

HI-ACTS TECHNOLOGY LABS - CALL FOR PROPOSALS (2027)



Application deadline: 27 February 2026

Send your complete application as one single PDF (proposal, LOIs, budget plan, etc.) to info@hi-acts.de by Friday, 27 February 2026

Overview

The Hi-Acts Technology Labs are a structured funding scheme that supports innovation-driven development of accelerator-based technologies. The goal is to work with industry and medical institutions to further develop research results towards economic exploitation.

They form a bridge between scientific knowledge and market-ready applications – the so-called “Valley of Death.”

Through targeted funding, technologies are advanced to a stage where additional R&D or investment funding can be secured.

- Funding period: 3 years (one extension by 3 years possible)
- Funding per Lab:
 - up to €400k/year for single-center Labs
 - up to €600k/year for cross-center Labs
 - Additional support/coaching activities

Objectives

The Hi-Acts Technology Labs aim to identify early-stage, high-impact application opportunities, connect Helmholtz Centers with partners from industry and medicine, strengthen scientific and transfer cooperation, and drive commercialization through targeted project development. The Labs address key challenges such as bridging the gap between basic research and the market, integrating transfer activities (e.g. marketing, standardization), and building sustainable industry partnerships. Possible goals can include:

- Identify early, high-impact application opportunities for accelerator-based technologies.
- Build bridges between research and market (“Valley of Death”).
- Strengthen collaboration between Helmholtz Centers, industry, and medicine.
- Enable sustainable industry partnerships and commercialization.

Requirements

- Eligible for funding are Helmholtz Centers of the Hi-Acts consortium: DESY, HZDR, GSI, Hereon, HZB. Cross-center initiatives are welcome.
- Projects must contribute to the overall objectives of Hi-Acts:
 - Technological, analytical or organizational solutions that facilitate the use of accelerators for industry or medicine or technologies with a clear accelerator context (including e.g. the use of synchrotron beamlines or ion beams for analytical or preparative experiments that address a real-world application)
- Integration of external partners:
 - Option A: Technology development - at least one external partner mandatory.
 - Option B: Service development - at least one external partner and two LOIs mandatory.
 - External partners are involved in order to regularly reflect on the approaches, provide feedback and contribute their professional perspective. The aim is to ensure, through open exchange, that the results achieved are application oriented, meaningful, and feasible.
 - External partners are not eligible for funding. Their expenditure is to be credited as an in-kind contribution. This can refer to the pure time expenditure for the regular exchange, but may also be higher.

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- Clear technology description (including Technology Readiness Level [TRL] and economic potential).
 - Advance technologies at least 2 TRL levels, targeting TRL 4/5 – higher TRL required when applying to create a Service
 - If TRL advancement is not reached: alternative justification through equivalent societal impact (e.g. in the medical field) is possible.
- Concrete goals & milestones must be defined (minimum one milestone per year).
- One scientific staff member of per center (not the group leader) must act as a dedicated transfer contact.
- Additional support with a mix of joint workshops and individual coaching.
- Annual milestone meeting of the Technology Lab with industry partners, Hi-Acts team, and additional stakeholders of the Hi-Acts Community.
- In cooperation with the Hi-Acts Team are additional efforts for marketing and outreach activities to be considered (interviews, videos, impact analyses, market research, standardization)
- The financial plan must include 35% own contributions. These can be achieved, for example, through the involvement of additional staff, beamtime or comparable measures.
- If the agreed activities are not implemented or the defined objectives are not achieved, Hi-Acts reserves the right, subject to a decision by the Hi-Acts Steering Committee, to reduce or withdraw the project funding accordingly.
- Important note:
Your application will be forwarded to selected industry representatives and experts for assessment. All the information provided in the application will be treated in the strictest confidence. The industry representatives and experts will neither forward the application to third parties nor make it accessible to third parties; this applies even after the end of the selection process.

Timeline

- Application deadline: 27 February 2026
- Pitch session for invited proposals: 15 min presentation + 45 min Q&A
- Final selection and project preparation: April 2026
- Official Technology Lab start: 01.01.2027

Proposal Structure

Please send your complete application as one single PDF (proposal, LOIs, budget plan, etc.)

1. Project Overview (1 page)
 - Summary, applicants, industry partners, financial overview.
2. Description of the Technology Lab and Objectives (2 pages)
 - Technology, TRL, economic exploitation, target groups, milestones.
 - Involvement of external partners.
 - Risks and mitigation measures.
3. Strategic Relevance and Transfer (2 pages)
 - Contribution to Hi-Acts objectives.
 - Market environment, market potential, comparison with similar activities.
 - Planned transfer activities.
4. Short Presentation of the Project Team (1 page)
 - Scientific and transfer staff from the Helmholtz Centers.
 - Industry partners and their resources.

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5. Outlook (1 page)

- Follow-up activities after successful completion.

6. Project Plan

- Work packages, detailed milestones, roadmap, involvement of external partners

7. Financial Plan

- Budget by year and by center, 35% own contribution must be included

Selection criteria (non-exhaustive):

- Clear description of the technology/software/services.
- Economic exploitation potential and relevance.
- Concrete goals and milestones aligned with the commercialization strategy.
- Realistic feasibility and resource planning.
- Involvement and commitment of industry partners.
- Transparent TRL description.
- Scientific and technical qualification of the team.
- Cross-center collaboration and division of tasks.
- Transparent project and financial plan.
- Inclusion of in-kind contributions.
- Contribution to Hi-Acts and Helmholtz objectives.
- Appropriate transfer activities (market research, commercialization, impact).
- Identification and assessment of potential risks.

Contact for questions

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HZDR: p.jungke@hzdr.de

GSI: s.utermann@gsi.de

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HZB: anna.anochin@helmholtz-berlin.de

Contact for general questions: info@hi-acts.de Additional information is available on the website www.hi-acts.de