

BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY YOUNG RESEARCHERS

Two-step Call for Proposals

First phase deadline March 18th, 2021

CALLS 2021. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Fondazione
CARIPLO

TUTE SERVARE MUNIFICE DONARE • 1816



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1. INTRODUCTION

Biomedical research conducted by young researchers is a two-step Call for proposals that fits with the Cariplo Foundation strategic goal “Scientific Research: increasing knowledge for the advancement of biomedical sciences and for the definition of more inclusive, circular and sustainable socio-economic developmental models”.

2. BACKGROUND

A distinctive feature of the Italian research system is the lack of support towards young researchers and the absence of training frameworks to 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 researchers to staying in Italy means to face a country with limited financial resources, an inefficient turnover and a failing meritocratic 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.

¹ The European movement on the theme of RRI is constantly evolving, as emerges from the debate which has recently led to the so called “Rome declaration on RRI” (https://ec.europa.eu/research/swafs/pdf/rome_declaration_RRI_final_21_November.pdf). Considering the available literature, it is possible to describe RRI as a dynamic and

3. AIMS

This Call is meant to support research projects aimed to identify and understand 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, with the exception of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and oncological diseases.

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 (RRI)¹, Cariplo Foundation aims to promote initiatives fostering communication and interaction between researchers and the 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.

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.

4. GUIDELINES

4.1 Eligible subjects

Public or private non-profit organizations that conduct scientific research.

By participating to this Call, organizations accept the portability of the grant. Any change in the host institution depends on Cariplo Foundation approval according to the guidelines for presentation ("Guida alla presentazione dei progetti su bandi") and the general criteria for granting contributions ("Criteri generali per la concessione dei contributi").

4.2 Eligible projects

The PI of the leading unit must:

- meet the following criteria:
 - i) has been awarded of his/her (first) PhD at least 2 and no later than 7 years by the deadline of the first phase^{2,3};
 - ii) has not reached yet his/her 41st birthday on the deadline of the first phase⁴;
 - iii) has at least one publication as first or last author in a peer-reviewed journal;
 - iv) has an h-index⁵ ≥ 6 or at least one publication as first/last author in a peer-reviewed journal with an Impact Factor⁶ ≥ 10 or at least two publications as first/last author in a peer-reviewed journal with an impact factor ≥ 5 .
- dedicate at least 50% of his/her total working time to the project.

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

³ Extension of eligibility:

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

⁴ See footnote 3.

⁵ Source: <https://www.scopus.com/freelookup/form/author.uri>

- be corresponding author in all the publications strictly related to this project and last author in at least one of these.

Moreover, the PIs of all the involved units (leading and partner):

- are allowed to submit one proposal only to this Call⁷;
- may participate as PI in more than one Call of the Scientific Research Area, as long as no overlap is displayed between proposals⁸;
- cannot be the PI of any other ongoing proposals previously funded by the Scientific Research Area (except for Calls in partnership with other granting agencies)⁹;
- must indicate, in all publications originating from the project results, the affiliation of the organization with which the project proposal was submitted¹⁰.

Projects should provide the approval of the Ethical Committee¹¹.

In case submitted proposals require animal experimentation, Cariplo Foundation should be informed about the Ministry of Health authorization as soon as it is available and, in any case, no later than the submission of the final grant report.

It is mandatory for the operational headquarter of the leading organization to be located within the geographical area of intervention of Cariplo Foundation. This requirement does not pertain potential partners.

⁶ Impact Factor should be referred to the year of publication. For recently published papers, in case of unavailability of the Impact Factor, please provide the most recent value.

⁷ In case of overlapping proposals, only the first one received will be considered.

⁸ See footnote 7.

⁹ A proposal 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.

¹⁰ It is recommended to refer to the "Linee guida per la citazione del contributo nelle pubblicazioni Scientifiche" available on the website.

¹¹ 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.

The total cost of the project should include the additional costs¹² and the overhead only, according to the eligibility criteria and the thresholds listed below:

- A03 - “Equipment and software”
This entry cannot exceed 20% of the additional costs. It fully covers the costs for newly acquired equipments and softwares. It is mandatory to 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 work expenses for the installation of the new equipments.
- 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 expense item must not exceed the threshold of 20% of the additional project costs and may include - in addition to the estimated costs attributable to this item according to the typology of the service to be acquired¹³ - highly specialized services for access to clinical data, tools and skills useful for carrying out the research, also provided by recognized institutes such as IRCCS or other entities related to the latter which may operate under an agreement with the subjects adhering to the partnership. Since the threshold applies to the total additional costs of the project and is therefore related to the partnership as a whole, in the case that the economic plan of a subject (leading organization or partner) should individually provide cost items for an amount exceeding the maximum allowed, this subject

¹² Sum of: A03, A04, A06, A07, A08, A10.

¹³ This entry should also include audit costs, where applicable. Exclusively certificated auditors are considered eligible. For the sole purpose of ascertaining whether the obligation to perform a financial audit applies or not, the amount which has to be considered is obtained by multiplying the eligible costs detailed in the Budget (sum of entries A06, A07, A08, A09 and A10) by the coefficient 1,25. It is also recommended to refer to the “Grant management and reporting guide” and to the guidelines for audit assignment “Linee guida per affidamento audit”; both documents are available on the Cariplo Foundation’s website.

must justify the choice in order to clarify its usefulness for the achievement of the research objectives¹⁴.

- A08 - “Materials and supplies”
This entry cannot include costs related to office supplies and photocopies.
- A09 - “Overheads”
This entry cannot exceed 10% of the additional costs.
- A10 - “Other operating expenses”
This entry cannot exceed 10% of the additional costs 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.

The grant will cover 100% of project costs, therefore the total cost of the project should correspond to the requested amount.

Requested funding should range from 100,000 to 250,000 euros.

Proposals should provide the following mandatory documents:

PHASE I

- Letter of Intent (LOI)¹⁵, as PDF file;
- Host institution agreement¹⁶;
- Partnership agreement¹⁷;
- At least one publication having the PI as first or last author, as PDF file;

However, it is anticipated that in case of funding, the Foundation will confirm to each recipient any obligation to satisfy such fulfillment.

¹⁴ It should be noted that these expenses, when reporting, can only be validated if accounted for following a regular invoice issued by the implementing body (lead partner and / or partner). The issuance of an internal note in place of the invoice can only be allowed in the case of public bodies and provided that a publicly known rate is available, in addition to a detailed report on the activity performed.

¹⁵ The LOI form can be downloaded from the website.

¹⁶ First phase host institution agreement does not require the indication of the amount of requested funding.

¹⁷ To be provided in case the project involves partners.

- PhD/MD degree certificate, comprehensive of the date of achievement¹⁸;
- Authorization for the Transfer of Personal Data to extra-European countries¹⁹.

PHASE II

- Project form²⁰, as PDF file;
- Communication plan form²¹, as PDF file;
- Detailed budget, as EXCEL file;
- Host institution agreement²²;
- Authorization for the Transfer of Personal Data to extra-European countries²³.

By participating to this Call, organizations acknowledge, agree and accept that the award of the grant requires the irrevocable acceptance of all the following documents, available online for the download: Intellectual property rights policy, Open access policy and Acknowledgement guidelines for academic papers (“Linee guida per la citazione del contributo nelle comunicazioni scientifiche”).

4.3 Criteria

The evaluation of the LOIs and full projects will be carried out according to the methods and criteria represented below.

PHASE I

Formal verification of the presence of all the mandatory documents and of the eligibility of the organizations. Selection of those proposals best addressing the present Call contents and purposes. Each proposal will be analysed by two independent reviewers. Please note that the keywords provided will be relevant to match proposals with the most appropriate reviewers.

PHASE II

Formal verification of the presence of all the mandatory documents and the coherence of the

budget with the criteria and the thresholds outlined above. Full projects’ evaluation will be performed on the basis of the following criteria:

1. DESCRIPTION (weight 5%)

- clarity of the project aims and strategies;
- analysis of the state of the art;
- preliminary data significance.

2. APPROACH (weight 20%)

- adequacy and rationality of the experimental plan;
- risk evaluation and presence of adequate back-up plans.

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, management and leadership skills of the PI;
- track record, adequacy of the PI and team expertise;
- expected impact of the project in terms of the PI’s professional development.

6. DISSEMINATION (weight 5%)

- quality of the communication plan.

7. BUDGET and PROJECT DURATION (weight: 10%)

- budget suitability, coherence and duration of the project. In this criterion, the suitability of

¹⁸ The date of achievement is intended as the date of their discussion.

¹⁹ The Authorization form can be downloaded from the website.

²⁰ The Project form can be downloaded from the website.

²¹ The communication plan form can be downloaded from the website.

²² Second phase host institution agreement requires the indication of the amount of requested funding.

²³ The Authorization form can be downloaded from the website and must be individually signed by each member of the research group.

the contributions of any partner and third party service providers will also be assessed.

Three independent reviewers will analyse the scientific workplan and the adequacy of the budget. Cariplo Foundation will evaluate the coherence of the budget and the quality of the communication plan.

4.4 Non-eligible projects

Proposals will be considered non-eligible in case they do not respect the Call contents and purposes and/or present the following features:

- purely descriptive;
- essentially aimed to develop novel methodologies and/or technologies;
- having exclusively a pharmacological and/or clinical focus;
- aimed to set up new research centres and/or laboratories and/or animal facilities.

In addition, Cariplo Foundation will not consider eligible a proposal that has been submitted more than two times to previous editions of this Call.

4.5 Submission process

PHASE I - The LOI must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on **March 18th 2021**.

PHASE II - This second step concerns those LOI invited to submit full projects. The deadline for submitting the full proposal will be announced with the invitation.

5. AVAILABLE BUDGET, ELIGIBLE/NON-ELIGIBLE COSTS

The budget available for this Call consists of 3 million Euros.

Eligible and non-eligible costs are detailed in the previous section 4.2 "Eligible projects".

6. COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

Cariplo Foundation, as a private entity, is not required to comply with public procedures and has the faculty not to allocate the entire budget in whole or in part. The text of the Call and all the

mentioned documents can be found on Cariplo Foundation website www.fondazionecriplo.it.

7. SUMMARY *

Call	Biomedical research conducted by young researchers
Type	Two-step Call
Deadline	First phase 18.3.2021
Available budget	€ 3.000.000
Obiettivi	Clarify the molecular mechanisms underlying human diseases. Offer young researchers the opportunity to develop independent careers.
Eligible subjects	Public or private non-profit organizations that conduct scientific research.
Funding constraints	Minimum € 100.000 Maximum € 250.000
Contacts	Scientific Research Area Staff contacts at: www.fondazionecriplo.it E-mail contact: ricercagiovani@fondazionecriplo.it

** The data shown in the "Summary" are intended as a brief overview of the terms and conditions of the Call only. For a full description, please read carefully the text of the Call.*