) in Portugal

The Principal Investigator must comply with the following rules:

- a) Have physical allocation to the project.
- b) Hold a doctoral degree by the application deadline, with supporting documentation to be submitted during the contractualization phase.
- c) Should 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 no. 6 of [FCT Projects Regulations](#), in which all the institutions must be localized in Portugal.
- d) Can only submit one proposal as PI in this call.
- e) Can only participate in one additional application as team member.
- f) Cannot be the PI of projects with a rejected final scientific report due to reasons attributable to the applicant, within the two years prior to the opening date of this call.
- g) 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 Research Team in Portugal

Each researcher (who is not a PI of an application) may participate as a team member in a maximum of two applications submitted under this call.

The members of the research team in Portugal shall be dedicated to the project according to their participation.

6.4 CMU Research Team

The lead team member at CMU must hold a faculty appointment at CMU.

The lead team member at CMU shall provide their counterpart in Portugal with all the information and documentation necessary for the preparation and submission of the proposal, including the confirmation statement and all details specified in the [CMU PI Research Proposal Template](#).

6.5 Principal Contractor

The Principal Contractor of the project must be one of the national entities of the Portuguese R&I system mentioned in no.2;

Applications will not be accepted if the Principal Contractor is in an unjustified situation regarding the return of funding transferred to the Principal Contractor in previous projects with the same Principal Investigator.

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) indicator using the following criteria, which are described in greater detail in the Guide for Peer Reviewers:

- A. Scientific merit (A1) and innovative nature (A2) of the project from an international standpoint and alignment with the goals of Phase IV of the CMU Portugal Program – **40%**;
- B. Scientific merit of the PI and the research team (B1), including the impact of project execution in developing the PI's career and/or research (B2) – **35%**;
- C. Feasibility of the workplan (including its planning) and the expected indicators (C1), including the project's impact in a real-world problem, as well as the budget adequacy (C2) – **25%**.

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

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

The criteria A, B and C are 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.

In cases where the information provided in the application does not allow for a substantiated score for a specific evaluation criterion, a score of 1.0 (one) will be assigned.

For a proposal to be eligible for funding, a minimum score of MP equal or higher than 5.00 points is required.

For selection and decision-making regarding funding, projects will be ranked by the MP score obtained in the review process in decreasing order. As a tiebreaker between applications with the same MP score, the classifications assigned to criteria A2, B1, A1, B2, C1, and C2 will be used successively in descending order to provide the final ranking of the projects.

8. Submission of Applications

Applications must be submitted in **English**, between **December 23, 2025** and **February 10, 2026**, at 5 p.m. (Lisbon time), through a specific electronic form available on [myfct](#) platform.

The PI, the core elements, and the remaining elements of the Portuguese research team, must have their *curriculum vitae* completed 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 24, 2026** at 5 p.m. (Lisbon time).

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

- A confirmation statement, describing the faculty appointment at CMU of the CMU Lead PI;
- A completed [2025 CMU Portugal ERP: CMU PI Research Proposal Template](#);
- File with the project timeline and main tasks (including national entities and the CMU team).

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 Regulation of Projects Financed Exclusively by National Funds, 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.

Before submitting a proposal, applicants are advised to thoroughly review all supporting documentation available on the [Call's webpage](#).

11. Data Protection

In the context of this call, personal data are collected and processed in compliance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 (General Data Protection Regulation – “GDPR”). In addition, data processing complies with the provisions of Law No. 58/2019 of 8 August, which ensures the implementation of the GDPR in the Portuguese legal framework.

The Foundation for Science and Technology, I.P. (FCT) acts as the funding body for the projects and is responsible for launching, evaluating, deciding on, and managing the funding process. For these purposes, FCT acts as the data controller with regard to the personal data collected and processed under this call, in accordance with the GDPR. The processing of personal data is carried out for the purposes of managing the call and the corresponding funding instruments and complies with the principles of lawfulness, fairness, transparency and storage limitation.

The processing of personal data by FCT is based, pursuant to Article 6(1)(c) and (e) of the GDPR, on compliance with legal obligations to which FCT is subject and on the performance of tasks carried out in the public interest vested in FCT, namely in the context of public funding of scientific research.

In the context of the CMU Portugal Exploratory Project Call, and considering the specific funding model whereby the Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) provides financial support to the U.S.-based research team, it is necessary to share certain information contained in the submitted proposals with CMU. Such data sharing is strictly limited to what is necessary to:

- confirm that the CMU Principal Investigator holds a faculty appointment at CMU; and
- verify that the proposed budget includes costs eligible under the CMU Portugal program at CMU.

For these purposes, restricted access to the submitted proposals will be granted to a limited number of members of the top governance structure of the CMU Portugal Program, namely the CMU Portugal Executive Director in Portugal, the Associate Director at CMU, and the National Directors of the CMU Portugal Program. Access to personal data will be limited to the information strictly necessary for the purposes described above and will not be used for evaluation, selection, funding decisions, or any other purposes.

Where applicable, this sharing of personal data may involve an international transfer of data to the United States of America, which is carried out in accordance with Chapter V of the GDPR, on the basis of the European Commission’s adequacy decision regarding the EU–US Data Privacy Framework, to which CMU is certified, thereby ensuring an adequate level of protection for the personal data transferred.

Applicants are hereby informed that this limited and controlled sharing of personal data is necessary for the management and implementation of the CMU Portugal Program and is carried out in compliance with the GDPR and applicable national legislation.

For detailed information regarding the personal data processing to be performed by FCT within the scope of this call, applicants should consult the Personal Data Protection document made available on the call’s webpage.

12. Contact Point

For inquiries of **scientific nature**, please contact the Carnegie Mellon Portugal Program at research@cmuportugal.org.

For specific **information related to the Carnegie Mellon team lead requirement or submission**, please contact CMUPortugal@andrew.cmu.edu.

For specific information related to the application **submission and FCT's applicable regulations**, please contact concursoprojetos@fct.pt.

Madalena Alves

President of the Board of Directors, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P.



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