

ACTION PLAN “INCREASING THE LEVEL OF SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE OF FUNDAMENTAL MEDICAL RESEARCH TEAMS BY FUNDING RESEARCH PROJECTS WITH A STRONG IMPACT ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY”

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN BIOMEDICINE

BACKGROUND

Human genome sequencing has marked the beginning of the post-genome era of biomedicine, a field of investigation with new resources at its disposal for the molecular characterization of human diseases.

Despite the achieved knowledge in man and in various animal model for biomedical studies, the molecular and cellular mechanisms at the basis of some human diseases aren't completely understood. Due to the resulting gap of knowledge, preventive, diagnostic and therapeutic practices could be not so effective.

GOALS

This call is to support research projects focusing on the study of the molecular bases of a specific human disease. Applicants have to identify the target disease and the molecular mechanisms they will investigate in the proposed research project. Human diseases are all eligible, except for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (funding opportunities for ALS are available through AriSLA www.arisla.org, a dedicated Foundation created with Fondazione Cariplo's support).

Particular attention will be paid to the innovative aspects, the methodological approaches and the expected biomedical outcomes. In particular, the projects must reflect well-focused research plans, based on clear and concrete work hypotheses, elaborated on the basis of substantial preliminary data. In addition, the experimental plan must adopt a multidisciplinary approach, combining a broad range of medical and biological disciplines, thanks to the involvement of various research teams and organizations. When looking for partners, it will be essential to identify additional expertise needed to the main applicants in order to fulfil the proposed research project.

In order to increase the value of the knowledge produced in a more concrete manner, with particular reference to improving preventive, diagnostic and therapeutic practices, support will be given, where appropriate and not obligatorily, to experimental laboratory research work with solid clinical bases.

Through this call, the Foundation aims to encourage collaboration between various research organizations, with a view to integrating their resources in terms of skills, human capital and equipment. Moreover, young researchers professional growth will be favoured.

GUIDELINES

Eligible organizations

In agreement with the *Guidelines for projects' presentation*, this call is addressed to organizations engaged in scientific research in the subject area set out. These organizations will have human resources, equipments and infrastructures directly at their disposal.

To be eligible for funding the lead organization shall have project operational facilities within Fondazione Cariplo's reference area (provinces of Lombardy and the Piedmont provinces of Novara and Verbano-Cusio-Ossola). This requirement does not apply to partners.

Fondazione Cariplo shall not accept applications by PIs (lead PIs or partners' PIs) of a project funded within the same call if still ongoing. A project is considered ongoing until the final grant report has been sent following the Foundation procedures. To be allowed to apply to this call, the final grant report shall be sent by the deadline.

Eligible projects

Fondazione Cariplo - with the advisory of an International Scientific Committee, which ensures transparency and the application of objective scientific criteria in the assessment process - will select a limited number of projects that:

- are submitted by a partnership of at least two eligible organizations of which one is the lead organization;
- respect the scientific priorities set out in the call.

At the end of the selection process the judgment of the International Scientific Committee shall be notified to the applicants.

The request for grant shall be of no less than €100,000 and no more than €350,000. Anyway the requested grant shall be no more than 80% of the total cost.

As to the project budget, the total cost shall relate to the proposed project and meet eligibility requirements, within the limits set out below:

- “Equipment and software”
This item of expense shall not exceed 20% of the total cost. It shall relate exclusively to newly acquired equipment or software programs to be used for more than one year, according to their effective use.
- “Other amortizable costs”
Expenses in this category shall relate exclusively to patenting costs, where applicable.
- “Permanent staff (salary)”
This item of expenses shall relate exclusively to research staff. It shall not include administrative staff. This item shall be covered by the applicants as co-funding.
- “Temporary staff”
This item of expenses shall relate exclusively to research staff. It shall not include administrative staff.
- “Sub-contractors and Consultants”
This item of expenses shall include audit costs, where applicable.
- “Materials and supplies”
This item of expenses shall not include stationary nor photocopy costs.
- “Other operating expenses”
This item of expense shall not exceed 5% of the total cost. It shall relate exclusively to travel expenses, participation to congresses by the project staff, meeting between project partners and publication costs.

Please note that under this call for proposals the following items of expense shall be judged ineligible for funding:

- “Acquisition of property”
- “Property renovation, maintenance, restoration”
- “Overheads”.

Assessment criteria

In addition to the overall scientific quality of the research project, the proposals will be judged on the following criteria:

- the state of the art knowledge;
- the presence and significance of preliminary data;
- the clarity of the research project objectives and strategies;
- the expected results and impact on the biomedical field;
- the potential impact on health;

- the originality and innovativeness of the research;
- the adoption of multidisciplinary approaches;
- the authoritativeness of the scientific leadership;
- the curriculum vitae of the principal investigator and research team involved;
- the involvement of young investigators in the team and/or as project leaders;
- the presence of training actions for the young investigators involved in the project team;
- the collaboration between research organizations both at the national and international level and the development of networks and various forms of partnership;
- the degree of structuring of the partnership and the added value of each partner for the implementation of the project;
- the adequacy of the project’s duration and budget;
- the extent and nature of the applicants’ co-funding;
- the level and forms of scientific communication and dissemination of results;
- the added value of the present application, in the case of the continuation of previously funded project.

Ineligible projects

- Merely descriptive research projects.
- Clinical trials on drugs.
- Projects of an exclusively clinical nature.
- Projects in which the existence of a partnership between at least two different eligible organizations is not documented.
- Financing requests for the set up of new research centers/ laboratories/animal facilities.

Applicants are invited to read carefully the following papers at the website www.fondazionecripi.it:

- *Guidelines for projects’ presentation*;
- *Grant Management and Reporting Guide*;
- *Policy on Intellectual Property Rights*
- *Policy on Open Access*.

Applicants agree that the grant will be subjected to the irrevocable acceptance of the two Policies.

Moreover, applicants are invited to:

- fill out entirely the on line forms, as follows:
 - Organization form (main applicant);
 - Project form (Italian language);
 - Complementary data (English language);

- Budget form.
- upload the required documents, as stated in the *Guidelines for projects' presentation*:
 - Project¹;
 - Budget¹;
 - Official submission letters;
 - Partnership agreement;
 - Organization related documents.

BUDGET

The Budget at disposal is 8 million euros.

¹ A dedicated template has been provided. It is downloadable at the Complementary data Section.