

# BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH CONDUCTED BY YOUNG RESEARCHERS

Two-step Call for Proposals

**First phase deadline March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022**

**CALLS 2022. SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

Fondazione  
**CARIPLO**

TUTE SERVARE MUNIFICE DONARE • 1816



# Index

- 1. INTRODUCTION..... 3
- 2. BACKGROUND..... 3
- 3. AIMS..... 3
- 4. GUIDELINES..... 4
  - 4.1 Beneficiaries ..... 4
  - 4.2 Eligible projects ..... 4
  - 4.3 Criteria ..... 6
  - 4.4 Non-eligible projects ..... 6
  - 4.5 Submission process ..... 7
- 5. AVAILABLE BUDGET, ELIGIBLE/NON-ELIGIBLE COSTS..... 7
- 6. COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION ..... 7
- 7. SUMMARY..... 7

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Biomedical research conducted by young researchers is a two-step Call for proposals that is part of the strategic goal “Scientific Research: support multidisciplinary research for the well-being of people and the socio-economic development of communities”.

## 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.

## 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. 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)<sup>1</sup>, 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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](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

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<sup>2,3</sup>;
  - ii) has not reached yet his/her 41<sup>st</sup> birthday on the deadline of the first phase<sup>4</sup>;
  - iii) has at least one original article<sup>5</sup> as first or last author in a peer-reviewed journal;
  - iv) has an h-index<sup>6</sup>  $\geq 6$  or at least one publication as first/last author in a peer-reviewed journal with an Impact Factor<sup>7</sup>  $\geq 10$  or at least two publications as first/last author in a peer-reviewed journal with an impact factor  $\geq 5$ .
- dedicate at least 50% of his/her total working time to the project.

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

<sup>3</sup> Extension of eligibility:

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

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 3.

<sup>5</sup> For this purpose, will be considered only scientific articles in which new experiments are described and the results deriving from them discussed. Reviews are therefore not allowed.

- 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 Call<sup>8</sup>;
- may participate as PI in more than one Call of the Scientific Research Area, as long as no overlap is displayed between proposals<sup>9</sup>;
- 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)<sup>10</sup>;
- must indicate, in all publications originating from the project results, the affiliation of the organization with which the project proposal was submitted<sup>11</sup>.

Projects using vertebrate animals, biological material of human origin and/or involving patients must comply with the relevant Italian laws.

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.

The total cost of the project should include the additional costs<sup>12</sup> and the overhead only, according to the eligibility criteria and the thresholds listed below:

<sup>6</sup> Source: <https://www.scopus.com/freelookup/form/author.uri>

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> In case of overlapping proposals, only the first one received will be considered.

<sup>9</sup> See footnote 8.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> It is recommended to refer to the "Linee guida per la citazione del contributo nelle pubblicazioni Scientifiche" available on the website.

<sup>12</sup> Sum of: A03, A04, A06, A07, A08, A10.

- 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 ranting 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 acquired<sup>13</sup> - 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 must justify the choice in order to clarify its usefulness for the achievement of the research objectives<sup>14</sup>.
- A08 - “Materials and supplies”

<sup>13</sup> 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. However, it is anticipated that in case of funding, the Foundation will confirm to each recipient any obligation to satisfy such fulfillment.

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)<sup>15</sup>, as PDF file;
- Host institution agreement<sup>16</sup>;
- Partnership agreement<sup>17</sup>;
- At least one original article having the PI as first or last author, as PDF file;
- PhD/Medical specialty degree certificate, comprehensive of the date of achievement<sup>18</sup>.

#### PHASE II

- Project form<sup>19</sup>, as PDF file;

<sup>14</sup> 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.

<sup>15</sup> The LOI form can be downloaded from the website.

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

<sup>17</sup> To be provided in case the project involves partners.

<sup>18</sup> The date of achievement is intended as the date of their discussion.

<sup>19</sup> The Project form can be downloaded from the website.

- Communication plan form<sup>20</sup>, as PDF file;
- Detailed budget, as EXCEL file;
- Host institution agreement<sup>21</sup>.

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;

<sup>20</sup> The communication plan form can be downloaded from the website.

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

Please note that the evaluation of the projects is carried out through peer review, or through a scientific assessment of merit entrusted to an independent third party made up of qualified experts who are subject to precisely defined rules and procedures aimed at excluding conflicts of interest and ideological prejudices, personal pressures and self-referentiality. The Offices will make a judgment limited to the coherence of the Business Plan 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:

<sup>21</sup> Second phase host institution agreement requires the indication of the amount of requested funding.

- 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 16<sup>th</sup> 2022**.

**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.fondazione cariplo.it](http://www.fondazione cariplo.it).

For the purpose of the assessment of merit through peer review, any personal data that may be reported in the project form, may be transferred to non-EU countries or organizations, in accordance with EU Regulation 2016/679. Before applying, therefore, please read the new privacy policy to learn more about the processing of personal data and the transfer of personal data to countries or organizations outside the European Union.

## 7. SUMMARY \*

Call	Biomedical research conducted by young researchers
Type	Two-step Call
Deadline	First phase 16.3.2022
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: <a href="http://www.fondazione cariplo.it">www.fondazione cariplo.it</a> E-mail contact: <a href="mailto:ricercagiovani@fondazione cariplo.it">ricercagiovani@fondazione cariplo.it</a>

*\* 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.*