

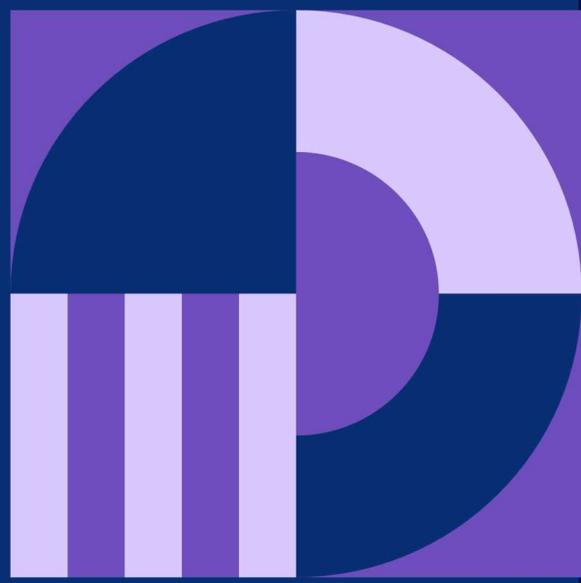


INEQUALITIES RESEARCH:

generating knowledge to reduce inequalities

Call for proposals
12 May 2026

CALL 2026





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INEQUALITIES RESEARCH: generating knowledge to reduce inequalities

1. INTRODUCTION

The call INEQUALITIES RESEARCH – Generating new knowledge to reduce inequalities is a deadline-based funding opportunity that falls within Cariplo strategic mandate “Reducing inequalities by addressing different forms of poverty and vulnerability.”

2. IL BACKGROUND

The steady proliferation of inequalities represents one of the main obstacles to individual well-being, social cohesion, and collective progress¹. This phenomenon manifests itself across multiple dimensions—from health to education, income to geographic background, gender identity to civic participation—following increasingly additive and interconnected patterns. Recent international crises have further widened these gaps, intensifying their multidimensional nature, and Italy is no exception to this global trend²³.

In Italy, in 2024, more than 5.7 million people were living in absolute poverty, with higher incidence among large households, single-parent families, households with minors, and families with non-Italian citizenship, where the risk of poverty is significantly higher than in households composed

solely of Italian citizens. Marked generational and educational disparities also persist: poverty rates are lower among households whose reference person is at least 65 years old and decrease as educational attainment rises. Indicators of relative poverty confirm this trend, showing a significant increase in incidence as household size grows⁴.

Promoting the development of a more equitable and accessible society—one capable of guaranteeing full citizenship rights to all individuals, regardless of economic, social, territorial, cultural, or gender conditions—therefore constitutes a challenge of primary importance.

The Italian context also presents distinctive characteristics that offer valuable insights for shaping intervention models relevant at the international level. Italy is widely recognized as a complex territorial mosaic, where very different contexts coexist: large metropolitan areas, small towns, inner areas, medium-sized cities, and rural territories. This plurality makes the country a privileged vantage point for analyzing how inequalities evolve depending on the scale of observation and the territorial scope considered. Research activities are therefore called upon to engage with this complexity, assessing the extent to which proposals are capable of capturing and

¹ Ines A Ferreira, Rachel M Gisselquist, Finn Tarp, On the Impact of Inequality on Growth, Human Development, and Governance, International Studies Review, Volume 24, Issue 1, March 2022, viab058, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viab058>.

² Rapporto Oxfam 2024. Disuguaglianza: il potere al servizio di 2 pochi”.

³ <https://unric.org/it/un75-i-grandi-temi-disuguaglianza-3-come-3-colare-il-divario/>

⁴ https://www.istat.it/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/La-poverta-4-in-italia_-Anno-2024.pdf.





integrating the specificities of diverse local contexts.

3. AIMS

Through this call for proposals, Fondazione Cariplo aims to support multidisciplinary studies geared toward:

- understand and map the nature, prevalence and relevance of different dimensions of inequality;
- define the main problems related to inequality;
- stimulate reflection on how different forms of inequality relate to the structural changes that characterize our societies;
- foster the development of shared agendas aimed at building more inclusive societies.

Given the complexity of the topic, projects must adopt a multidimensional perspective, combining the analysis of two or more dimensions of inequality to provide an integrated and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

To strengthen the practical relevance and dissemination of research outputs, applicants are required to design an inclusive communication plan, open to stakeholders (citizens, nonprofit organizations, and/or public decision-makers) and including:

- events and initiatives dedicated to disseminating and transferring research results;
- the production of project deliverables, including recommendations and/or policy briefs⁵.

Projects should also provide a meaningful opportunity for training and professional development for early-career researchers,

⁵ Policy briefs can be considered short written documents aimed at stimulating debate on current issues of public interest. Policy briefs are traditionally intended for policymakers and are characterized by a strong advocacy value.

⁶ It is emphasized that proposals adopting either a deductive approach—starting from general principles to explain specific phenomena—or an inductive approach—through the analysis of

adopting mechanisms that promote gender equality in academic careers.

Multidisciplinary approaches capable of integrating different disciplines and areas of expertise—also through the use of diverse and complementary methodologies—are strongly encouraged⁶.

Applicants are invited to clearly specify the reference contexts of their research, including an examination of territorial inequalities (urban and rural areas, large metropolitan cities, small towns, and inner areas) in order to understand how different dimensions of inequality emerge, persist, and interact. In this regard, it will be important to involve, from the earliest stages of project design, nonprofit organizations operating in social, cultural, and/or environmental fields, whose knowledge of local contexts and social vulnerabilities can help shape research questions, approaches, and expected results.

Although the call focuses primarily on the Italian context, applicants may include comparative perspectives, provided that the national and/or local relevance and impact of the research findings are clearly demonstrated.

4. GUIDELINES

4.1 Eligible organizations

The call is addressed to public and private nonprofit research institutions⁷ that meet the requirements specified in the General Criteria for Grant Allocation (available on the Foundation's website).

Nonprofit entities that do not include research among their statutory purposes may participate exclusively as partners.

The project must be carried out by an operational structure located in the Foundation's reference area. The actions referring to any partners can also be carried out in other structures outside the Foundation geographical context.

specific case studies leading to the formulation of general principles suitable for understanding other similar phenomena—will be equally considered.

⁷ It is useful to recall that the financial statements of private non-profit entities must be prepared in compliance with the criteria set out in the "Guide to the submission of project proposals under calls for applications" (paragraph 6.1).





Participating this call, organizations accept the grant portability for all Principal Investigators (PIs) of all the involved units (leading organizations and partners). Any change in the host institution needs to be approved by Fondazione Cariplo 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 Admissible projects

To be eligible projects must present the following characteristics:

- fall within the call's research priorities;
- adopt a multidimensional perspective that integrates two or more dimensions of inequality;
- engage, train and develop young researchers⁸;
- promote gender equality in the careers of researchers⁹;
- provide detailed measures to transfer research findings to civil society and/or public decision makers.

Unit leaders (lead and partner):

- must submit only one project proposal on this call for proposals¹⁰ ;

⁸ The term young researcher in this call refers to graduate students, doctoral students and postdocs who are not older than 35 years of age on the call deadline date.

⁹ Useful tool on gender issues is the "Horizon Europe Guidance on Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)" published by Directorate-General for Research and Innovation.

¹⁰ Should more than one project proposal be received on the same call, only the first one received will be considered eligible. It is reiterated that this criterion concerns the heads of the lead unit and the heads of any partner units

¹¹ Also included in this expense item are any costs for the certification of the licensed professional

- should not be unit leaders in projects still being funded under previous editions of this call.

Fondazione Cariplo will guarantee the coverage of 100% of the project costs; therefore, the requested contribution must correspond to the total cost, in compliance with the eligibility criteria and the ceilings listed below:

- A03 – "Equipment and software". This entry should not exceed the threshold of 20% of total project cost. It covers the costs for newly acquired equipment and software. All costs must be clearly motivated in relation to the project needs. A03 include renting costs as well as building work expenses meant to cover new equipment installation;
- A04 – "Other amortizable costs". This entry can include patent costs and the costs covering equipment rental;
- A05 – "Structured Staff". This item must not exceed the threshold of 30% of the total project costs and must only concern the remuneration of the structured staff belonging to third sector organizations. In this regards A05 covers the hours worked specifically on the project in addition to the normal business or service;
- A06 – "Temporary staff". This entry is dedicated to research personnel costs. Please note that costs for administrative staff are not allowed;
- A07 – "Sub-contractors and consultants"¹¹;

registered with the Register of Auditors. In this regard, it is recommended that reference be made to the "Guide to Reporting" and the "Guidelines for the Engagement of Auditors"; both documents can be found on the website. For the sole purpose of the calculation aimed at ascertaining whether or not there is an obligation to acquire the Report of the licensed professional registered with the Register of Auditors (audit), it should be noted that, excluding third sector organizations, the amount to be taken as a reference is obtained by multiplying the costs included in the Economic Plan (sum of items A06, A07, A08, A09 and A10), by the coefficient 1.25. In any case, it is anticipated that in





- A08 – “Materials and supplies”. This entry cannot include costs related to office supplies and photocopies;
- A09 – “Overheads”. This entry cannot exceed the threshold of 5% of total project costs;
- A10 – “Travel, publication and dissemination costs”. A10 is dedicated to cover research personnel’s travel expenses and conference fees, scientific publications and all communication activities.

Requested funding should range from 100,000 to 200,000 euros.

Proposals should provide the following mandatory documents:

- Letter of agreement;
- Partnership agreement¹²;
- Project Form, PDF format;
- Budget Form, Excel format;

All documentation must be prepared using the forms available in the "Bandi" section of the Fondazione Cariplo website and in the reserved area.

With the participation to this call, organizations acknowledge, agree and irrevocable accept “Intellectual property rights policy”, “Open access policy” and “Acknowledgement guidelines for academic papers”. Please note that these documents are available online for downloading. It is reminded that all publications that will result from the project results must bear the affiliation of the organization with which the project proposal was submitted.

In addition, for the purpose of preparing the proposal, it is also suggested that you read the FAQ specifically drafted for this call for proposals.

4.3 Criteria

Proposals’ evaluation will be performed as indicated in “Guida alla presentazione dei progetti

the event of funding, the Foundation will confirm to the individual beneficiaries any obligation to meet this fulfillment.

su bandi”. Projects final score will be calculated according to the following criteria.

1. PROJECT FRAMEWORK AND ORIGINALITY (weight 20%)

- clarity of the research question;
- positioning of the project within the academic debate;
- originality and innovativeness of the project and its approach.

2. RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODOLOGY (weight 20%)

- A logical and appropriate experimental design in relation to the research objectives;
- a logical and appropriate experimental design in relation to the research objectives;
- a multidimensional strategy that integrates two or more dimensions of inequality;
- the project’s ability to identify the specific characteristics of the contexts in which inequalities emerge and to incorporate these elements into the analysis;
- integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches within a multidisciplinary methodological framework capable of bringing together different disciplines and areas of expertise;
- adequate research planning, including early engagement of stakeholders;
- integration of a gender dimension within the experimental design.

3. IMPACT (weight 25%)

- clear definition of the research impact in advancing knowledge and in deepening the understanding and analysis of different forms of inequality;

¹² The partnership agreement will be a mandatory document only if there are project partners and must be drafted based on the forms available online for download..





- the project's capacity to produce effective results to mitigate emerging social, cultural, and economic inequalities;
- creation or strengthening of research networks and relationships with the various actors involved in or affected by the project and its outcomes;
- adequacy and quality of the measures designed to transfer research results to civil society, public decision-makers, and nonprofit organizations, with the aim of maximizing social impact and supporting the development of more inclusive societies;
- the proposal's contribution to the formulation of policies and/or solutions aimed at reducing inequalities, with particular attention to the Foundation's geographical area of reference.

4. TEAM AND INCLUSIVENESS (weight 20%)

- Scientific competence and relevance of the applicants and collaborators;
- Coordination capacity of the scientific lead of the coordinating (lead) unit;
- Clear definition of the roles of the research partners;
- Synergistic integration of the expertise of the entities involved;
- Project activities aimed at the training and professional development of early-career researchers;
- Project activities aimed at fostering the development of research teams with a balanced representation in terms of sex and gender.

5. DISSEMINATION (weight 5%)

- adequacy of the communication plan;
- appropriate involvement of civil society and public decision makers as the main target audience for research communication activities.

6. BUDGET AND DURATION (10%)

- budget suitability and coherence with the project timeline. Whether present the

evaluation of partners and subcontractors' contribution should be assessed here.

It should be noted that the merit assessment of projects is carried out through peer review. In particular, projects are sent to qualified experts. To carry out their activities reviewers are requested to follow specific rules and procedures aimed at excluding conflicts of interest, prejudices ideological, personal pressures and self-referentiality. The offices will express an opinion limited to the consistency of the Economic Plan and the adequacy of the Communication Plan.

4.4 Non-admissible projects

Proposals will be considered non-eligible in case they are not in line with "4.2 Eligible projects" and/or fall in any of the following categories:

- projects purely descriptive;
- projects aimed to set up new research centers, and/or laboratories, and/or animal facilities;
- projects without clear social and policy implications.

In addition, the Foundation will not consider the resubmission of a project that has already been submitted twice in previous editions of this call.

4.5 Presentation iter

The deadline for proposals' submission no later than 5 p.m. on May 12th 2026. Submissions of applications for the current calls are always allowed within 30 minutes after the call deadline.

5. BUDGET AVAILABLE AND NON ADMISSIBLE COSTS

The budget available for this call is 2.3 million Euros.

Please note that eligible and non-eligible costs are detailed in section "4.2 Eligible projects".

6. COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

Fondazione Cariplo, as a private entity, has full power to decide on the allocation of the budget. The text of the call and all the necessary





documents are available at Fondazione Cariplo website: www.fondazionecariplo.it.
For the purposes of peer review process, any personal data reported in the detailed description of the project may be transferred to non-EU countries or organizations, in compliance with EU Regulation 2016/679. For more information, before submitting an application, please have a look at the new privacy policy on the processing of personal data and the transfer of personal data to countries or organizations outside the European Union

7. SINTESI*

Call	Inequalities Research
Type	Call with deadline
Deadline	12.5.2026
Available Budget	€ 2.300.000
Aims	Generate new knowledge to reduce inequalities and foster the development of more inclusive societies
Target	Public and private nonprofit organizations
Grant requirements	Between € 100.000 e € 200.000
Contact	Scientific and Research Area contacts available at www.fondazionecariplo.it

** The data in the "Summary" are a snapshot of the key elements of this Call. Please read carefully the full text of the Call for all details.*

