Information Technology/Academia Collaboration (ITAC) Program

# Applicant's  Guide for Proposal Submission

## ITAC Collaborative Funded Projects

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# 1 Introduction

- The ITAC program works within the following mission statement: "***To bring value to Egyptian ICT Industry by fostering collaboration between industry and academia aiming at developing R&D based innovative products and services that put Egyptian ICT companies in a leading position in the ICT market, both locally and internationally***."
- The currently available Collaborative Funded Projects (CFPs) in the ITAC program are the Product Development Projects (PDP), the Advanced Research Projects (ARP), and Preliminary Research Projects (PRP). Each of these projects has its conditions on the entry point and the final output as summarized in the figure below.
- The goal of this guide is to introduce interested applicants to the eligibility criteria, the proposal preparation and submission steps, the evaluation process, and the funding process.
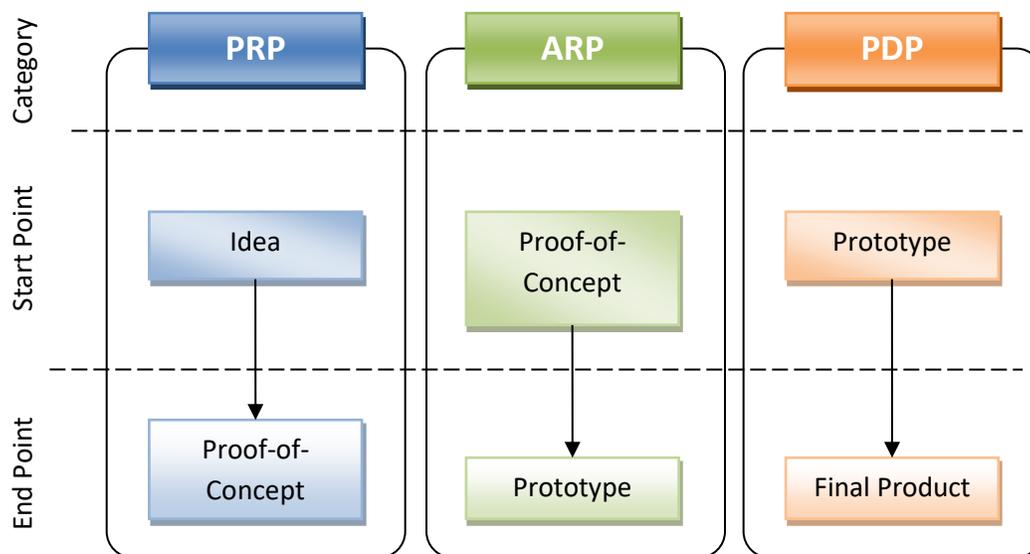


# 2 About the Collaborative Funded Projects

## 2.1 Scope and Definitions

- CFP funds aim at boosting the ICT industry in Egypt by exploiting the research power in Egyptian universities and research centers, with the goal of developing innovative and competitive Egyptian products. A key element in these projects is the existence of a research component.
- The CFPs are meant to take the product from the stage where it is just an idea, through the proof-of-concept and prototyping stages, till it becomes a complete product ready to hit the market. The start and end points of each project are defined as follows:

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☞ **Proof-of-Concept**: Solid work published by the applicants in a journal, a patent owned by the applicants, or promising preliminary results of the proposed research or methodology.

☞ **Prototype**: A working but not necessarily complete product. It may still need additional research for improving its output, miss some features, or need customization for specific applications.

☞ **Final Product**: should satisfy all the specifications of a commercial product and should be ready to hit the market by the conclusion of the PDP period.

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- In all these projects, the collaboration between an Egyptian **ICT** academic institution and an Egyptian **ICT** industrial partner is aimed. The extent of contribution/involvement of the industrial partner depends on the project category.
- For PRPs submitted from the university, endorsement from an interested ICT industrial partner is a plus (in the form of a letter of interest/intent or actual contribution to the project). For ARPs and PDPs, significant contribution of the **IP is required** and clearly indicated in the proposal, namely, in the marketing strategy and plan, the industry analysis, and in the product development.

## 2.2 Eligibility

- The PI and the research team must be working in an **ICT related** Egyptian university or research institute, have a strong record of publications and/or patent in the proposal topic. If the PI is from Academia, he should hold a PhD.
- For PRP, a company can apply without an academic partner. In this case, the team should have at least two junior researchers. The project should end with a prototype. In such a case, the purchase of fixed assets is not allowed.
- For PDP, a company can apply without the academic partner. In this case, the prototype had to be developed by the company R&D team, the prototype has an innovation that can be patented or published, and the company has a research team that is capable of filling in the research institutes role within the submitted project. In such a case, the purchase of fixed assets is not allowed.
- The IP must be an Egyptian operating and established ICT company <u>registered in ITIDA Companies database</u>.
- Please submit proposal **<u>only once</u>**, duplicate submissions will lead to screening all submitted proposals.

## 2.3 Project Fund Limit

- Accepted projects will be supported by the ITAC program with the amounts indicated in the table below.
- The ITAC support may be used towards eligible budget items as explained in the ITAC Financial Guide.
- The budget covers only ICT components. Securing separate fund for non-ICT components is a prerequisite (for e.g. components related to agriculture, health… etc.)

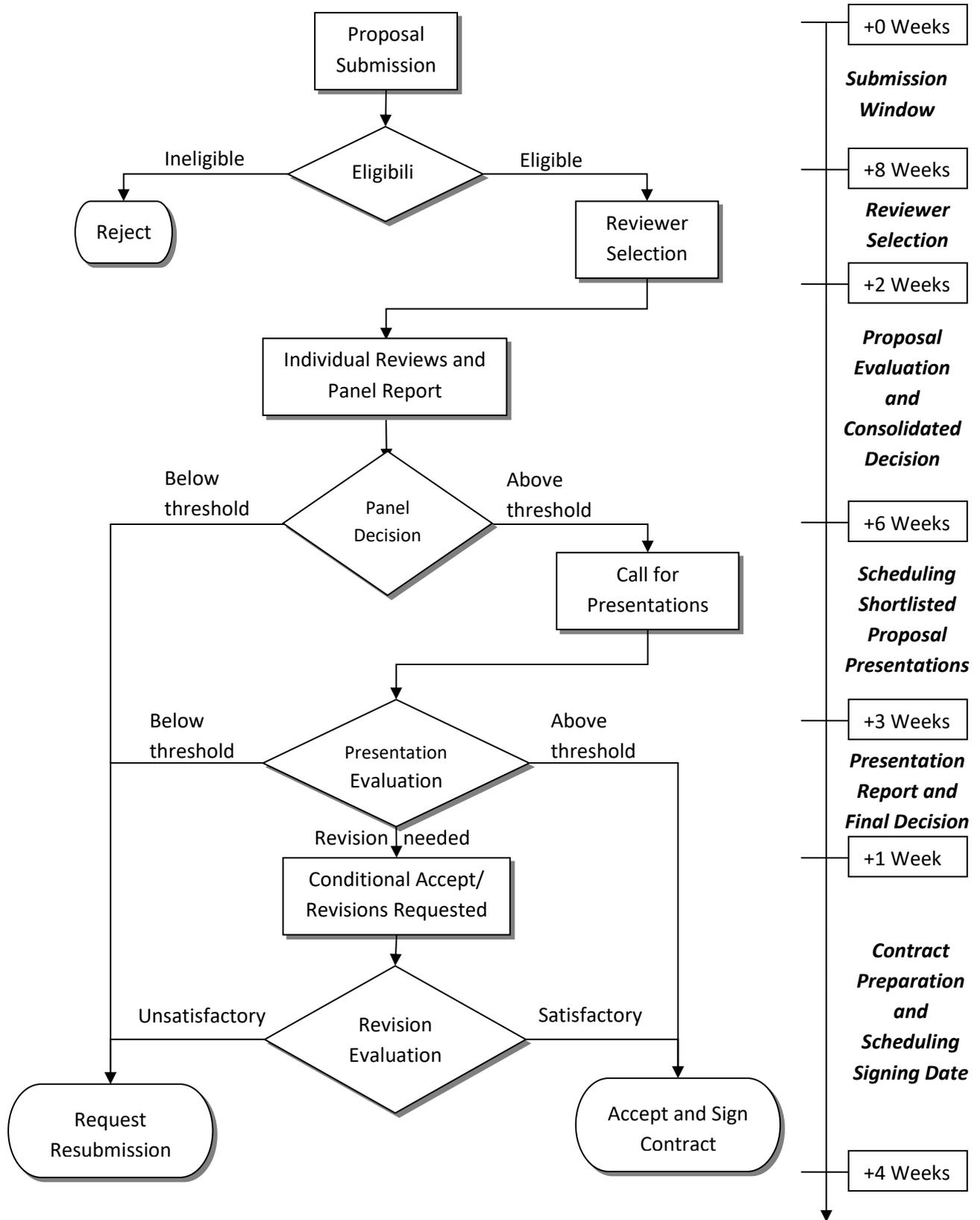| Project Category | ITAC Fund Limit (EGP) | Additional Fund to IC Fabrication and Circuit Prototyping (EGP) |
|---|---|---|
| PDP (electronics) | 5,000,000 | |
| PDP | 3,000,000 | 250,000 |
| ARP | 1,500,000 | 250,000 |
| PRP | 350,000 + 350,000* | 100,000 |
| * The total fund is 700 KEGP. Companies are eligible for this amount. Universities are allowed if a company will be established within the project. | | |

# 3   Proposal Submission

- A template is provided on the ITAC webpage for the typical sections of the proposal. This template represents the minimum requirements that are expected to be found in the proposal. Please use the templates in the section under "Guides and templates"/"Collaborative Funded Projects".
- The proposal should be prepared to address all the scoring items provided in the Score Sheet relevant to each project category.
- The proposal topic should be within the areas published on the ITAC webpage.
- Only online submission of proposals is accepted. The submission package should include:
  - Project Abstract: in PDF format, the filename should be a **short/abbreviated name** for the project followed by "_Abstract". For e.g., `My Proposal_Abstract.pdf`.
  - Project Proposal: in PDF format, the filename should be a **short/abbreviated name** of the project followed by "_Proposal". For e.g., `My Proposal_Proposal.pdf`.
  - Project Team Resumes: in PDF format, **one** file combining all resumes. The filename should be a **short/abbreviated name** of the project followed by "_Resumes". For e.g., `My Proposal_Resumes.pdf`.
  - Company Profile: in PDF format, the filename should be a **short/abbreviated name** of the project followed by "_Company". For e.g., `My Proposal_Company.pdf`.
  - Key Success Indicators: in Excel sheet, the filename should be a **short/abbreviated name** of the project followed by "_KSI". For e.g., `My Proposal_KSI.xlsx`.
  - Team dedication percentage: in Excel sheet, the filename should be a **short/abbreviated name** of the project followed by "_Team_Dedication". For e.g., `My Proposal_Team_Dedication.xlsx`
- To submit the proposal, please visit the ITAC page on ITIDA's website.

# 4   Proposal Evaluation

- The evaluation of proposals is carried out by highly experienced independent reviewers with expertise in both academia and industry.

- The ITAC team ensures that the process is fair and in line with the principles approved by the ITAC Steering Committee (SC), which is formed from a group of experts from industry and academic institutions.
- Reviewers performing technical evaluation are expected to keep the confidentiality of the proposal material and perform an independent, impartial, and objective review.
- The flowchart on the next page summarizes the review cycle starting with the proposal submission and ending with the final decision of the ITAC SC.
- Upon receipt by the ITAC team, proposals are checked for completeness, eligibility, and scope. The result of the initial check is sent to the applicant, along with an ID for eligible proposals to be used throughout the review cycle.
- Reviewers are selected to evaluate the proposal, and, upon receipt of their individual reviews and scores, a unified decision and score is made in a reviewer panel meeting, and the applicant receives the consolidated review comments and one of the following decisions:
    - **Accept**: The applicant is requested to make minor revisions during the presentation.
    - **Major revisions:** The idea is acceptable; however, major revisions are required before the presentation. Applicants should respond to reviewers' comments within the same round.
    - **Reject:** The proposal idea is not acceptable based on a list of weaknesses

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┌─────────────────┐                                          ┌──────────────┐
│    Proposal     │                                          │  +0 Weeks    │
│   Submission    │                                          └──────────────┘
└─────────────────┘
         │                                                   *Submission*
         ▼                                                   *Window*
   Ineligible ◄──◇ Eligibili ◇──► Eligible                   ┌──────────────┐
        │                                                    │  +8 Weeks    │
        ▼                           ┌──────────────┐         └──────────────┘
   ┌─────────┐                      │  Reviewer    │         *Reviewer*
   │ Reject  │                      │  Selection   │         *Selection*
   └─────────┘                      └──────────────┘         ┌──────────────┐
                                           │                 │  +2 Weeks    │
                                           ▼                 └──────────────┘
                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                          │ Individual Reviews and│           *Proposal*
                          │    Panel Report       │           *Evaluation*
                          └──────────────────────┘            *and*
                                    │                         *Consolidated*
                                    ▼                         *Decision*
        Below threshold ◄──◇ Panel Decision ◇──► Above threshold  ┌──────────────┐
              │                                                    │  +6 Weeks    │
              │                        ┌──────────────┐           └──────────────┘
              │                        │   Call for   │           *Scheduling*
              │                        │ Presentations│           *Shortlisted*
              │                        └──────────────┘           *Proposal*
              │                               │                   *Presentations*
              │                               ▼                   ┌──────────────┐
    Below threshold ◄──◇ Presentation Evaluation ◇──► Above threshold │ +3 Weeks  │
              │                    │                                └──────────────┘
              │            Revision needed                         *Presentation*
              │                    ▼                               *Report and*
              │          ┌──────────────────┐                      *Final Decision*
              │          │ Conditional Accept/│                    ┌──────────────┐
              │          │ Revisions Requested│                    │  +1 Week     │
              │          └──────────────────┘                      └──────────────┘
              │                    │
              │                    ▼                               *Contract*
  Unsatisfactory ◄──◇ Revision Evaluation ◇──► Satisfactory       *Preparation*
        │                                        │                 *and*
        ▼                                        ▼                 *Scheduling*
 ┌──────────────┐                       ┌──────────────┐           *Signing Date*
 │   Request    │                       │ Accept and Sign│
 │ Resubmission │                       │   Contract    │         ┌──────────────┐
 └──────────────┘                       └──────────────┘          │  +4 Weeks    │
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# 5   Proposal Presentation

- Applicants whose proposals receive an **"Accept"** decision and a score **above a certain threshold** are deemed as **shortlisted proposals**.
- The team of the shortlisted proposal is invited to give a presentation before the SC members and the reviewers. This presentation results in another unified score based on how the applicants addressed the comments/concerns in the panel report, and final decision is made.
- Based on the presentation score, proposals which are found **winning** will proceed to the next stage.

# 6   Proposal Resubmission Policy

Rejected proposals may resubmit in a future round upon addressing the review committee comments indicated in the decision message and report. The ITAC accepts **<u>one</u>** resubmission for a rejected proposal. If a resubmitted proposal is rejected, then this proposal cannot be resubmitted again.

# 7   Budget Estimation

Proposals must include a detailed estimated budget in which all prices/expenses are given in EGP. Applicants of proposals approved for funding will be contacted by the ITAC requesting a filled budget based on the ITAC budget template. For further information about the ITAC financial rules, please refer to the ITAC Financial Guide posted on the ITAC webpage.

# 8   Funded Project Auditing

## 8.1   Milestone Reports and Progress Evaluation

- The ITAC funds projects on a milestone-by-milestone basis.
- The ITAC will assign a **technical auditor** who will be responsible for:
  - Evaluating the milestone reports and submitted by the project PI.
  - Conducting milestone review meetings with the project team to evaluate the progress against the planned technical objectives.
- If the project is inexplicably not progressing according to the original proposal, the ITAC will take all measures in order to terminate the project and recover any unspent budget.
- In the event of receiving a follow up report that is not accepted by the auditor, ITAC has the right to request additional follow up reports/reviews or to terminate the contract.

## 8.2   Milestone Reports

At the end of each milestone, technical and financial reports are requested from the project team including the following items:

  - Achievements, challenges, and obstacles during the milestone.
  - Justification for any diversion from the project plan.
  - A report on financial expenditures during the milestone.

o Updated budget and project plan for the remaining period of the project.

## 8.3 Project Closure Report

Submitted before the official closure of the project, the final technical and financial report should include the following items:

o Detailed technical achievements and deliverables of the project.
o Detailed financial report of the activities and expenditure of the project.
o Proposed future research.

## 8.4 Funded Project Guide

More details about the process of funding projects, the needed forms and templates … etc. can be found in the Funded Project Guide that will be sent by email to the funded project team upon signing the contract.

# 9 Funding from Other Agencies

The ITAC Program expects transparency from applicants with regard to submission of substantially the same topic to other agencies. ITAC holds the right to share parts of the proposal with other agencies in case of similarities with projects by some or all project team reported by other agencies.

If the proposal is submitted to multiple agencies, the ITAC Program should be notified if funding is approved by another agency prior to the contract signing or during the project funding.