



CARIPLO - TELETHON ALLIANCE

Joint call for applications

REVIEWERS GUIDELINES

Fondazione Cariplo (FC) and Fondazione Telethon (FT) made an alliance to foster basic research to support projects focused on unknown aspects of rare diseases. Basic research, especially in the field of rare diseases, is still an orphan area of investment, but it is also pioneering for the development of applied research in more frequent diseases.

Indeed, the analysis of scientific literature has highlighted the tendency of researchers and funding agencies to focus on a limited portion of the human genome. The most studied genes are not necessarily the most significant: sometimes studying one gene instead of another is simply linked to the timing of its discovery. There are therefore numerous non-coding DNA regions and gene sets - with their relative RNA and proteins - whose function is still unknown but could potentially play an important role within molecular pathways, physiological and pathological mechanisms.

Peer Review Process

The evaluation process entails two consecutive phases: Triage and Full Evaluation.

The Reviewers are requested to fill in the "Evaluation Form" available in *TETRA - Telethon Projects Managements system portal* at <https://projects.telethon.it> accessible through personal login and password.

Phase I: Triage

In the triage phase, the Scientific Committee reviewers will preliminarily rank all the applications based on the adherence to the call - project focused on the study of Tdark/s¹ (genes/gene families, proteins, and RNA molecules whose function is unknown) in the context of rare diseases², of genetic and non - genetic origin - and the scientific competitiveness, focusing on the sections "Overall Description of the Research Project" within the online Application.

Triage Evaluation (max 3,000 characters including spaces)

Reviewers will be asked to provide a score and a brief statement which should be a summary of the key reasons for their recommendation according to the following criteria:

- Is the proposed research relevant to the objectives of this Call?
- Is the proposed research original and innovative?

¹ Please refer to the classification developed by the Illuminating the Druggable Genome Knowledge Management Center, <https://pharos.nih.gov/>

² In the EU a disease is defined as "rare" when its prevalence does not exceed 0.05% of the population, 5 cases out of 10,000 people (<https://www.orpha.net>).

- Are the experimental approaches proposed adequate?
- Do you envision a potential outcome for the proposed research?

A score will be provided according to the following scale:

Triage Scoring Scale		
Triage Score	Project Evaluation	Recommendation
4.5 – 5.0	Outstanding: no concerns	Suggested for full review
3.5 – 4.4	Good to Excellent: some concerns (please justify)	Could undergo full review
1.0 – 3.4	Poor to average: major problems (please justify)	Not suggested for full review

Phase II: Full Review

Applications that will pass the **Triage phase** will undergo **Full review** and the **Full Proposal** will be evaluated by two Scientific Committee reviewers.

In support of their evaluation, Scientific Committee Reviewers will be provided with written comments/scores by one External Reviewer, who will be chosen ad hoc for each Application by FC-FT Scientific Officers.

Description

Primary reviewers only are requested to fill in this field. The description should be a summary of the hypothesis to be tested, the specific aims and the procedures of the proposed research.

All reviewers will be asked to separately evaluate each proposal based on the following criteria:

Project quality and feasibility

Scientific Evaluation (max 3,000 characters including spaces)

What are the proposal's major strengths and major weaknesses?

Appropriateness of Design and Methods (max 3,000 characters including spaces)

Are the experimental approaches/methods appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the proposal?

Can the research be completed within the proposed time frame?

Does the Applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative plans?

Preliminary results- if ANY: Please note preliminary results are not mandatory and as such their absence should not be considered detrimental for the significance and originality of the Proposal. If present, please verify whether the provided results are adequately supporting the principles to be tested.

Team Competence (max 3,000 characters including spaces)

Is the Team appropriately trained and well suited to carry out the work proposed? Is the work proposed proportionate to the level of experience of the principal investigator and key personnel (Partner/collaborators)? Does the Team play a significant role in the field of the submitted proposal?

Budget (max 3,000 characters including spaces)

Is the budget appropriate to the proposed research?

For Multicentre research proposals, is the shared budget appropriately justified?

Project impact

Potential of the proposed research (max 3,000 characters including spaces)

What will be the potential impact of the proposed research if successful (does it address an important gap, what difference will it make to the scientific community)?

Potential impact on patients (max 3,000 characters including spaces)

What will be the potential impact on patients in the long term?

Training of young researchers (max 3,000 characters including spaces)

Is the plan to engage/train young researchers appropriate?

Potential impact on large scale funding (max 3,000 characters including spaces)

Do the expected results have the potential to attract large-scale funding?

Scores

- **Project quality and feasibility**

Relative weight: 80%

Score range: from **1.0 (poor)** to **5.0 (outstanding)** by 0.1-unit increments.

Full Evaluation Scoring Scale		
Score	Value	Description
4.6 - 5.0	Outstanding	No concerns
4.0 - 4.5	Excellent	No substantial issues need discussion
3.0 - 3.9	Good	Only one or a few addressable concerns
2.0 - 2.9	Average	Several concerns in one or more Aims
1.0 - 1.9	Poor	Major concerns in one or more Aims

- **Project Impact**

Relative weight: 20%

Scores and scoring criteria (based on the potential project impact):

Score=5: High Impact

Score=4: Medium Impact

Score=3: Low Impact

The **overall score** will be automatically calculated by combining the two scores according to their relative weight.