

**EVALUATION GUIDE
FOR THE AWARD OF THE
COLLABORATIVE LABORATORY TITLE
(CoLAB)**

1. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the review process of the call for proposals to award the Collaborative Laboratory (CoLAB) Title and defines the responsibilities of the participants in the process. It details a number of important issues, such as: the mission of FCT; goals of the present call and application components; evaluation criteria; scoring system; the evaluation process; feedback to applicants; confidentiality and conflict of interests.

- **The mission of FCT**

Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P. (FCT), the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, is the public agency responsible for implementing the Portuguese government's policy for Science and Technology.

As of August 1997, FCT succeeded the previous national funding agency, JNICT, created in the 1967. FCT's mission is to continuously promote the advancement of scientific and technological knowledge in Portugal, by exploring opportunities in any scientific or technological domain to attain the highest international standards in the creation of knowledge, to stimulate the dissemination of this knowledge and its contribution to improve education, health, the environment, and the quality of life and well-being of citizens and society. The activity of FCT includes peer-review-based funding of applications presented by institutions, research teams or individuals in public calls.

FCT funds all areas of knowledge, namely Exact Sciences and Engineering, Life and Health Sciences, Natural and Environmental Sciences and Social Sciences and the Humanities.

- **Goals of the present call**

The creation of CoLAB and the assignment of the CoLAB title is oriented to stimulate the creation of qualified employment generating economic and social value in Portugal, having as other objectives:

- a) Diversifying, stimulating and coordinating activities based on scientific knowledge, promoting processes of technological change and the creation of short- and medium-term research and innovation agendas by identifying economic, social or cultural needs and challenges, contributing to the qualification of human resources and institutions at territorial level, as foreseen in the Interface Programme (<http://www.programainterface.pt/pt>);
- b) Addressing challenges and problems of significant complexity and size, having a social and economic impact, from a standpoint of innovation based on scientific knowledge, expanding the scale and intensity of funding for R&D in close collaboration with the productive, social and cultural fabric. The intention is to promote the creation of critical mass to stimulate new centres for R&D activities throughout the country, including sparsely populated areas;

- c) Accelerating the development of new products and services directed at global markets, supporting the transformation of the pattern of specialization of the Portuguese economy and the technological intensity of its exports;
- d) Strengthening highly-qualified and scientific employment in Portugal, including innovation oriented employment in order to contribute to the greater competitiveness of the productive and social fabric, and of companies in particular, as provided for in the Scientific Employment Stimulation Programme and in the Interface Programme, both promoted within the context of the National Reforms Programme;
- e) Ensuring the strengthening of institutional collaboration of technology interface centres and of other know-how transfer centres to complement other activities to be supported by the Interface Programme, promoting collaboration between technology and engineering centres with scientific and higher-education institutions and with the productive fabric and cultural and social institutions;
- f) Building collective entities, involving the scientific and technological activity of increasingly diversified institutions that facilitate co-creation of new knowledge, stimulating creativity and the production of new knowledge, along with its dissemination throughout the territory, in partnership and in network with relevant players of these territories.

- **Components of the Application**

Applications are submitted online via a specific FCT Web application. The application form is organised into the following sections:

Section A: Contains general information on the proposal, including all relevant documents to assess its eligibility, as well as the CoLAB name, keywords and abstract. It is available online;

Section B: Contains all the information necessary for the evaluation. It should be made available in a single pdf document annexed to Section A.

Section B includes information on the CoLAB, namely:

- Strategic Vision, medium term (10 years);
- R&I Agenda;
- Analysis of major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (i.e., type of SWOT analysis; or similar narrative);
- Brief and Detailed Presentation of the Work Plan, including strategy for qualified job creation;
- Action Plan;
- Selected activities from participating entities;

- Selected information regarding the characteristics of the CoLAB “bootstrapping team” (i.e., CoLAB members that will launch the CoLAB) and the role of the members of participating entities;
- Evolution plan of qualified and scientific employment to be created directly (i.e., CoLAB members) and indirectly (i.e., in other institutions, and in the market);
- Governance and Management;
- Financial and Business Plan, with detailed analysis of plan for the diversification of funding sources;
- Potential impact foreseen and/or expected.

2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation and selection process is based on three main review criteria:

A | SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL MERIT AND RELEVANCE

B | IMPLEMENTATION, GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

C | POTENTIAL IMPACT

Application of these criteria shall take into account, among other considerations, the following aspects:

Criterion A:

- i. Relevance, soundness and potential of the strategic vision: Clear identification and characterization of the challenge and extent to which the problem to be addressed is of relevant dimension and complexity; Clarity of stated goals, objectives and priorities;
- ii. Scientific, technological and innovation potential of the proposed activities. Extent to which these activities contribute to achieve the established goals, are beyond the state of the art, and demonstrate innovation and technological potential driven by the identification of economic, social and cultural needs and challenges; Appropriate consideration of interdisciplinary and inter-sectorial approaches;
- iii. Potential for knowledge-based value creation. Ability to translate knowledge into novel concepts, approaches, processes, products, technologies, services, businesses, organizational models, among others;
- iv. Appropriate measures for the dissemination and/or exploitation of scientific and technological results;
- v. Appropriate measures for the internationalization of the national scientific and technological capacity, including the potential to foster high value exports.

Criterion B:

- i. Ability of the consortium to implement the action plan. Complementarity of the participants and extent to which the consortium as a whole brings together the necessary expertise and resources; Effective mobilization and collaboration with entities of the productive, social and cultural fabric and the adequate articulation with the higher education institutions and research centers;
- ii. Appropriate Human Resources development plan for full members of the CoLAB in particular (HR Hire Plan), which guarantees the success of the workplan; Adequate plan for specialized training and job creation as well as conditions to attract and retain qualified human resources;

- iii. Appropriate allocation of tasks, ensuring that all participants have a valid role and adequate resources in the project to fulfill that role; Feasibility and effectiveness of the work plan including the extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with their objectives and deliverables;
- iv. Appropriate business and financial plan to successfully implement the proposed action plan and guarantee the project medium and long term sustainability. This includes the adequacy of the budget to accomplish the proposed R&D Agenda and the suitability of the strategy to attract and diversify the funding sources during 5 years and to secure the adequate revenues;
- v. Appropriate management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management;

Criterion C:

- i. Level and nature of qualified and scientific employment created, including employment established directly by the CoLAB and potential indirect impact in the institutions that might be involved in the value added chain promoted by the CoLAB;
- ii. Potential to stimulate knowledge-based economy and its diffusion throughout the territory together with relevant actors from these territories; Mobilize the entrepreneurial capacity, create new market opportunities and strengthen competitiveness and growth of companies.
- iii. Develop innovative solutions to complex societal challenges creating economic, social and cultural value;
- iv. Creation of critical mass and new centralities for R&D activities throughout the national territory, especially in areas of lower population density;
- v. Strengthen the institutional collaboration of interface and knowledge transfer centers, ensuring the collaboration between technology and engineering centers with scientific and higher education institutions and with the productive fabric and cultural and social institutions;

Scoring System

Each of the 3 (three) criteria is rated using 0-5 (zero-five) scale.

The overall rating (0-15; zero-fifteen) of each proposal will be the sum of the individual criterion scores.

Grade	Description
5	<u>Excellent</u> . The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion; any shortcomings are minor.
4	<u>Very Good</u> . The proposal addresses the criterion very well but with a small number of shortcomings.
3	<u>Good</u> . The proposal addresses the criterion well but with a number of shortcomings.
2	<u>Fair</u> . The proposal broadly addresses the criterion but there are significant weaknesses.
1	<u>Poor</u> . The criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.
0	<u>Missing/incomplete information</u> : The criterion cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information or the proposal fails to address the criterion.

A minimum score of 14 should be obtained for the proposal to be considered for approval.

3. EVALUATION PROCESS

Applications may be submitted to FCT, continuously, without any fixed deadline for application submission. The evaluation will be carried by an evaluation panel of internationally recognized merit and competence appointed by the board of Directors of FCT, which will meet at least twice a year. Additional meetings may be organized through web-based procedures.

The chair of the evaluation panel will lay down the procedures to be followed and the tasks of the respective members. The panel members will have access to all the applications as well as to the respective reviews.

The applications are assessed in a one stage evaluation process and may involve access to external experts, only if considered necessary by the evaluation panel. One of the panel members will be appointed as lead reviewer and will, therefore, be responsible for drafting the consensus report based on the individual reviews received and his/her own judgement on the application. All reports will be made available to panel members in preparation for the panel meeting. An evaluation panel report containing the feedback to applicants is drafted by the lead reviewer explaining the panel's decision for each proposal.

In the context of the evaluation process, FCT may request from the proponent institution any additional documentation that may prove necessary for the confirmation of the elements presented in the application.

The Evaluation Panel Report will include:

- Overall score calculated by the sum of the scores obtained in the three criteria, as well as the score for each criteria;

- Overall comment that should fully explain the judgment on the application. This comment should be substantial, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the application.

Meeting activities include:

- Ensuring that each application receives a fair judgment and is discussed appropriately;
- Generating a consolidated ranked list of all applications;
- Selecting the applications to be considered for CoLAB Title;
- Preparing an evaluation panel report for each application, based on the corresponding draft prepared by the lead reviewer;
- Preparing a panel meeting report with a summary of the meeting and comments regarding the evaluation process. The panel meeting report must indicate the date and place of the meeting, the members present and votes cast by each one, the matters scheduled and dealt detailed on the meeting agenda, the applications evaluated, their deliberations and justification.

4. FEEDBACK TO APPLICANTS

All reviewers are encouraged to observe the following additional guidelines:

- Avoid comments that give a description or a summary of the application;
- Avoid the use of the first person or equivalent: "I think..." or "This reviewer finds...";
- Always use dispassionate and analytical language: avoid dismissive statements about the applicant, about the proposed science, or about the scientific field in question;
- Always use impeccably polite language;
- Avoid asking questions, as the applicant will not be able to answer them;
- Evaluate the proposed work and not the work you consider should have been proposed.

The evaluation comments may be succinct but should be substantial, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the application. A minimum of 1000 characters is required. The use of standard comments is strongly discouraged.

5. CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

Confidentiality

Confidentiality of the applications must be safeguarded. All reviewers and panel members are requested to accept a statement of confidentiality relative to the contents of the applications and to the results of the evaluation.

Panel members and experts involved in the evaluation are asked not to copy, quote or otherwise use material from the applications.

The first time each reviewer has access to the evaluation area, he/she will have to approve the following statement:

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Thank you for accepting to participate in the scientific evaluation of a “Collaborative Laboratory – CoLAB” submitted to the *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P.* (FCT).

The reader of this message pledges, on his/her honour, not to quote or use in any way the contents of the applications, nor to make available, other than to FCT or to the Evaluation Panel, the results of the evaluation.

Conflict of interests (Col)

Any Col must be declared prior to the evaluation process. No panel member or external reviewer shall make an individual review of an application if he/she has declared Col with it.

Applicants affiliated with any company, research units, associated laboratories, higher-education institutions, technological interface centres and other intermediate institutions, technology centres, business associations or any other participating entities of the CoLAB, both national and international, that have submitted a CoLAB application to the present Call, as Principal Researcher, team member, members of the participating entities or project consultants, have to decline participating in the evaluation process. Those with first-degree relationships, domestic partnership or married to the responsible coordinator, team member, member of the participating entity or consultant are also hindered from being a panel member or external reviewer.

Disqualifying Conflict of Interest

In case a disqualifying conflict of interest is identified, the panel member cannot evaluate the respective application. Panel members are also not allowed to participate in the panel meeting discussion of these applications. Circumstances that could be interpreted as a disqualifying conflict of interest are the following:

1. Personal or financial interest in the application's success;
2. Current or planned close scientific cooperation;

3. Research cooperation within the last three years, e.g. joint publications;
4. Dependent employment relationship or supervisory relationship within the last five years before the opening date of the call;
5. Affiliation or pending transfer to any of the departments, research centres, companies or other entities involved in the project;
6. Researchers who are active in a council or similar supervisory or advisory board of the applying institutions are excluded from participating in the review and decision-making process for applications originating from these institutions.

Potential Conflict of Interest

In the case of a potential conflict of interest, the panel member should notify FCT and clarify if he/she is able to perform an unbiased evaluation or if the conflict should rather be considered as disqualifying. A potential conflict of interest exists in the following circumstances:

7. Relationships other than first-degree, marriage or domestic partnership; other personal ties or conflicts;
8. Participation in university, company or any other participating entity bodies other than those listed under no. 6;
9. Preparation of an application or implementation of a project with a closely related research topic (competition);
10. Participating in an on-going scientific or inter-personal conflict with the applicant(s).

For all potential conflict of interests, FCT will make a decision whether the situation in question constitutes an actual Col or whether no Col exists.

Before starting the evaluation of each application, and in order to be able to access the evaluation form, each reviewer needs to complete a Col Declaration, as follows:

Conflict of Interest Declaration

Please state:

- No, I have no conflict
- Yes, I have a strong conflict (see Disqualifying Col)
- It is possible that I have a conflict (see Potential Col)

In case of a disqualifying or potential Col, the reviewer is asked to justify the situation.

The individual reviewer will not be able to proceed in case of a disqualifying conflict of interest. In this case, the individual reviewer is required to inform the Panel Chair and FCT team of this situation, so that the application may be reassigned. The panel meeting report must mention all declared Col.