“ACTION PLAN” INCREASING THE LEVEL OF SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE OF BASIC 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 Cariplo Foundation’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 the submission of proposals, 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.

The following projects shall be judged ineligible:
• projects submitted by the Ps of a project already funded by Fondazione Cariplo, unless the progress of previously funded projects is properly documented;
• projects submitted by the Ps of a project funded by Fondazione Cariplo in the previous edition of this call for proposals.

Eligible projects

Cariplo Foundation - 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.

The request for grant shall be of no less than € 100,000. Funding shall be granted only to cover costs which 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 requested grant. 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” [patent costs only]
• “Temporary staff”
  This item of expenses shall relate exclusively to research staff. It shall not include administrative staff.
• “Sub-contractors and Consultants”
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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 10% of the requested grant. It shall relate exclusively to travel expenses, participation to congresses by the project staff, meeting between the project partners and publication costs, where applicable.

“Permanent staff” costs have to be included in the total cost but they have to be covered by the applicants as a co-funding, where applicable. This rule is also applicable to “Temporary staff” costs when already funded by other organizations (e.g. PhD students).

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 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 ability to attract young talent in the team and/or as project leaders and thus invest in the human capital of scientific research;
• 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 experience acquired in the specific field of research and the consistency of the project with the development strategies of the applicant organizations;
• the adequacy of the project’s duration and budget;

• 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.fondazionecariplo.it:

• Guidelines
• Grant management and reporting Guide
• Policy on Intellectual Property Rights

Applicants agree that the grant will be subjected to the irrevocable acceptation of the policy.

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:
  – Project1;
  – Budget1;
  – Official submission letters;
  – Partnership agreement;
  – Organization related documents.

BUDGET

The Budget at disposal is 7 million euros.

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