Co-Lab AcceleBio

Open Call 2026

for Drug Discovery Projects

Rules for Participation

The Open Call 2026 at a glance

You have a validated, druggable target and promising data. What you need now is the translational strategy, data and methods that move the project to the next stage of drug discovery. The Open Call pairs two academic teams with an AccelBio translational scientist for 18 months to get there.

What you get

A dedicated AccelBio translational scientist, for 18 months

Selected computational work, from hit discovery to PK/PD

A Valorisation Plan tailored to your project's maturity

Business development and partnering support

Who can apply

Portuguese universities, research centres and hospitals that own the asset

Any therapeutic area

Small molecules, peptides and ATMPs

What we look for

A validated, druggable target

A clear unmet clinical need

A translational gap AccelBio can help close

A committed host lab

Key facts

2 projects selected

Short application, deadline 15 January 2026

Results in March 2027; start on April 2027

No monetary funding

Background IP stays with its owners

How it works

1 Apply

Short application form and support letters by 15 January 2027

2 Feasibility and evaluation

AccelBio assesses feasibility; experts then score each proposal

3 Interview

Shortlisted teams present their project

4 Joint workplan

After selection, AccelBio and your lab build the workplan together

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1. Scope

CoLAB AccelBio ("AccelBio") is a Collaborative Laboratory whose purpose is to accelerate biomedical innovation in Portugal. Its main objective is to transfer scientific knowledge to the economy through the development of products and businesses in pharma and biotechnology. AccelBio's associates include academic institutions, pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, and an investor.

The AccelBio Open Call ("Open Call") is a translational guidance programme. It selects academic drug discovery projects with a validated, druggable target and a defined translational gap, and works with the research team to move each project from its current stage of drug discovery to the next. The Open Call does not provide any monetary contribution. Selected projects receive translational advisory support from a dedicated AccelBio translational scientist, selected computational work, and business development and partnering support.

Many promising academic projects stall between discovery and development, in what is often called the "valley of death". The cause is rarely a lack of good science: it is usually missing translational data, industry-standard methods, or a development and business strategy. AccelBio addresses these gaps by working alongside the research team.

The Open Call is aimed at projects that are mature enough to benefit from translational de-risking.

The programme is open to Portuguese public and non-profit legal entities (universities, research centres, hospitals) that own or co-own the project's assets. The Open Call is open to all therapeutic areas. Eligible projects must be developing a small molecule, a peptide or an advanced therapy medicinal product (ATMP).

Each selected project is developed in close collaboration between AccelBio and the Host Lab over 18 months, following a Workplan agreed after selection. The Workplan leads to a defined value inflection point and to a **Valorisation Plan**. The Valorisation Plan is tailored to the maturity of each project at entry and to the 18-month timeframe. For projects at an earlier stage, it focuses on the Target Product Profile, the evidence still required and a prioritised route to the next decision point. For projects arriving with hits or leads, it extends to developability and development planning and a partner-ready package. Depending on project maturity, it includes:

- a **Target Product Profile**, with the criteria and benchmarks that guide candidate selection;
- **Market Analysis and Positioning**, covering the competitive landscape and opportunities for differentiation;
- **Development Planning**, with milestones, timelines, decision points and go/no-go criteria;
- **Business Case**, with the commercialization strategy and the possible routes to licensing, partnering or company creation, defined at a level of detail appropriate to the project's maturity.

2. Glossary

APPLICANT INSTITUTION means a Portuguese public-sector or non-profit organisation that owns or co-owns the Asset(s) and submits the application.

ASSET(S) means the results of scientific research owned or co-owned by the Applicant Institution, whether or not already protected by a patent application, identified for or developed under the Selected Project.

BENEFICIARY INSTITUTION means the Applicant Institution whose Proposal has been selected. It receives the Support and is responsible for complying with the Agreement.

COLLABORATION AGREEMENT means the agreement between AccelBio and the Beneficiary Institution for a Selected Project. It sets out the Workplan, the contributions of each party and their value, follow-up, reporting, IP and value-sharing terms.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION means the information and research results identified for or developed under the Selected Project, and any other information exchanged within the Open Call.

CO-OWNER(S) means any entity or individual that co-owns the Asset(s) with the Applicant Institution.

DRUGGABLE TARGET means a target for which there is evidence that it can be modulated in the required direction by the proposed therapeutic modality, for example tool compounds, binders, structural data with a suitable binding site, or, for ATMPs, evidence of feasible delivery and expression in the relevant cells or tissue.

ELIGIBLE PROPOSAL means a Proposal that meets all eligibility criteria of the Open Call.

EVALUATION COMMITTEE means the group of experts who assess the Proposals.

FINAL REPORT means the report submitted by the Project Leader within three (3) months of the end of the Project Term or approved extension. It covers results against the Workplan, the value inflection point reached, lessons learned and next steps.

HOST LAB means the research group at the Beneficiary Institution that carries out the Selected Project with AccelBio.

HOST LAB CONTRIBUTION means the expertise, people, time, samples, data, materials, equipment access, funding and running costs that the Host Lab commits to the Selected Project.

IP RIGHTS means industrial and/or intellectual property rights to research results owned or co-owned by the Applicant Institution before the Selected Project (background IP), and/or obtained during it (foreground IP).

OPEN CALL means the AccelBio Open Call for translational drug discovery projects.

PROJECT LEADER (PL) means the individual who leads the Selected Project. The PL need not be the principal investigator who generated the Asset(s).

PROJECT TERM means the period starting on the date set in the Collaboration Agreement and ending eighteen (18) months later, or at the end of any extension approved by AccelBio (up to six (6) months).

PROPOSAL means the application submitted by an Applicant Institution to the Open Call.

SELECTED PROJECT means a Proposal selected to receive the Support.

SUPPORT means the non-monetary support AccelBio provides to a Selected Project, as described in Section 3. The Support does not include any grant, monetary contribution or reimbursement of costs.

TRANSLATIONAL GAP means the specific data, capability or strategy that is missing for the Asset(s) to progress toward clinical development or industry partnering.

VALIDATED TARGET means a target for which there is evidence linking the target to the disease, supported at least by preliminary data.

VALORISATION PLAN means the strategic plan, prepared with AccelBio, combining the experimental roadmap and the business strategy for the Asset(s), tailored to the project's maturity.

VALUE INFLECTION POINT means a defined, measurable milestone that moves the Asset(s) to the next de-risked stage of drug discovery, for example a validated hit series or in vivo proof of concept.

WORKPLAN means the activities, milestones, go/no-go criteria, timelines and responsibilities jointly agreed by AccelBio and the Host Lab after selection.

3. Aims and framework of the Open Call

a. Through the Open Call, AccelBio aims to:

   i. close defined translational gaps in promising academic drug discovery projects;

   ii. move assets to the next de-risked value inflection point in drug discovery;

   iii. introduce industry practices and standards into academic laboratories;

   iv. build the capacity of Project Leaders and their teams to bring assets into the drug development value chain.

b. **The Open Call does not provide any monetary contribution.** No grant, transfer of funds or reimbursement of costs will be made to the Beneficiary Institution or the Host Lab. The experimental work, and its costs, remain with the Host Lab, unless otherwise agreed in the Workplan.

c. Selected Projects receive Support built on three pillars:

01

Translational advisory support

A dedicated AccelBio translational scientist reviews the evidence, advises on experimental design and assay quality, analyses data with the team, guides target druggability and modality questions, and builds the Workplan and Valorisation Plan with the Project Leader.

02

Selected computational work

Computational drug discovery agreed in the Workplan: virtual screening and hit prioritisation, structure-based design and in silico ADMET, and PK/PD modelling (see the table below).

03

Business development and partnering

A product-oriented roadmap: Target Product Profile, market and competitive analysis, IP strategy, business case, and introductions to industry, investors and AccelBio's associates.

AccelBio's computational support by project stage

Stage	What AccelBio's computational team can deliver	Typical output for the project
Hit discovery	Structure- and ligand-based virtual screening of large compound libraries, AI/ML-based hit prioritisation, selection of compounds for testing	A prioritised set of hits for experimental confirmation
Lead optimisation	Structure-activity relationship analysis, structure-based design, in silico ADMET prediction, multiparameter optimisation	Design proposals for improved analogues and a ranked lead series
PK/PD assessment	PK and PBPK modelling, PK/PD modelling, human dose prediction	A translational PK/PD model supporting candidate selection and the development plan

Computational support applies mainly to small molecules and peptides. For ATMPs, the Support focuses on translational and business development guidance.

d. The Support is set per project in the Workplan. In the 2026 edition, AccelBio's two translational scientists will support two Selected Projects for the duration of the Project Term, complemented by the computational work agreed in the Workplan. AccelBio may adjust the Support during the Project Term according to results and go/no-go decisions.

e. Use of AccelBio's experimental platforms (for example its organoid models) is not part of the Support. Where useful for the project, it may be agreed separately.

f. The value of the Support is calculated on the basis of the FTE time and computational work provided (Section 8).

g. The Host Lab remains the main source of biological insight, scientific steering, interpretation of results, experimental work and research tools for the project.

4. Target and general requirements

Is your project a fit?

Your project is a good candidate if it has:

- ✓ A validated target, with evidence that it is druggable by the proposed modality
- ✓ A clearly defined unmet clinical need
- ✓ A small molecule, peptide or ATMP
- ✓ A clear translational gap that AccelBio's expertise can help close
- ✓ A milestone you can reach together within 18 months
- ✓ A host lab ready to commit people, samples, data, funding and time
- ✓ Potential to generate or strengthen protectable IP

Eligible projects

a. Projects must be in therapeutic drug discovery for human health and address a clearly defined unmet clinical need. The Open Call is open to all therapeutic areas. The target must be amenable to modulation by one of the following therapeutic modalities: small molecules; peptides; or advanced therapy medicinal products (ATMPs), namely gene therapies or cell therapies.

b. As a minimum, the project must have a **validated, druggable target**: evidence linking the target to the disease, supported by preliminary data, and evidence that the target can be modulated by the proposed modality (see the definition of Druggable Target in Section 2). Typical entry stages are:

Stage	Typical starting point	Example value inflection point reached with AccelBio
Validated, druggable target	Target linked to disease in relevant models; evidence of druggability; assay concept available	Validated hit series with confirmed activity
Hit-to-lead	Confirmed hits or a first-generation molecule	Lead series with structure-activity relationship and early ADMET profile
Lead optimisation and early efficacy	Lead molecule with in vitro activity	Efficacy in human-relevant or in vivo disease models; early safety profile
Candidate profiling	Optimised lead	Candidate package ready for partnering.

The stages above are described for small molecules. Equivalent stages apply to peptides and ATMPs, for example selection of the lead sequence or construct, potency and efficacy in relevant models, and early safety and biodistribution data.

c. The project must have a **defined translational gap** that AccelBio can address through its translational expertise, computational capabilities and network.

d. The project must have an **achievable value inflection point**: a defined milestone that can be reached within the Project Term with the Support and the Host Lab Contribution.

Non-eligible projects

e. The following projects are not eligible:

- Projects without a validated target, or without evidence that the target is druggable by the proposed modality, including target discovery, hypothesis generation or fundamental research projects.
- Projects without a clearly defined unmet clinical need.
- Projects whose key remaining activities fall mainly within downstream drug development (for example GLP toxicology, manufacturing under GMP, clinical trials), which should be undertaken by an industry partner.
- Projects that mainly seek funding for staff, running costs or research activities of the Host Lab.
- Projects without the possibility of generating or strengthening protectable IP, or whose assets are subject to prior commitments that would prevent licensing or partnering.
- Projects on diagnostic tools (biomarkers, diagnostic tests), medical devices, biomaterials [tissue engineering outside ATMPs], or digital health tools.

Applicant Institution and Host Lab

f. The Applicant Institution must own or co-own the Asset(s), have its main activity located and registered in Portugal, and submit the application in its own name. Assets do not need to be protected by a patent application at the time of application.

g. Applicant Institutions must be public-sector or non-profit organisations, including universities and university foundations, research or technology centres and hospitals.

h. The Host Lab must have the scientific expertise needed for the project and commit the people, resources, access, samples, data and engagement required for successful execution, including its own staff, running costs and the experimental work agreed in the Workplan. Only team members with secured funding and an expected stay of at least two years from submission count as team members; MSc students cannot be listed as team members.

i. The Applicant Institution must provide the Project Leader with the scientific and administrative support needed to manage the project, including timely handling of agreements and IP matters by its technology transfer office or equivalent office.

Project Leader

j. The Project Leader must be linked to the Applicant Institution and hold a university degree or PhD. The PL need not be the principal investigator who generated the Asset(s).

k. The Project Leader must commit to leading the project and taking part in the follow-up activities set out in Section 7.

l. A person may take part in more than one Proposal per call, but may lead only one as PL.

5. Evaluation process

The application is short. Proposals go through four steps: eligibility check, feasibility assessment by AccelBio, remote evaluation, and interview.

Step 1. Eligibility check. AccelBio checks each Proposal against Section 4, including the minimum entry point (validated, druggable target). Proposals that are not eligible or lack mandatory documents are not evaluated, and the Project Leader is notified. A Proposal may be declared ineligible at any point before the Collaboration Agreement is signed if a breach of these Rules is found.

Step 2. Feasibility assessment. AccelBio's translational and computational teams review each eligible Proposal to estimate the support needed to reach the value inflection point and whether it fits AccelBio's available capacity. The assessment may include a short technical call with the Host Lab. It is shared with the Evaluation Committee.

Step 3. Remote evaluation. Each eligible Proposal is scored by up to three (3) members of the Evaluation Committee, against the criteria below, taking the feasibility assessment into account. Each criterion is scored from 1 to 5. Proposals scoring below 3 on criterion 2 or 3, or below 3.0 overall, are not shortlisted.

#	Criterion	What evaluators assess	Weight
1	Scientific quality and target validation	Quality of the science and preliminary data; strength of target validation and druggability; unmet clinical need; novelty and differentiation	30%
2	Translational gap and fit	A clearly defined translational gap that AccelBio can address with its translational expertise, computational capabilities and network	20%
3	Achievable value inflection point	A defined milestone, reachable within the Project Term, that moves the asset to the next stage of drug discovery	20%
4	Host lab commitment	Expertise of the team; people, models, samples, data, funding and time committed; engagement of the Project Leader	15%
5	IP and partnering potential	Potential to generate or strengthen protectable IP, including foreground IP; competitive position and route to licensing, partnering or company creation	15%

Step 4. Interview. Shortlisted applicants present their project remotely to the Evaluation Committee, followed by questions. AccelBio may ask shortlisted applicants for additional information before the interview. The Committee confirms or adjusts the scores and recommends the Selected Projects.

The Open Call 2026 is aimed at selecting two (2) projects, matching AccelBio's available capacity. Shortlisted projects that are not selected are placed on a reserve list for the case that a Selected Project does not proceed. Every applicant receives written feedback; projects that are not yet eligible receive a short checklist of what they would need to become eligible in a future call. Evaluators sign a confidentiality and conflict-of-interest declaration. Further detail is given in the Guidelines for Evaluation.

6. Application process and calendar

a. Proposals are submitted through Our Calls - AccelBio, using the official application form, written in English. You will receive an acknowledgement within five working days; if not, contact geral@accelbio.pt.

b. Each Proposal must include:

- the completed application form;
- a supporting data annex of up to three (3) pages (applications without the annex will not be evaluated);
- a letter from the Applicant Institution supporting the application and confirming ownership or co-ownership of the Asset(s), signed by its legal representative or technology transfer office;

Calendar



Applications close at 17:00 Lisbon time.

7. Project follow-up

a. The application captures the applicant's initial perspective and is not expected to contain a full translational development strategy. After selection, each project is paired with an AccelBio translational scientist, who works with the Project Leader to review and develop the project's plan into the Workplan: prioritised activities, measurable milestones, the target value inflection point, go/no-go criteria, timelines and who performs each activity. Selection is based on the submitted Proposal; the joint planning is part of the Support, not of the selection process.

b. AccelBio holds a kick-off meeting at the start of the project, follow-up meetings every two months, and a final meeting to review outcomes. The AccelBio translational scientist may call additional meetings when needed.

c. At each go/no-go point, AccelBio and the Host Lab review results together. If a go/no-go criterion is not met, the parties may adjust, pause or end the Workplan. AccelBio may then reallocate its resources to other projects, including those on the reserve list.

d. Activities follow agreed quality standards, including Standard Operating Procedures and study plans for each task, and a process to record and address deviations.

e. AccelBio provides a shared workspace for documents and communication throughout the project.

f. Within three (3) months of the end of the Project Term, the Project Leader submits a Final Report using the template provided by AccelBio.

8. Intellectual property and value sharing

a. **Background IP stays with its owners.** Participation in the Open Call does not transfer or license any pre-existing IP Rights to AccelBio, other than the non-exclusive right to use them to carry out the Workplan.

b. **Results belong to those who generate them.** Ownership of results generated during the project follows applicable law and inventorship. Where results are generated jointly, ownership reflects each party's contribution, as set out in the Collaboration Agreement.

c. **The institution's technology transfer office leads.** The Beneficiary Institution, through its technology transfer office or equivalent office, leads the protection and commercialisation of the Asset(s), in coordination with AccelBio. The Beneficiary Institution informs AccelBio promptly of any invention arising from the project.

d. **AccelBio participates in the value created, on success only.** There are no upfront fees. AccelBio's contribution is valued as set out in Section 3. If results generated with AccelBio's contribution are licensed or used to create a company, AccelBio participates in the value created in proportion to that contribution.

e. The Collaboration Agreement is negotiated with the Beneficiary Institution's technology transfer office before the project starts. If results generated with AccelBio's contribution are later licensed or used to create a company, the Parties agree the specific terms of AccelBio's participation in the value created in a term sheet, negotiated in good faith at that time. AccelBio's model Collaboration Agreement and term sheet are available to technology transfer offices on request.

9. Obligations

Obligations of the Beneficiary Institution

Without prejudice to other obligations in these Rules, the Beneficiary Institution will:

1. sign the Collaboration Agreement before the project starts;
2. provide the Host Lab Contribution set out in the Workplan, including staff, time, samples, data, materials, equipment access, funding and running costs;
3. use the Support only for the Selected Project, in line with these Rules and the Collaboration Agreement;
4. exploit the results of the project on fair market terms, in coordination with AccelBio;
5. not enter into agreements that conflict with the Collaboration Agreement;
6. inform AccelBio promptly of inventions arising from the project, and of the exploitation of results generated with AccelBio's contribution;
7. manage the project with due diligence and report progress and results to AccelBio;
8. apply good documentation, laboratory and research integrity practices, and consider the ethical and social implications of the project, including the gender dimension;
9. acknowledge the Support in materials, publications and dissemination activities (Section 10);
10. take part in scheduled and extraordinary follow-up meetings;
11. deliver the Final Report;
12. provide the information AccelBio reasonably needs to promote the Open Call, which may be treated as confidential on express request;
13. report additional third-party funding raised for the project.

Obligations of the Project Leader

The Project Leader will lead the project and the Host Lab's contribution, take part in follow-up meetings, and comply with all other obligations in these Rules.

10. Breach, duration, confidentiality, data protection and publicity

Breach

a. If the Beneficiary Institution or Project Leader commits a remediable breach of these Rules, AccelBio notifies the breaching party, which must remedy it within thirty (30) days of notification.

b. If the breach is not remedied in that period, AccelBio may require compliance or terminate participation, and in both cases claim compensation for damages caused.

c. If AccelBio finds that the Support was used for purposes other than the Selected Project, it may suspend or end the Support immediately and claim compensation corresponding to the value of the Support misused, calculated as set out in Section 3.

Liability

The Beneficiary Institution and the Project Leader shall not hold AccelBio liable for any costs, damages or expenses (including reasonable legal fees) arising from breach or defective compliance with their obligations under these Rules.

Duration

a. These Rules apply from the date the Applicant Institution submits its Proposal (the "Effective Date").

b. They end when any of the following occurs:

- **i.** mutual written agreement between AccelBio and the Beneficiary Institution;
- **ii.** failure to protect and maintain the Asset(s), effective on AccelBio's notice of non-compliance, unless remedied within the period AccelBio sets;
- **iii.** failure to implement the Selected Project, including exploitation of the Asset(s), where the failure is attributable to the Beneficiary Institution;
- **iv.** a no-go decision under Section 7 that ends the Workplan.

c. The sections on IP rights, obligations, breach and liability, confidentiality, data protection and publicity remain in force for ten (10) years after termination.

Confidentiality

a. Proposals are treated as confidential throughout the process. AccelBio may publish general information about the Open Call and, for Selected Projects, the project name and logo, a short non-confidential description, the Beneficiary Institution and its logo, and the Project Leader's name and photo.

b. Project content, results and other information exchanged within the Open Call are Confidential Information. Unless the other parties authorise it in writing, AccelBio, the Beneficiary Institution, the Project Leader and any other participant will keep it confidential, use it only for the Selected Project, and share it only with people who need it for the project and are bound by confidentiality.

c. These obligations do not apply to information that is public through no fault of the receiving party, was obtained without a confidentiality obligation, or must be disclosed by law or court order, in which case the other party is notified in advance where possible.

Data protection

a. Personal data in Proposals is processed by AccelBio to manage, evaluate, select and monitor projects, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (articles 13 onwards). Applicants are informed at submission.

b. Applicant Institutions warrant that the people named in Proposals have been informed and, where required, have consented.

c. Personal data is kept until the end of the applicable statutory periods, is not subject to automated decisions, and is shared only with third parties needed to run the Open Call or where required by law. Transfers outside the European Economic Area follow GDPR safeguards.

Publicity and dissemination

a. AccelBio may publicise the Selected Projects and their results in suitable media and platforms, without any compensation to the Beneficiary Institution.

b. The Beneficiary Institution and Project Leader will inform AccelBio in advance of communication activities about the project, and acknowledge the Support in all related materials and events using: "The project leading to these results has received support from CoLAB AccelBio under the Open Call 2026."

c. AccelBio's channels to tag are Instagram @colab_accelbio and LinkedIn CoLAB AccelBio.

d. Any abstract, presentation, publication or other disclosure related to the project must be agreed with AccelBio beforehand, so that IP protection is not compromised. Dissemination states that it reflects only the authors' views.

Contact

Questions about these Rules should be sent to geral@accelbio.pt.