

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE 2022 CALL FOR EXPLORATORY RESEARCH PROJECTS UNDER THE UT AUSTIN PORTUGAL PROGRAM

The present Announcement for Call for Proposals (ACP) is intended for R&D projects in specific areas. It is submitted under a call for proposals, with terms disseminated on www.fct.pt, and prepared under the terms set by the Regulation for Projects Exclusively funded by National Funds, hereinafter designated by [FCT Projects Regulations](#) and published in Regulation No. 999/2016, of October 31st.

1. AIMS AND PRIORITIES

The consolidation and reinforcement of the National System of Science and Technology (NSST) constitute priorities of the National Science and Technology (S&T) policy, which aims to increase the national and international competitiveness of science and technology and its contribution to innovation and knowledge transfer. In this context, the promotion and strengthening of the scientific and technological institutions through the participation of their research teams in Projects is of the utmost importance.

The **UT Austin Portugal 2022 Call for Exploratory Research Projects (ERPs)** has been designed to help teams of researchers from non-corporate entities of the National Scientific and Technology System (NSTS) and The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin) come together to conduct joint exploratory research activities in the leading scientific areas of the UT Austin Portugal Program.

Proposed projects must aim to stimulate and promote Portugal's international competitiveness through Science and Technology (S&T), focusing on the opportunities provided by the data economy as a driver of growth and change.

Submitted proposals must configure groundbreaking, high-risk/high-reward projects with a potential for further expansion. Although exploratory research projects (ERPs) are not expected to achieve, during their standard time frame, the sort of results typical of longer projects, submitted proposals must be able to clearly frame the outcomes they should deliver in 12 months and link them to long-term goals for full value realization.

The ERPs should value impact, i.e., propose potential solutions to real-world problems, thereby going beyond the production of scientific papers.

Considering the above-mentioned goals, FCT is launching the **Exploratory Research Call** (to fund applications in the following areas):

- i) Advanced Computing;**
- ii) Medical Physics for Emerging Cancer Therapies;**
- iii) Nano Materials for New Markets;**
- iv) Space-Earth Interactions.**

A detailed description of the challenges and subtopics related to each scientific area is provided in the [Terms of Reference](#) for Exploratory Research Projects under the UT Austin Portugal Program – Call for Proposals 2022.

Project proposals addressing **Advanced Computing**-related topics are encouraged to foster synergies with the Minho Advanced Computing Center (MACC).

Additionally, proposals addressing the **Space-Earth Interactions** area should, desirably, demonstrate their contribution to the Atlantic International Research Center's scientific agenda (AIR Center), as laid down in the document "[Towards a Science and Technology agenda for an integrative approach to the Atlantic: Climate Change and Energy Systems, Space and Ocean Sciences, through North-South cooperation](#)", available on FCT's website.

All applications must fully comply with the terms of reference defined in the [Terms of Reference](#) for Exploratory Research Projects under the UT Austin Portugal Program – Call for Proposals 2022.

2. SUPPORTED ENTITIES

The following Portuguese organizations can be beneficiaries of the funding provided through this Call:

- a. Higher Education Institutions, their institutes and R&D units;
- b. State or International Laboratories with head office in Portugal;
- c. Non-profit private institutions whose main objective is R&D activities;
- d. Other non-profit private and public institutions developing or participating in scientific research activities.

This Call will only fund resources and activities attributable to research teams of eligible Portuguese beneficiaries (supported entities). Under the UT Austin Portugal Program, UT Austin will grant funding to UT Austin Principal Investigators partnering with eligible Portuguese beneficiaries.

3. CRITERIA FOR SUPPORTING PROJECTS

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

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

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 research team.

The submitted proposals must include:

- One or more Portuguese research institutions as identified in no. 2 of this Call Announcement.
- At least one partner at UT Austin (or at the UT MD Anderson Cancer Center for applications in the area of Medical Physics, if applicable). Also, under this Call, proposals in the area of Advanced Computing may be led by a Principal Investigator (PI) affiliated with the Texas Advanced Computing Center (TACC), provided that they meet the eligibility status set forth in no 6.4 of this Announcement.

The project consortium may include, on the Portuguese side, collaborative institutions, i.e., companies, municipalities, CoLABs, and other similar entities, that may wish to 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.

4. FORM OF SUPPORT AND FUNDING RATE

Supports to be granted are non-refundable.

Projects will be funded by National funds through the FCT budget.

5. BUDGET ALLOCATION

The budget allocation for this call is € 400,000 (four hundred thousand euros) for eligible Portuguese institutions with projects starting at the beginning of 2023.

Up to € 50,000 (fifty thousand euros) will be granted per selected project for the the Portuguese research team to undertake its research work plan.

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 of the submitted proposals and the funding available.

The UT Austin Portugal Program's budget at UT Austin will provide matched funding for UT Austin's research teams involved in the projects receiving the grants available on the Portuguese side through this Call.

6. PROJECTS AND BENEFICIARIES' ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The eligibility conditions for projects and beneficiaries are those indicated in the [FCT Project 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;
- 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.

6.2 Principal Investigator in Portugal

- Can only submit one proposal as PI in this call;
- Must identify a co-responsible for the project, the Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI), that will replace the PI when he/she is unable to fulfil his/her duties; The Co-PI can only be identified as such in only one proposal and cannot present an application as PI;
- Must have a Doctoral degree. The document certifying the doctoral degree must be attached to the application;
- 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's of [FCT's Project Regulations](#);
- If a PI has had a final scientific report rejected in the two years before the opening of the call for reasons attributable to them, they are not allowed to submit an application;
- The PI 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

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

6.4 UT Austin Team

- The proposal must be led by a tenured or tenure-track faculty member, who will be responsible for the project at the American counterpart. A confirmation statement should be attached to the application.
 - In the area of **Advanced Computing**, full-time senior researchers from the Texas Advanced Computing Center (TACC) may also lead projects, as long as they have a PI status, which should be indicated in the confirmation statement.
 - In the area of **Medical Physics**, faculty at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center may also participate and/or lead projects.

6.5 Principal Contractor in Portugal

- Must be one of the national entities of the R&D system listed in no. 2;
- Can not 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.

7. ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

The following expenses are eligible:

a) Direct Costs for Portuguese institutions:

- i. **Human resources** dedicated or related to the development of R&D activities regarding the project's execution in all mandatory components by the applicable labor legislation, including expenses with grant holders directly supported by the beneficiaries.
- ii. Expenses with **missions** in Portugal and abroad, directly attributable to the project, fulfil the legal regulations that rules public expenditure, namely the Decree-Law No.106/98 of April 24th and the Decree-Law No. 192/95 of July 28th, in its current wording;
- iii. **Acquisition of scientific and technical tools and equipment**, indispensable to the project if within its useful lifetime;
- iv. **Amortization of technical and scientific tools and equipment**, indispensable to the project and of which the useful lifetime falls within the execution period but does not end within that period;
- v. **Subcontracts** directly related to the project scientific task's execution;
- vi. Expenses related to the national and international record of **patents, copyrights, open-access publications, utility models and designs, national models or trademarks** when

associated with other forms of intellectual protection, namely fees, state-of-the-art searches and consulting expenses;

- vii. Expenses with the **demonstration, promotion and disclosure of project's outputs**, for dissemination actions of public knowledge and public disclosure of the results, namely publication fees in compliance with the national policies for the Open Access;
- viii. **Acquisition of other goods and services** directly related to the project execution, including costs with **consultants** that do not establish subcontracts.

b) Indirect Costs for Portuguese institutions, with a fixed rate of 25% of direct eligible costs with exclusion of subcontracting.

Non-eligible expenses for Portuguese institutions are indicated in Article 9 of [FCT Projects Regulation](#).

The conditions of eligibility indicated in point 2 of the [Budget Execution Norms](#) should also be taken into consideration.

8. PAYMENTS AND EXPENDITURE JUSTIFICATION

The advance payment will be 75% of the funding approved.

The remaining amount, until the approved funding for each project, will be paid after the scientific and financial components of the project are closed and by means of a final refund payment.

The expenditure justification should be made via electronic submission of the identifying lists of expenses paid, and in a specific form provided through FCT "[Portal de Ciência e Tecnologia](#)".

9. SELECTION METHODOLOGY

An international panel of independent reviewers, affiliated with foreign institutions, will carry out the evaluation. The selection and ranking of projects are based on a Project Merit Indicator (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 [2022 UT Austin Portugal's Call for Exploratory Projects](#):

- A. Scientific merit and innovative nature of the project from an international standpoint and alignment with the objectives of the UT Austin Portugal Program and the scientific area where it falls under;
- B. Scientific merit of the research team;
- C. Feasibility of the work program and budget adequacy;
- D. The potential social and economic impact of the research work;

The **Merit of the Project** (MP) is given by:

$$\text{MP} = 0.40 \text{ A} + 0.20 \text{ B} + 0.20 \text{ C} + 0.20 \text{ D}$$

The criteria A, B, C and D 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.

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 or higher than 5.00 points is required.

For the purpose of selection and decision-making regarding funding, projects will be ranked by MP in decreasing order. In case of ties (projects with the same MP score), the ratings assigned to criteria A, B, C and D will be used sequentially and by decreasing order to provide the final ranking of the projects.

10. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications must be presented to FCT, in English, **from October 11 to November 17, 2022, at 17:00 Lisbon time**, using a specific on-line form and submitted through myFCT platform.

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

- "Technical Annex" (according to no. 2.6 of "[Terms of Reference](#) for Exploratory Research Projects under the UT Austin Portugal Program - Call for Proposals 2022")
- The document that certifies the PhD degree of the Lead Principal Investigator (PI) in Portugal;
- **A statement from the PI at UT Austin** (or at MDACC - for applications in the area of Medical Physics) confirming that he/she will be the PI at the American counterpart and that he/she holds a tenure-track faculty appointment at the same university;
 - In the case of proposals in the area of **Advanced Computing**, led by PIs at the Texas Advanced Computing Center (TACC), the statement must indicate the PI is a full-time senior researcher with PI status;
- File with the project timeline and main tasks.

The Principal Investigator, Co-principal Investigator, the core elements, as well as the remaining elements of the research team in Portugal, 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 2 December 2022 at 17:00 (Lisbon time).

11. 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.

12. 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, of 16 October, and by other applicable national and community legislation.

FCT recommends a timely reading of all the documentation supporting the application, namely the [FCT Projects Regulation](#), the [Guidelines for Exploratory Research Projects Proposals Writing](#), the [Terms of Reference](#) for Exploratory Research Projects under the UT Austin Portugal Program - Call for Proposals 2022, the [Guide for Peer Reviewers](#), [CIÊNCIAVITAE Guide](#) and the [Ethics Self-Assessment Guide](#).

13. CONTACT POINT

For inquiries of a **scientific nature**, please contact the UT Austin Portugal program at research@utaustinportugal.org.

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

Madalena Alves
President, Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia