

TERMS OF REFERENCE INTERNAL SEED PROJECTS

Supporting new collaborations, emerging talent, and commercialization

1 Introduction

Recognizing the relevance of internal exploratory research projects INESC TEC is launching an instrument to fund *Internal Seed Projects*, aimed at supporting 3 categories of projects:

- Inter-Center Research;
- Junior Researcher Development;
- Commercialization Proof-of-Concept.

An *Inter-Center Research* project should involve researchers from more than one center and focus on the launching and initial steps of original, disruptive ideas and high-risk research activities, with outputs in low TRLs, for a period of up to two years.

A *Junior Researcher Development* project is aimed at fostering the development of very innovative ideas by the institute's younger talent, covering any TRL and scientific domain, for a period of up to one year.

A *Commercialization Proof-of-Concept* project aims at supporting product and market proof-of-concept activities, targeting high TRLs and all scientific domains, also for a period of up to one year.

Regardless of its category, an *Internal Seed Project* should be high-risk/high-reward and explicitly show promise and a strategy for significant future expansion.

2 Awards

2.1 Duration

The awards will be effective for *Inter-Center Research* projects lasting 24 calendar months or less, and *Junior Researcher Development* or *Commercialization Proof-of-Concept* projects lasting 12 calendar months or less.

2.2 Eligible costs

The eligible costs are the following: human resources, missions, consultants, equipment, acquisition of goods and services and other current expenses, and patenting. The funding for each project is flexible, but will not cover personal computers.

2.3 Application

Applications are submitted through the on-line form available in INESC TEC's platform and it consists of:

- Summary information. Title of the project, project category, contact information of the PI, list of Co-PIs and other key personnel, duration of the project, total requested budget amount, keywords, and a one-paragraph abstract.
- Project description. Motivation, objectives, state-of-the-art, expected original contributions, outcomes and deliverables, intended future expansion of project goals, workplan, and resources required and available. In addition, *Commercialization Proof-of-Concept* projects should also address potential impact on market and time horizon to impact.
- Budget. A budget table.
- The CV of the Principal Investigator (PI) and each co-applicant. Each uploaded CV should have a maximum of 2 pages (11 point) and include a list of up to 10 of the most relevant papers.

2.4 Review of applications

Applications will be reviewed and ranked by an evaluation committee indicated by the INESC TEC's Board of Directors. The committee will be chaired by a Board member and it includes one member of the Scientific Council and one senior researcher from each cluster of INESC TEC. The evaluation committee may, if deemed appropriate, request assistance to assess specific applications from an external expert. The selection for funding is based on the criteria presented in Sec. 4.

2.5 Notification

The applicants will be notified by email and through INESC TEC's platform.

3 Eligibility information

3.1 Team composition and PI requirements

The teams in *Inter-Center Research* projects must include researchers from at least two different centers.

In *Junior Researcher Development* projects, the PI should either have been awarded a PhD up to three years prior to the submission, or be in the second or third year of a full-time grant or contract at INESC TEC at the time of the submission.

In a *Commercialization Proof-of-Concept* project, the PI should be one of the creators or inventors of the creation or invention of focus for the project.

3.2 PI and researcher dedication

The PI shall be dedicated to the project, according to the duration of the proposed activities, at no less than 10%. The remaining co-applicants shall be dedicated to the project, according to their participation, at no less than 5%.

3.3 Limit on number of proposals per PI and researcher

A researcher may be identified as PI in only one proposal. Researchers may be listed as team members in multiple proposals.

3.4 Reporting

A final report of the project should be delivered for review by a committee with a similar composition to the evaluation committee.

In the case of *Inter-Center Research* projects, an interim report after the initial 12 calendar months of execution will also be delivered for review.

Periodic status updates of the projects may be requested at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

4 Evaluation and selection criteria

The final selection and ranking of the proposals will be based on 3 criteria:

Criterion 1) What is the potential for the proposed activity to advance the state of the art within its own field and to provide original contributions?

Criterion 2) To what extent do the proposed activities benefit society?

Criterion 3) Are the team and the proposed workplan adequate for carrying out the proposed activities?

The evaluation committee will classify each criterion in a grade scale of 0 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent). The final score of the proposal will be the weighted average of the classification of the 3 criteria, considering the following weights:

- a) Inter-Center Research: Criterion 1: 1/3; Criterion 2: 1/3; Criterion 3: 1/3;
- b) Junior Researcher Development: Criterion 1: 1/3; Criterion 2: 1/3; Criterion 3: 1/3;
- c) Commercialization Proof-of-Concept: Criterion 1: 1/4; Criterion 2: 1/2; Criterion 3: 1/4;

The evaluation process will consist of 2 phases. In Phase 1, the evaluation committee will evaluate and rank the proposals based on the analysis of the submitted proposals. In Phase 2, the proposals ranked above 4 in the Phase 1 will be interviewed by the committee that will use these interviews to confirm or modify the evaluation made in Phase 1.

The average score described up to the hundredths of unit will constitute the evaluation of the proposal. A single list will be used to rank the projects according to their final classification.

An individual evaluation report will be provided to the PI of each project containing the classification of every criteria and a set of comments supporting the assessment of the project.