

YOUNG RESEARCHERS

Supporting postdoctoral researchers in the early stage of their careers

Two-step Call - First phase deadline:

- Life Sciences 18th March 2024
- Social Sciences and Humanities 20th March 2024
- Physical Sciences and Engineering 22nd March 2024

GRANTING SCHEMES 2024 - SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

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1. INTRODUCTION

The call "Young Researchers - Supporting postdoctoral researchers in the early stage of their career" is a two-step programme falling within Fondazione Cariplo's mandate "Creating the enabling conditions to strengthen our communities".

2. BACKGROUND

In Italy, the PhD represents the highest level of education. Typically, it requires an investment of at least three years and is meant to foster scholars' academic independence, creativity and methodological knowledge.

According to AlmaLaurea¹ Interuniversity Consortium, one year after graduation, 37.8% of PhDs are eager to continue their academic career either in Italy or abroad. However, currently Italy offers only a few funding programs dedicated to postdoctoral researchers in the early stage of their careers. Undoubtedly, our country registers important weaknesses in terms of strengthening and promoting young scholars' independence.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to close this gap for both the researchers and the scientific community. Research is never the results of the activity of one individual scholar, but rather the combination of different expertises, knowledge, skills and abilities. In that respect it is important to create a good balance between: experience, social relationships and management skills, often characterizing mature scholars and, originality and innovativeness typical of younger researchers².

3. AIMS

Through this call, Fondazione Cariplo supports after graduation researchers in the early stage of their careers. Indeed, the call is dedicated to researchers who accomplished their PhD no more than two years before the call deadline. The aim is to identify the best proposals to enhance the profile of young researchers and support the development of their research identity³.

With this call Fondazione Cariplo offers young researchers the opportunity to develop their first independent project, collect preliminary data functional to the proposed study, explore new methods, conceptual frameworks, tools or innovative techniques. The call encourages the submission of proposals characterized by the contamination between different disciplinary areas, methodologies or approaches considering this an opportunity to respond complex problems and to foster scientific progress.

Submitted proposals can include training courses either to consolidate or to improve technical and soft skills. The call requires the presence of a mentor who will support the applicant in her/his academic progresses. It supports internationalization, the development collaborative networks and the inclusion of research experiences in organizations or groups different from the ones hosting the young researcher during his/her PhD studies. In any of the cases above, proponents are required to detail their work plan and provide adequate letters of support. It should be noted that all proposals' activities and experiences need to be consistent with the research project and represent an added value in terms of research identity.

¹ AlmaLaurea Report 2023 "Profilo dei Dottori di ricerca 2022".
² https://www.dsu.cnr.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Relazione_sulla_ricerca_e_innovazione_in_Italia_2023.pdf.

³ The term research identity refers to a set of elements which define the profile of a researcher. These include affiliation to one or more organizations, publications - with related citations -

participation in congresses, methodologies and techniques usually used in studies, collaborations, teaching, peer review, editorial and third party activities mission. For a scientific treatment of the topic, see, among others Castelló (2021) What perspectives underlie 'researcher identity'? A review of two decades of empirical studies.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-020-00557-8>

Finally, young researchers are required to describe the potential impact of their research on society and develop a communication plan in line with the approach to Responsible Research and Innovation⁴ promoted by the European Commission.

4. GUIDELINES

4.1 Eligible subjects

Public or private non-profit organizations carrying out scientific research.

By participating this call, organizations accept the portability of the grant. Any change in the host institution requires Fondazione Cariplo's 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

To be eligible, projects must:

- be proposed by a Principal Investigator whose PhD Degree has been achieved no more than 2 years before the deadline of this call⁵;
- identify a *mentor* who will support the researcher in the development of his/her research identity;
- have a maximum duration of 36 months.

Researchers funded in the previous edition of this call as PI of the leading organization will not be allowed to submit further applications as PI of

either the leading organization or as head of the partner unit, if any.

It is mandatory that one of the operational headquarter of the leading organization is located within the geographical area of intervention of Fondazione Cariplo. This requirement is not directed to partners. The total cost of the project should include additional costs⁶ and overhead only, according to eligibility criteria and thresholds listed below:

- A03 - "Equipment and software"
This entry cannot exceed 10% of project additional costs. It fully covers the costs for newly acquired equipment and software. It is mandatory to clearly motivate these costs in accordance to the specificity of the project.
- A04 - "Other amortizable costs"
This entry can include patent costs and the amounts to be incurred in the case of the rental of equipment;
- A06 - "Temporary staff"
This entry can only include research personnel costs. The cost of administrative staff is not allowed. In addition to the salary for the candidate, A06 also includes the salary for any collaborators.
- A07 - "Sub-contractors and consultants"⁷
- A08 - "Materials and supplies"
This entry cannot include costs related to office supplies and photocopies.
- A09 - "Overheads"
This entry cannot exceed 10% of project additional costs.

⁴ The European movement on RRI is constantly evolving, as emerges from the debate that led to the so called "Rome declaration on RRI" (https://www.sis-rri-conference.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/RomeDeclaration_Final.pdf). Considering the available literature, it is possible to describe RRI as a dynamic and iterative process aimed to match research and innovation with society values, needs and expectations. Moreover, RRI aims to actively involve all the stakeholders differently implicated in research and innovation and make them mutually responsible of each other and with regards to research process and results.

⁵ Extension of eligibility:

- Maternity leave: 18 months for each child (born before or after the PhD) and the birth certificate;
- Paternity leave: effective period of documented paternity leave taken per each child (born before or after the PhD);

- Illness leave (over 90 days): documented period of effective leave for serious illness (occurred after the PhD).

⁶ Sum of: A03, A04, A06, A07, A08, A10.

⁷ 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.

- A10 - "Other costs"

This entry 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.

Please note that the grant request should not exceed 200.000 euros.

Proposals should provide the following mandatory documents:

PHASE I

- Letter of agreement (PHASE I)⁸;
- Partnership agreement⁹;
- Letter of intent (LOI), which includes the project's idea¹⁰, in PDF;
- PhD certificate¹¹, in PDF;
- Letter of support from the mentor.

PHASE II

- Letter of agreement¹²(PHASE II);
- Detailed project¹³, in PDF;
- Budget, in EXCEL.

With the participation to this call, organizations acknowledge, agree and irrevocably accept "Intellectual property rights policy", "Open access policy" and "Guidelines for the citation of the contribution in scientific communications" available online for download. Please note that all publications resulting from the project results must report the affiliation of the organization with which the proposal was submitted. Have a careful look at the FAQs specifically prepared for this call.

⁸ Host institution agreement must be drawn up on the basis of the form made downloadable from the website.

⁹ To be provided in case the project involves partners and the doc must be drawn up on the basis of the form made downloadable from the website.

¹⁰ The LOI must be completed using the form available for the call.

4.3 Criteria

In the following paragraphs we describe in detail the evaluation process.

PHASE I

- Formal check of the availability of all mandatory documents and of the eligibility of the organizations (lead and partners);
- Identification of the proposals that meet the call's aims and requirements;
- Evaluation of the most competitive proposals in terms of the project scientific quality project and the PI CV.

PHASE II

Phase II includes: formal check of the availability of all mandatory documents and Budget consistency with respect to the call's criteria and the evaluation of proposals' merits of the proposals on the basis of the criteria listed below:

1. SCIENTIFIC QUALITY OF THE PROJECT (weight 40%)
 - clarity in the formulation of the objectives and strategic approach;
 - adequate contextualization of the project within the state of the art;
 - presence of a logical and well-structured research design;
 - adequacy of the proposed methods and techniques with regards to the project objectives;
 - originality of the project in terms of proposed methods and techniques;
 - impact of the project in the academic context.

¹¹ The date on which the degree was awarded is the date on which the doctoral thesis was defended.

¹² Host institution agreement must be drawn up on the basis of the form made downloadable from the website. Second phase host institution agreement requires the indication of the amount of requested funding.

¹³ The project's detailed description must follow the form available for the call.

Please note that in the evaluation process contamination between different disciplinary areas, methodologies or approaches is considered a rewarding element.

2. PROJECT INVESTIGATOR (weight 30%)

- curriculum vitae of the applicants (PIs);
- coherence between the project activities and the profile of the applicants (PIs);
- impact of the project and added value of the mentor in terms of fostering applicants' research identity.

Please note that in the evaluation of the project investigator, the development of research experiences in other structures will be considered a rewarding element.

3. SOCIAL IMPACTS AND DISSEMINATION (weight 15%)

- quality of the proposal in the definition and evaluation of its impact on society;
- adequacy of the communication plan.

4. FINANCIAL PLAN AND DURATION (weight 15%)

- adequacy and coherence of the budget plan and the duration of the project with respect to the activities envisaged in the proposal.

This criterion will also evaluate the adequacy of the contributions of any partners and third parties.

Phase I and II follow the peer review evaluation process, i.e. through a scientific evaluation delegated to an independent third party made up of qualified experts who are subject to precisely defined rules and procedures aimed at exclude conflicts of interest, ideological bias, personal pressure and self-referentiality. In phase II, the offices will evaluate the consistency of the budget plan.

4.4 Submission process

When submitting their proposals scholars will have to specify the academic area in which their project falls in choosing from:

- Life Sciences
- Social Sciences and Humanities
- Physical Sciences and Engineering

In turn, they will also have to detail both the primary sector and the relevant secondary sector¹⁴.

Grant applications must be submitted by 5 pm (CET) on:

- March 18, 2024, for Life Sciences
- March 20, 2024, for Social Sciences and Humanities
- March 22, 2024, for Physical Sciences and Engineering

Submission of pending applications is allowed within 30 minutes after the call deadline.

Only the proposals passing Phase I will be invited to participate to Phase II. More detail on Phase II submission process will be communicated later on to the applicants in their personal invitation letter.

5. BUDGET AND ELIGIBLE COSTS

The overall budget available for the call is 8 million euros.

In order to standardize the success rate of the candidate projects, the overall budget will be allocated to each academic area in proportion with the number of requests received.

With reference to eligible and/or ineligible expenses, please check paragraph 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

¹⁴ Please note that project classification refers to ERC primary and secondary sectors as indicated at the link https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-03/ERC_panel_structure_2024_calls.pdf

The classification is also available as attachment of the call.

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. SUMMARY*

Call	Young researchers
Type	Two step call
Deadline Phase I	Life Sciences 18 th March 2024 Social Sciences and Humanities 20 th March 2024 Physical Sciences and Engineering 22 nd March 2024
Available Budget	€ 8.000.000
Aims	Support postdoctoral researchers in the early stage of their careers in development of their research identity
Eligible organizations	Public or private research organizations
Budget limits	Max € 200.000
Contact	Area Ricerca Scientifica Contact available at www.fondazionecariplo.it Contact e-mail: ricercagiovani@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.