



**DEADLINE LETTER OF INTENT: FEBRUARY 14<sup>TH</sup>, 2018**  
**DEADLINE FULL PROPOSAL: SEPTEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup>, 2018**

## BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY YOUNG RESEARCHERS

### BACKGROUND

A distinctive character of the Italian research system is the lack of support towards young researchers and the absence of training frameworks that successfully elicit their independency and leadership abilities.

In this framework, the well-known “brain drain” phenomenon becomes almost inevitable. Furthermore, young talents trained abroad seldom if ever decide to move back to Italy. The Italian system is thus losing an entire generation of talents. For young researcher to stay in Italy means to face a country with limited financial resources, an inefficient turnover, and a failing meritocracy system. Therefore, it has become by now a priority for our country to change the status quo and recreate the conditions for young talents to contribute science and innovation with original and independent initiatives.

In order to encourage the creativity of young researchers, through a “bottom-up” approach, this call for proposals – within the biomedical research field - aims to clarify the molecular mechanisms underlying human diseases.

### AIMS

This call is meant to support research projects aimed to identify and understand of the molecular basis of a human disease. Applicants are required to carefully specify the disease and the molecular mechanism they intend to investigate. All human diseases are eligible for this call, except for amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. (Indeed, funding opportunities for projects focusing on this pathology are provided by ARISLA Foundation - [www.arisla.org](http://www.arisla.org). Cariplo Foundation has contributed, among others, to found ARISLA Foundation.)

The originality of the research project, its methodological approach and the expected outcomes will be crucial during the entire selection process. Specifically, applications should be supported by a clear rationale, conceived on compelling preliminary data.

Through this call, Cariplo Foundation aims to offer young researchers the opportunity to develop independent careers, conducting research projects under their own responsibility, without the control of a supervisor. It is thus recommended to the applications to clearly stress the leadership of the young principal investigator (PI, without ambiguities on his/her effective role in conducting the proposed project).

Finally, embracing the principles of Responsible Research and Innovation<sup>1</sup>, Fondazione Cariplo aims to promote initiatives fostering communication and interaction between researchers and civil society. In particular, researchers must propose a communication plan inclusive and open to all stakeholders differently implicated in the research. Planned activities are meant to facilitate the activation of a dual exchange between science and society. The communication plan is considered an integral part of the research proposal.

### GUIDELINES

This call for proposals is dedicated to young researchers. They must perform their research activities in one of the hosting institution eligible to receive funding from the Foundation. Beside the requirements set out in the *Guidelines for presentation*, it is mandatory for the hosting institution to carry out directly scientific research in the specific field of interest of the applicants. Furthermore, institutions must have adequate staff and equipment to guarantee applicants a real opportunity to bring their research to completion.

Moreover, it is mandatory for the leading hosting institution, and more specifically the operational headquarters of the project,

<sup>1</sup> The European movement on the theme of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) is constantly evolving, as emerges from the debate which has recently led to the so called “Rome declaration on RRI” ([http://www.sis-rri-conference.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/RomeDeclaration\\_Final.pdf](http://www.sis-rri-conference.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/RomeDeclaration_Final.pdf)). Considering the available literature, it is possible to describe RRI as a dynamic and iterative process which intends to match research and innovation to values, needs and expectations of the society. Moreover, RRI aims at actively involving all the stakeholders taking part to activities of research and innovation, making them mutually responsible with respect to both the research process and its results.

to be located within the geographical area of interest of Cariplo Foundation (Lombardia plus Novara and Verbania districts). This requirement does not pertain potential partners.

The hosting institution must provide the PI with appropriate workspaces, laboratories, equipment, qualified staff (e.g. lab technicians), as well as any other resources needed to adequately carry out the project.

By submitting a proposal, applicant organizations accept the "portability of the grant". This means that PIs always maintain the rights to require the transfer of the research project to a new eligible institution, for as long as the research objectives are preserved. Any change in the host institution depends on Fondazione Cariplo approval according to the guidelines of this call of proposals.

### Eligible applicants

To be eligible, PIs of the leading unit must:

- fulfil all the following requirements:
  - i) have been awarded of their (first) PhD at least 2 and no later than 7 years before the deadline of this call<sup>2,3</sup>;
  - ii) have not reached yet their 41<sup>st</sup> birthday on the deadline of this call<sup>4</sup>;
  - iii) have at least one publication as first or last author in a peer reviewed journal;
- guarantee at least 50% of his/her total working time to the project;
- propose only one project as principal investigator<sup>5,6</sup>;

2 The call is also addressed to medical doctor awarded of their medical specialty at least 2 and no later than 7 years. For candidates with both PhD and medical specialty, eligibility will be determined considering the degree they earned first.

3 Extension of eligibility:

- Maternity: 18 months for each child (born before or after the PhD award);
- Paternity: effective period of paternity leave for each child (born before or after the PhD award);
- Illness (over 90 days): effective period taken for each incident (occurred after the PhD award).

4 See footnote 3.

- not result as PI of any other ongoing project funded by previous calls launched by the Scientific Research Area (except for calls in partnership with other granting agencies)<sup>7</sup>.
- appear as last author in at least one publication strictly relevant to this project and be always indicated as corresponding author of the publications originated by this research.

Moreover, any proposal with the following characteristics will be considered non-eligible:

- failing to meet this Call scientific priorities;
- purely descriptive;
- essentially aimed to develop novel methodologies and/or technologies;
- proposing an exclusive pharmacological and/or clinical focus;
- aimed to set up new research centres and/or laboratories and/or animal facilities;
- missing of a proper communication plan (for detail please see the "Communication Guidelines").

In addition, Fondazione Cariplo will not consider eligible a project that has been submitted to this specific Call more than two times.

Projects should provide the approval of the Ethical Committee<sup>8</sup>. In case of animal trials Fondazione Cariplo requires a copy of the Ministry of Health authorization. By all means the authorization has to be notified to Fondazione Cariplo before the final report on the project.

5 In this specific case we refer to both PIs of the leading unit as well as PIs of partner units.

6 In case of multiple submission of the same PI only the first one will be admitted.

7 A project is considered ongoing unless the final grant reports – both the scientific and the financial one – have been uploaded on our website before the deadline of this call.

8 In case the approval is not available by the Call's deadline, the leading organization will be requested to send it together with the preliminary fulfillment, penalty the grant revocation.

The total cost of the project can only include costs related to the realization of the proposed studies, respecting the eligibility criteria and the thresholds listed below:

- A03 - "Equipment and software"  
This entry cannot exceed 20% of the additional costs<sup>9</sup>. It covers fully the costs for newly acquired equipment and software. It is indispensable that researchers clearly motivate these costs in accordance to the specificity of the project. In this category can also be included renting costs as well as building expenses for the installation of the new equipment.
- A04 - "Other amortizable costs"  
This entry can only include patent costs.
- A06 - "Temporary staff"  
This entry can only include research personnel costs. The cost of administrative staff is not allowed.
- A07 - "Sub-contractors and consultants"  
This entry should also include audit<sup>10</sup> costs, where applicable<sup>11</sup>.
- A08 - "Materials and supplies"  
This entry cannot include costs related to stationery and photocopies.
- A09 - "Overheads"  
This entry cannot exceed 10% of the additional costs<sup>12</sup>.
- A10 - "Travel, publication and dissemination costs"  
This entry cannot exceed 10% of the additional costs<sup>13</sup> and can only include travel expenses and conference participation fees for the research personnel involved in the project, scientific publications and activities of communication with the civil society.

<sup>9</sup> Sum of: A03, A04, A06, A07, A08, A10.

<sup>10</sup> Exclusively certificated auditors are considered eligible.

<sup>11</sup> With the exclusive aim of ascertaining whether the obligation to perform a financial audit applies or not, the amount which has to be considered is obtained multiplying the eligible costs detailed in the Budget (sum of entries A06, A07, A08, A09 and A10) by the coefficient 1.25 (which represents an estimate of the co-funding generally guaranteed by the hosting institution, mainly in the form of permanent staff). It is also recommended to refer to chapter 10 of the *Grant management and reporting guide* and to the *Guidelines for audit*; both documents are available on the *Grant management and reporting page* of Cariplo Foundation's website.

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 4.

<sup>13</sup> See footnote 4.

The grant will cover 100% of project costs. Requested funding should range from 100,000 to 250,000 euros. When filling in the forms, please be careful and note that the total cost of the project will have to perfectly match with the requested funding.

Please note that it is not required to explicit in the budget form organizations' co-funding expressed in terms of personnel costs.

#### **Application submission: Letter of intent (LOI)**

The first stage of the submission process consists in the submission of the LOI.

LOI must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on February 14<sup>th</sup> 2018. PIs must submit LOI accessing the online platform available on Fondazione Cariplo's website. First-time applicants need to register and require their username and password.

Fondazione Cariplo will consider non-eligible applications submitted on paper or using forms different from the specific ones available online.

In order to apply for this grant, applicants are required to fill in integrally all the online forms organized as below:

- Leading organization details (fill in the form with in details; or check and update your organization's details if already registered);
- Project section;
- Additional information;
- Budget section.

Clearly, applicants must upload all compulsory documents as it is indicated in the Guidelines for Presentation:

- LOI (PDF file)<sup>14</sup>;
- partnership agreement<sup>15</sup>;
- documentation of the applicant organizations<sup>16</sup>;
- publication[s] having the PI as first or last author, as PDF files;
- PhD degree certificate.

Please note that in this first phase of evaluation the LOI represents the only document subjected to meritocratic analysis.

In order to help applicants during their submission we prepared a series of documents that applicants are kindly invited to read (please note all documents are available on Cariplo Foundation's website at [www.fondazionecriplo.it](http://www.fondazionecriplo.it)):

- Guidelines for presentation;
- Grant management and reporting guide;
- Communication Guidelines;
- Acknowledgement guidelines for academic papers;
- Intellectual property rights policy;
- Open access policy.

By submitting a proposal, applicants acknowledge, agree and accept that the award of the grant requires the irrevocable acceptance of all policies mentioned above and respect of aforementioned Guide and Guidelines.

#### **Application submission: full proposal**

Exclusively PIs of the most competitive LOIs will be invited to submit full proposal. The deadline of the proposals is September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018, 5:00 p.m. PIs are requested to submit their applications using the following email address: [ricercagiovani@fondazionecriplo.it](mailto:ricercagiovani@fondazionecriplo.it).

Applications submitted on paper or using forms different from the specific ones available online are considered non-eligible.

The mandatory documents to access the second stage of the evaluation process are:

- project form (PDF file)<sup>17</sup>;
- detailed budget (PDF file)<sup>18</sup>;
- project dissemination form (PDF file)<sup>19</sup>.

Please note that the LOI, the project form, the budget form and the dissemination form are the only documents subjected to meritocratic analysis.

#### **Evaluation process**

All proposals submitted before the deadline and according to the formal requirements described above will follow a two-step evaluation process:

##### *1. LOI evaluation*

Fondazione Cariplo will check that all proposals are submitted correctly. This means that it will be checked the eligibility of the applicants as well as the presence of all necessary documents and the coherence with the guidelines. In parallel a panel of external and independent reviewers will check the scientific coherence in accordance to the Call indications. During this stage of the evaluation, each proposal will be analysed by 2 independent reviewers selected according to their expertise in the specific research milieu of the project. Please note that the keywords provided by applicants will be determinant in the definition of the match between reviewers and projects. This logic is meant to ensure the identification of the most suitable reviewers for the projects.

<sup>14</sup> The form for the LOI can be downloaded from the online section "Complementary Data".

<sup>15</sup> In case the project involves partners.

<sup>16</sup> Applicants are advised to read the document 'Guidelines for Grant seekers' available on Fondazione Cariplo's website.

<sup>17</sup> Project form can be downloaded from the online section "Complementary Data".

<sup>18</sup> Detailed budget form can be downloaded from the online section "Complementary Data".

<sup>19</sup> The detailed dissemination plan must be prepared in accordance with the template related to the call. The form can be downloaded from the section Additional Information under Online Forms.

Only the most competitive applications will access the last stage of the evaluation process. Please note that all PIs excluded from the second stage of the evaluation process will receive a formal letter with full details on the exclusion.

#### II. Full proposal evaluation

Full proposals will be evaluated by independent experts in a peer review process ensuring scientific expertise and impartiality. Each proposal will be analysed by 3 independent reviewers selected for their expertise in the specific research milieu of the project. Please note that also in this stage the keywords provided by the applicants will be determinant in the definition of the match between reviewers and projects. This logic is meant to ensure the identification of the most suitable reviewers for the project.

The final score given to the project reflect scores and weight:

1. DESCRIPTION (weight 5%)
  - state of the art analysis;
  - preliminary data significance;
  - clarity of the project aims and strategies;
2. APPROACH (weight 20%)
  - adequacy and rationality of the experimental plan;
3. INNOVATION (weight 15%)
  - originality and innovation of the project;
4. OUTCOMES (weight 20%)
  - expected results and their impact on the scientific community;
  - potential benefits for human health;
5. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, TEAM AND ORGANIZATION (weight 25%)
  - scientific and managerial leadership of the PI;
  - track record and adequacy of the PI and team competencies (leading organization and partner);
  - expected impact of the project in terms of the PI's career;
6. DISSEMINATION (weight 5%)
  - quality of the communication plan also in relation to Responsible Research and Innovation<sup>20</sup> principles;
7. BUDGET and PROJECT DURATION (weight: 10%)
  - adequacy of budget and duration of the project.

The final ranking ultimately represents the list of the best projects worth of funding.

At the end of the review process, all applicants will receive official communication together with reviewers' feedback.

#### AVAILABLE BUDGET

The budget available for this call for proposals consists of 4 million euros.

<sup>20</sup> See footnote 1.