

Fondazione  
**CARIPLO**



## FONDAZIONE CARIPLO – FONDAZIONE TELETHON JOINT CALL FOR APPLICATIONS 2025

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### REVIEW EVALUATION GUIDELINES – COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The present Call aims at supporting basic research projects focusing on the study of genes/gene families, mRNAs and proteins whose function is unknown in rare diseases of genetic (both monogenic and polygenic) and non-genetic origin and conducted by researchers working in Italian public or private non-profit research institutions.

For this Call, research projects can be submitted as:

- **PILOT APPLICATION:** one-year research projects with the potential to generate data and/or tools to elucidate a role for Tdark(s) associated with rare diseases. Preliminary data are not mandatory, however, if any, they are encouraged to support rationale and feasibility of the research project. Only single-center proposals are admitted.
- **FULL APPLICATION:** up to two-years research projects with a solid background. Preliminary data are mandatory. Both single- and bi-center proposals are admitted.

#### Committee Members' Role

The Fondazione Cariplo – Fondazione Telethon Scientific Committee members (hereon “Internal Reviewers”) will support the evaluation process, by providing written comments and an overall recommendation for each eligible Application.

#### General Instructions

The Applications and the Evaluation Form are available on *Fondazione Telethon Grant Management* system portal at this [link](#), accessible through personal login and password.

#### Internal Reviewer Account

*Registered Users in TETRA (the former Grant Management system)*

Reviewers already registered in TETRA – the former Fondazione Telethon Grant Management system – are **kindly asked NOT to create a new account**.

Please click on **Forgot Password?** and follow the given instructions for setting a New Password, then enter the portal.

### *New Reviewer to Fondazione Telethon Calls*

To register and review the Applications, Reviewers should click on the **Register Here** button and enter their email address: to complete the registration process follow the online instructions.

## Peer Review Process

### *Triage Phase (if needed)*

The **Triage Phase (if needed, depending on the number of submitted applications)** is the first phase of the review process and is applied to select the top-ranking projects for a full evaluation. In the triage phase, each project is assigned to three members of Fondazione Cariplo (FC) – Fondazione Telethon (FT) Scientific Committee, who are asked to score it based on scientific quality.

**For Pilot Applications**, each member of the FC – FT Scientific Committee will evaluate the entire online Application, whereas **for Full Applications** ONLY the “Overall Description of the Research Project” section of the online Application will be evaluated.

After Triage, for the **Full Review** of the top-ranking projects, three Scientific Committee members will evaluate the Applications and, in case of **Full Applications**, they will be supported by one international external reviewer.

### *Triage Instructions*

Three Committee members will review the “Overall Description of the Research Project” section or the whole Application in case of Full and Pilot Applications, respectively. Each reviewer is asked to provide a score.

Committee members are requested to access *Fondazione Telethon Grant Management* system portal at this [link](#) through personal login and password. By clicking on **Pending Triage**, the Reviewer will view the list of all the Applications assigned to be reviewed and can access each proposal’s evaluation form by clicking on the specific project.

For Full Applications, the Reviewer will see in the **Review** tab the general information about the project and the **Overall Description of the Research Project** section embedded in the evaluation form.

For Pilot Applications, the Reviewer will see in the **Review** tab general information about the project and the whole proposal will be visible either by clicking on **Actions** and then on **View Application in Split Screen** or by clicking on the **View/Print** button next to **Application Preview**.

For both types of Application, Committee members will first fill in the box named **Triage Evaluation**, by answering the following questions:

- Is the proposed research relevant to the objectives of this Call?
- Is the proposed research original and innovative?
- Are the experimental approaches proposed adequate?
- Do you envision a potential outcome for the proposed research?

Then, according to the scale reported below, Committee members will select one of three score ranges (please, refer to the Triage Scoring Scale in the next page) and then they will manually assign a numerical score in the **Triage Score** section of the form. The score will reflect the recommendation of whether the project deserves full review or not. When ranges 1.0 – 3.5 or 3.6 – 4.5 are selected, the Committee members are also asked to fill in a **Weaknesses** (multiple choice) and a **Comments** section (max 3,000 characters). In the **Comments** section we highly encourage each reviewer to provide a few sentences to highlight any issue

regarding the project. When all parts of the evaluation form have been completed, the Reviewer will click on **Submit** and the Application will then be listed in the **Submitted Reviews** tab on the Home Page.

Committee members' comments might be used to provide the Applicants with a written overall justification of the triage exclusion of their proposal.

Triage Scoring Scale		
Triage Score	Project Evaluation	Recommendation
4.6 – 5.0	Outstanding	No concerns, suggest for Full Review
3.6 – 4.5	Good to Excellent	Some concerns (please justify), could undergo full review
1.0 – 3.5	Poor to Average	Major Problems (please justify), not suggested for full review

### Full Review

Applications that will pass the Triage Phase will undergo full review and the whole application will be evaluated by three FC - FT Scientific Committee members.

In support of their evaluation, Internal Reviewers will be provided with written comments by one External Reviewer (Full Applications only), who will be chosen *ad hoc* for each application by FC-FT Scientific Officers.

During this phase of the Review process, the *Primary Reviewer* is responsible for the project's presentation during the plenary review session. *Primary* and *Secondary Reviewers* have to provide written comments, whereas the *Tertiary Reviewer* is not requested to (but may provide written comments, if he/she wants to).

Written comments are an essential part of the review and are critical in developing summary statements for the Applicants.

The individual written comments will be anonymously incorporated into a complete review report that will be returned to the Applicant. It is therefore important that the written material is accurate, clearly written, and does not include derogatory language.

Please note: External Reviewers' written comments will also be included as such in the review report.

### Full Review Instructions

Three Committee members will review the assigned Applications and each reviewer is asked to provide a score.

Committee members are requested to access *Fondazione Telethon Grant Management* system portal at this [link](#) through personal login and password. By clicking on **Pending Panel Review**, the Reviewer will view the list of all the Applications assigned to be reviewed and can access each proposal's evaluation form by clicking on the specific project. The Reviewer will see in the **Review** tab general information about the project and the whole proposal will be visible either by clicking on **Actions** and then on **View Application in Split Screen** or by clicking on the **View/Print** button next to **Application Preview**.

For each Application the Reviewers will have to fill in the **Description** section. *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.

Committee members are asked to provide written comments and score each proposal based on the following criteria and the type of Application.

### For Pilot Applications:

#### Project quality and feasibility

- **Science significance and originality** (max 3,500 characters including spaces) – Is the Tdark(s) link to rare diseases properly addressed? Is the proposed research original and/or innovative? Does the proposal offer a clearly stated rationale? Please highlight overall strengths and weaknesses.
- **Appropriateness of Design and Methods** (max 3,500 characters including spaces) – Are the experimental approaches/methods appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Is the project feasible and can it be completed within the proposed timeframe? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and provide alternative plans?
- **PI and team competence** (max 3,500 characters including spaces) - Is the PI and Team appropriately trained and well suited to carry out the proposed work? Is the work proposed proportionate to the level of experience of the principal investigator and key personnel? Does the Team play a significant role in the field of the submitted research project? Is the plan to engage/train young researchers appropriate?
- **Total requested Budget** (max 3,500 characters including spaces) - Is the budget appropriate for the proposed research?

#### Scores

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 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

When all parts of the evaluation form have been completed, the Reviewer will click on **Submit** and the Application will then be listed in the **Submitted Reviews** tab on the Home Page.

### For Full Applications:

#### 1. Project quality and feasibility

- **Science significance and originality** (max 3,500 characters including spaces) – Is the Tdark(s) link to rare diseases properly addressed? Is the proposed research original and/or innovative? Does the proposal offer a clearly stated rationale? Please highlight overall strengths and weaknesses.
- **Appropriateness of Design and Methods** (max 3,500 characters including spaces) – Do the preliminary results support the principles to be tested? Are the experimental approaches/methods appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Is the project feasible and can it be completed within the proposed timeframe? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and provide alternative plans?
- **PI and team competence** (max 3,500 characters including spaces) - Is the PI and Team appropriately trained and well suited to carry out the proposed work? Is the work proposed proportionate to the level of experience of the principal investigator and key personnel (Partners/collaborators)? Does the Team play a significant role in the field of the submitted research project? Is the plan to engage/train young researchers appropriate?
- **Total requested Budget** (max 3,500 characters including spaces) - Is the budget appropriate for the proposed research? For multicentre research proposals, is the shared budget appropriately justified?

## 2. 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)? What will be the potential impact on patients in the long term?

### 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 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.

When all parts of the evaluation form have been completed, the Reviewer will click on **Submit** and the Application will then be listed in the **Submitted Reviews** tab on the Home Page.

Milan, January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025