

MULTIROUND CALL FOR RESEARCH PROJECTS

2025-2027 – ROUND I

EVALUATION GUIDELINES 2025 – EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

The present Call supports research projects focusing on rare diseases of proven genetic origin, of either monogenic or polygenic forms. The Call aims at funding basic and pre-clinical research projects focused on rare genetic diseases and conducted by researchers working in Italian public or private non-profit research institutions.

Research projects can be submitted into one of the following tracks:

- **Track BASIC RESEARCH**
Focused on the identification of disease mechanism(s) and/or disease target(s).
- **Track PRECLINICAL PROOF OF CONCEPT**
Focused on the identification and validation of therapeutic candidate(s).

Non-Eligible diseases

- Cancer
- Multiple sclerosis
- Acquired immunodeficiency
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). Note: funding opportunities for ALS are available through AriSLA (<http://www.arisla.org/>), a dedicated Foundation supported by Fondazione Telethon

Multifactorial diseases (i.e., studies focused on the identification of genetic risk factors, e.g., single nucleotide polymorphisms or other predisposing variants).

External Reviewer's Role

External reviewers will support Fondazione Telethon (FT) Scientific Committee members in 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.

Reviewer Account

Registered Users in TETRA (the former Grant Management system)

External 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, External 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

Full Review

The present call is a two-step process, a Triage phase, based on the evaluation of a Letter of Intent (LoI) performed by the FT Scientific Committee members only, and review of the Full Application.

Applications that **pass the LoI - Triage Phase** will undergo **Full Review** and will be evaluated by three FT Scientific Committee members, with the support of two international External Reviewers. External Reviewers, who will be chosen *ad hoc* for each Application by FT Scientific Officers, are asked to provide written comments and an overall recommendation for each proposal.

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.

Full Review Instructions

Two External reviewers will review the assigned Application and are asked to provide a score.

External Reviewers are requested to access *Fondazione Telethon Grant Management* system portal at this [link](#) through personal login and password. By clicking on **Pending Peer Review**, the External Reviewers will view their assigned Application and can access the evaluation form by clicking on the specific project. The External Reviewers 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 External Reviewers will have to fill in the **Description** section (max 2,000 characters). The description should be a summary of the hypothesis to be tested, the specific aims, and the procedures of the proposed research.

The External Reviewers will then be asked to evaluate and give an overall recommendation for each proposal based on the following criteria:

Project quality and feasibility

- **Significance** (max 3,500 characters) – Is the link to rare genetic diseases properly addressed? Is the proposed research original and/or innovative? Does the proposal offer a clearly stated rationale? Will the results of this research fill a gap in knowledge or an unmet need medical need for the disease? If the project is successful, will it improve therapeutic development?
- **Approach** (max 3,500 characters) – 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 be completed within the proposed timeframe? Is the budget appropriate? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and provide alternative plans? For preclinical projects is there a practical pathway to translation? Please highlight overall strengths and weaknesses.
- **PI and team competence** (max 3,500 characters) - Are the PI and 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 (Partners/collaborators)? Does the Team play a significant role in the field of the submitted research project?

Overall Recommendation

Based on the specific points raised in the written critique, the External Reviewers are asked to choose their recommendation as follows:

A - Outstanding; Exceptionally strong with only minor weaknesses.

B - Excellent; Very strong with no major weaknesses.

C - Good; Strong but with moderate weaknesses.

D - Average; Few strengths and one or more major weaknesses.

E - Poor; Numerous major weaknesses.

Definitions:

Minor: easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen the value of the project

Moderate: weakness that lessens the value of the project

Major: weakness that severely limits the value of the project

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

Milan, February 18, 2025