



Call for Proposals “Young Researchers” – 2026 FAQs PHASE I (updated on 23/02/2026)

Proposals should provide the following mandatory documents:

- Letter of agreement (PHASE I), available in the project Reserved Area;
- Partnership agreement, available in the project Reserved Area;
- Letter of intent (LOI), outlining the project idea, in PDF format and drafted in English, using the designated template
- Full Proposal, as the detailed description of the project, in PDF format and drafted in English, using the designated template;
- Self-declaration attesting that the candidate meets the eligibility requirements, prepared using the designated template.

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1. What are the deadline date and time for the call?

The deadline for Phase I project submissions is set as follows:

- Life Sciences: April 13, 2026
- Physical Sciences and Engineering: April 14, 2026
- Social Sciences and Humanities: April 15, 2026

Proposals must be submitted by 5:00 PM. Submission of applications already in progress is allowed within thirty minutes after the deadline.

Please note that the portal will not allow submission in the following cases:

- Attempted submission after the deadline;
- Incomplete project documentation;
- Incomplete personal and institutional data (lead applicant and any partners).

2. What is the intervention area of Cariplo Foundation?

The area of intervention corresponds to the Lombardy Region and the provinces of Novara and Verbano-Cusio-Ossola. Please note that only organizations with an operational structure located within the Foundation's reference territory may apply as lead applicants. The presence of partners based outside the territory (in Italy or abroad) is permitted).

3. Where can I find the cover letter, the possible partnership agreement, and the possible declaration on the non-profit nature of the foreign partner?

The documents can be downloaded – in a pre-filled Word format – from the Reserved Area of the project (Attachments section)

4. Who should submit the Letter of Agreement?

The Letter of Agreement should be submitted only by the Leading Institution of the project.

5. Can the Letter of Agreement be digitally signed? When is the digital signature considered valid?

It is possible to sign the Letter of Agreement digitally. For the digital signature to be valid, it must be possible to verify its authenticity (the identity of the signer), integrity (which guarantees originality) and non-alteration of the signed documents. Therefore, the document must not be renamed, merged, or have its extension altered after the

signature is applied.

6. Where can I find the templates for the LoI and the Full Proposal, as well as the self-declaration (substitute declaration of affidavit) confirming that the candidate meets the eligibility requirements?

The documents can be downloaded from the Fondazione Cariplo website, on the Calls for Proposals page (Scientific Research Area section), and from the project's Reserved Area (Home section). The LOI and the detailed project (Full Proposal) must be drafted in English using the specific templates provided. All documents must be uploaded in PDF format.

7. Why was the substitute declaration of affidavit introduced, and what should it contain?

Starting from the 2026 edition, it is required to upload to the portal the substitute declaration of affidavit signed by the Legal Representative of the lead institution. This declaration formally certifies that the candidate meets the eligibility requirements indicated in the call for proposals (age, date of degree completion, and any extensions for maternity, paternity, or serious illness). The declaration, which must be completed using the template available both in the Calls section and in the Reserved Area, replaces the need to upload additional certificates for extensions. It is emphasized that the PhD certificate must be attached to this declaration.

8. Is there a maximum age limit for the scientific coordinator of the lead unit?

Yes, the coordinator of the lead unit must not yet have turned 33 by the call deadline in their specific reference area (see specific deadlines in the call text). This requirement applies only to the scientific coordinator of the lead unit.

9. What are the eligibility criteria concerning the achievement of the PhD degree?

I giovani responsabili dell'unità capofila sono ammissibili se hanno conseguito il titolo tra il:

- a. April 13rd, 2024, and April 13rd 2026 for Life Sciences
- b. April 14th, 2024, and April 14th 2026 for Sciences and Engineering
- c. April 15th, 2024, and April 15th 2026 for Sciences and Humanities

Except for the extensions specified in the call text (maternity, paternity, serious illnesses).

10. Is it necessary to attach documentation to request extensions related to maternity, paternity, or serious illnesses?

No, it is not necessary to attach supporting documentation. To make use of the extensions provided by the call (maternity, paternity, serious illnesses exceeding 90 days), it is sufficient to indicate these periods in the substitute declaration of affidavit, using the appropriate template (see FAQs 5 and 6)

11. Can a researcher who obtained their PhD outside of Fondazione Cariplo's intervention area apply for the call? Can foreign researchers also apply?

The call is open also to young researchers who received their PhD degrees outside of FC's reference territory. There are no restrictions on the nationality and origin of the applicant. However, it is necessary that the Leading Institution with which the PI is applying is located in the intervention area of Fondazione Cariplo.

12. Is the involvement of project partners mandatory? In the case of partnership projects, are there constraints on the number of partners and the percentage of funding distribution?

The involvement of project partners is not mandatory. In the case of partnership projects, there are no constraints in the number of partners nor in the funding distribution. Partners must be eligible for funding by Fondazione Cariplo. In addition, it is important that the choices are well justified and functional for the implementation of the project itself.

13. What is the difference between partners and external collaborators?

Institutions with which a formal partnership agreement has been signed (Phase I) may be considered partners.

Partners must apply as recipients of a portion of the grant and share responsibility for achieving the project's objectives. It is not possible to add new project partners in Phase II.

External collaborators, on the other hand, are entities/individuals with whom informal collaboration will take place during the project; they do not receive any portion of the grant.

It is recommended to include a description of each team member—whether belonging to a partner institution or acting as a collaborator—in the “Research team” section.

14. Can foreign entities be involved in the partnership?

The project can be submitted in partnership with foreign entities. The Leading Institution must issue a declaration on the non-profit nature of the partner, using the appropriate forms available in the reserved area, "Attachments" section.

15. Which documents will the reviewers have access to for the evaluation?

Although in Phase I applicants must provide complete documentation (LOI and Full Proposal), in the first phase only the LOI will be evaluated by the reviewers.

For projects admitted to Phase II, the reviewers will evaluate only the Full Proposal

16. What criteria must be followed when suggesting possible reviewer names?

It is possible to suggest reviewers considered suitable for evaluating the proposal, whom Fondazione Cariplo may contact if deemed appropriate. The suggested reviewers must be affiliated with non-Italian institutions and must have no conflicts of interest with the project team. A conflict of interest in peer scientific review exists when a reviewer has a direct or indirect interest in the funding proposal that could compromise impartiality.

In particular, a conflict of interest arises when the reviewer:

- has ongoing research collaborations or other significant professional activities with the Principal Investigator (PI) or the project mentor;
- has co-authored scientific publications with the PI or the mentor;
- could gain personal, professional, or economic benefit from the evaluation outcome.

17. When must the detailed project (Full Proposal) be submitted, and what information must it contain?

The detailed project must be submitted together with the LOI by the call deadline. In addition to what is required in the form, any letters of support and quotations (preferably in English) may be attached at the end of the proposal in a single PDF file.

Other documents uploaded in the attachments section will not be visible to the reviewers and therefore cannot be taken into consideration for the evaluation

18. Will the reviewers' comments be provided at the end of Phase I and Phase II?

All scientific coordinators will receive the reviewers' evaluations.

19. Are there any constraints regarding the project duration (minimum or maximum duration)??

There are no constraints regarding the minimum duration of the project, while the maximum duration must not exceed 36 months, with the possibility of an extension of up to 12 additional months.

20. What information should be included in the "Environmental Impact" section of the project?

In line with its Mission and priority intervention lines, Fondazione Cariplo requires specifying the specific actions to be adopted during the project's implementation to comply with environmental sustainability principles. The "Environmental Impact" section aims to raise awareness of this issue.

21. Is it possible to involve Third Sector organizations within the project?

Yes, it is possible. There are two possibilities for involving them. Third sector organizations eligible for funding that have scientific research among their statutory aims can participate as project partners. In all other cases, it is

suggested to recognize their participation under item A07 professional services of third parties.

22. Is the salary of the scientific coordinator (non-permanent staff) an eligible expense?

Yes, Fondazione Cariplo may cover the salary of the scientific coordinator for the time dedicated to the initiative. This expense should be included under item A06 (non-permanent staff) in the financial plan.

23. What role does the mentor have? How should their involvement in the project be documented?

The mentor's role is to encourage and guide the young researcher's personal and professional development by sharing knowledge, skills and experience. The relationship between the young researcher and their mentor will be based on mutual trust, respect, and communication, involving regular meetings to exchange ideas, discuss progress, and set goals for developing the young researcher's research identity. The call requires, under penalty of exclusion, a signed declaration from the mentor indicating their willingness to participate in the project and the reasons for their involvement. This declaration, which is an integral part of the Phase II Project Form, must be included in the section titled "Mentor's Letter of Support." The mentor's profile must also be detailed in the "Research Team" section.

24. What is meant by dissemination and communication?

Funding recipients must carry out activities aimed at increasing the visibility of the project and the impact of its results, specifically:

a) Sharing research results with potential users: the scientific community, industry, other commercial actors, civil society, and policymakers (dissemination).

b) Promoting the action and its results to society by providing targeted information to diverse audiences in a strategic and effective manner (communication).

Communication, aimed at multiple audiences, involves using different languages and channels adapted to the target audience. One-way communication does not require interaction with recipients; two-way communication involves feedback and contributions, with communication flowing from the project to the public and vice versa.

Examples of one-way communication include: journals, press releases, newsletters, manuals, brochures, radio, television, videos, posters, policy briefs, etc. Examples of two-way communication include: dialogues, debates, face-to-face conversations, group discussions, brokerage events, round tables, etc.

Supplementary material:

https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/docs/h2020-funding-guide/grants/grant-management/dissemination-of-results_en.htm

https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/other/gm/h2020-guide-comm_en.pdf

25. In which document should the budget plan be presented?

The budget plan must be completed within the Full Proposal.

It should be noted that the information entered in this section must subsequently be fully reproduced, without any modification, in the Excel file of the financial plan to be submitted in Phase II, limited to the projects admitted to the next evaluation phase.

26. When should the audit expense be planned? Under which item should it be included in the budget plan?

To determine whether an external auditor's report (audit) is required, first identify the reference value: this is obtained by multiplying the self-certifiable expenses (sum of items A06, A07, A08, A09, and A10) by a coefficient of 1.25.

For non-partnership projects, if the reference value is equal to or greater than €250,000, the project is subject to audit.

For partnership projects, the partnership is subject to audit if the reference value reaches or exceeds the limit calculated using the following formula: $(n-1) \times €250,000$ with n = number of entities in the partnership including the lead institution. Additionally, an audit will be required for individual entities in the partnership if:

- self-certifiable expenses multiplied by 1.25 are equal to or greater than €125,000, in the case of a partnership subject to audit;

- self-certifiable expenses multiplied by 1.25 are equal to or greater than €250,000, in the case of a partnership not subject to audit;

The audit cost, if applicable, should be included under "Third-party professional services (A07)"

Example 1 (non-partnership project):

Self-certifiable expenses = €200,000

Reference value = $200,000 \times 1.25 = 250,000$

Limit = €250,000

Reference value \geq Limit Project subject to AUDIT

Example 2 (partnership project):

Self-certifiable expenses = €250,000

Reference value = $250,000 \times 1.25 = 312,500$

n partners = 2

Limit = $(2-1) \times €250,000 = €250,000$

Reference value \geq Limit Partnership subject to AUDIT

Self-certifiable expenses = €250,000

Partner 1 = $160,000 \times 1.25 = €200,000$ YES AUDIT

Partner 2 = $90,000 \times 1.25 = €112,500$ NO AUDIT

Example 3 (partnership project):

Self-certifiable expenses = €198,000

Reference value = $198,000 \times 1.25 = 247,500$

n = 2

Limit = $(2-1) \times €250,000 = €250,000$

Reference value $<$ Limit Partnership not subject to AUDIT

Self-certifiable expenses = €198,000

Partner 1 = $150,000 \times 1.25 = €187,500$ NO AUDIT

Partner 2 = $48,000 \times 1.25 = €60,000$ NO AUDIT