

USE CASE INITIATIVES 2026 CALL FOR PROPOSALS



What is it about?

The overall aim of the Helmholtz Innovation Platform for Accelerator-based Technologies and Solutions - Hi-Acts - is to make accelerator-based technology solutions widely available to users in industry and medical facilities. It wants to improve industrial access to and use of existing and new accelerators developed by the Helmholtz Association. Hi-Acts is transforming accelerators to become an integral part of R&D, product development and quality analysis, but also as products in their own right - as easily accessible tools for non-specialists - and will drive their adoption into value and production chains.

Putting Hi-Acts into action

Helmholtz partners in Hi-Acts are working in different groups to develop technological and analytical solutions that make accelerators easier to exploit for industrial needs: easier to use, with results that are easier to understand, more reliable and less cost-intensive. One instrument for achieving these goals is the annual call for proposals for "Hi-Acts Use Case Initiatives." This seed-funding measure aims to address current challenges facing industrial partners and seek (short-term) R&D or production solutions.

Details & requirements

This 2026 call for proposals for "Hi-Acts Use Case Initiatives" is again open to all projects that can contribute to the Hi-Acts objective listed below and that are clearly linked to accelerators. Hi-Acts only funds initiatives with a focus on applied research & development.

Important funding criteria are the increase in industry funding (e.g. via services), co-funded collaborations with industry and hospitals, licensing agreements and spin-offs, and demonstrable significant technical progress in the transfer of know how from research to practical applications.

Initiatives eligible for funding are those that ...

- improve the technical set-up or the analytical performance of accelerator-based technologies or methods, thereby facilitating industrial access or use (e.g. time, reliability, costs)
- address a specific, high-potential application in a certain industry (e.g. medtech, pharma, semiconductor, cross-cutting fields such as new sustainable materials or aerospace)
- boost the development of new or the further development of existing accelerator concepts and technologies or analytical methods targeting industry (maintenance efficiency, package solutions, testing capabilities within real accelerators)
- improve current service portfolios or develop new service solutions (e.g. smart analysis and evaluation of experimental data)
- broaden knowledge for "non-specialist users of accelerators" and encourage interaction between industry & science (i.e. communication, exchange, training, organisational processes, standardisation, use of new ideation tools such as hackathon formats)

Call criteria

- Who is eligible for funding? Current partners of the Hi-Acts consortium: DESY, HZDR, GSI, Hereon, HZB. Cross-centre initiatives are also welcome.
- Projects must contribute to the overall objectives of Hi-Acts:
 1. Technological, analytical or organisational solutions that facilitate the use of accelerators for industrial needs (see also: list of potential initiatives above).

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2. 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)

- Project period: 1 January 2026 until 31 December 2026
- Volume of funding: We offer seed funding up to € 100,000 per project (investment, personnel, material) over a period of up to 12 months.
- An attachment of at least one LOI (letter of intent) or written statement (e.g. e-mail) of a potential customer or user of the intended solution or service is required (see application form).
- Requested project funds must be invoiced and spent by 31 December 2026 at the latest.
- The transfer offices of the associated Helmholtz partners must approve the project application before submission (contact details below).

Procedure

1. Please complete the Use Case Initiatives Application Form (also as download form on www.hi-acts.de)
2. Send it to your transfer office for cross-checking (formal criteria)
3. Send your application (as a PDF attachment) to info@hi-acts.de (cc your local contact at the transfer office in the mail) by Friday, 19 September 2025.
4. The Hi-Acts selection committee (composed of the heads of the transfer offices and selected industry representatives) will choose the most promising projects based on the following criteria:
 - a. Performance of the approach in terms of likelihood of achieving (or even surpassing) the set targets; cost-effectiveness of the proposed solution(s);
 - b. Overall economic and societal impact (i.e. future cost-reduction potential, market size, revenues, transfer potential, time to market, TRL).
 - c. Expected impact on the transfer activities of your centre (number and extent of collaborations with or contract research for industry).
5. Short-listed initiatives will then be invited to present a 2 min online pitch, probably on Monday, 24 November or Tuesday, 25 November 2025.
6. As part of the preparation, we offer participants the opportunity to take part in a pitch training.
 - a. An introductory session will be held on two available dates: Monday, 10 November, 10:00-12:00 & Tuesday, 11 November, 14:00-16:00. Following this, you will have the chance to schedule a 30-minute one-on-one coaching session.
 - b. Participation is highly recommended, as the pitch will be considered in the final evaluation.

We will let you know by the beginning of December at the latest whether your proposal has been accepted to start immediately in January 2026.

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.

Contacts for approval of applications before submission:

DESY: johannes.blum@desy.de

HZDR: p.jungke@hzdr.de

GSI: s.utermann@gsi.de

Hereon: marc.thiry@hereon.de

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