



SPRING SEED GRANT 2026 COHEN

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Introduction

Associazione [Codini e Occhiali ODV](#) (Associazione) and Fondazione Telethon ETS (FT; www.fondazionetelethon.it) have agreed to collaborate to support **one-year** seed research projects focused on **Cohen Syndrome** with a **maximum budget of €50,000**.

The Seed Grant Call is based on the following premises:

- a. Associazione is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, disseminating, and supporting scientific research on Cohen Syndrome;
- b. FT is a non-profit organization recognized by the Italian Ministry of University and Research, whose mission is to advance biomedical research toward cures for rare genetic diseases by funding research projects through a peer-review process compliant with the UNI EN ISO 9001:2015 standards.
- c. Associazione recognized FT's peer review process as a valid method for evaluating and identifying research projects deserving of funding, thereby ensuring a more effective use of financial resources within the research portfolio.
- d. Associazione has expressed its interest in establishing a collaboration with FT, under which: (i) FT will be responsible for preparing the Call, managing the evaluation process for submitted projects, carrying out the post-award administrative procedures, disbursing funds and monitoring scientific results, and (ii) Associazione will be responsible for disseminating the scientific results obtained.

Accordingly, Associazione and FT have agreed to collaborate and combine their respective resources to select and manage research projects aimed at advancing scientific progress for Cohen Syndrome.

Associazione hereby irrevocably appoints FT to act on its behalf and authorizes FT to activate the project funding in the Associazione's sole interest and at Associazione's own expense.

Aim of the Call

This Call supports research seed projects focused exclusively on **Cohen Syndrome (ORPHA 193)**. Its aim is to explore new hypotheses and deepen understanding of the molecular and pathophysiological mechanisms underlying VPS13B-related pathology, thereby paving the way for the development of new therapeutic strategies.

Applicants may **submit only one proposal** under the **Spring Seed Grant 2026 Call** and only **single-center proposals** are admitted.

Applications must be prepared in accordance with the specific guidelines provided. The guidelines and a sample application form are available on the website and platform.

Key Dates

CALL OPENING: **April 1st, 2026**, at this [link](#).

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: **May 6th, 2026, at 1:00 PM (CEST)**.

The study section will take place **by the end of June 2026**

Notification to applicants of the final outcome: **by the end of July 2026**

Although not mandatory, **Applicants are kindly asked to register on the platform and insert *the Title, Research type, Research step, Disease Name, and ORPHA code*** of the proposed project by **April 16th, 2026**.

Project duration

The duration of the proposed project is 12 months.

Eligibility criteria

Eligible projects

- Research projects focused exclusively on Cohen Syndrome (ORPHA 193) are eligible.
- The following types of research projects are **NOT eligible** under this Call: epidemiological studies, registries, and biobanks.
- **Preliminary results are not required** provided that the underlying rationale and objectives are sound, plausible and testable.

Eligible Host Institutions

Only research proposals submitted by Applicants working either in public or private Italian non-profit research Institutions are eligible. Applicants from FT Research Institutes (SR-TIGET and TIGEM) are eligible.

Eligible applicants

Applicants who currently hold an active grant under a different FT funding initiative are eligible to submit a proposal.

Prior experience in the field of Cohen Syndrome is not required.

Dual appointments at foreign Institution are permitted, provided they do not interfere with the proper conduct of the FT-funded research project.

Budget

A maximum budget of € 50,000 is allowed.

For more details about allowed costs, please see the *Guidelines for Applicants* for the Spring Seed 2026 Call and the *Regolamento di Gestione del Finanziamento Seed Grant* documents, available on the FT website.

A budget justification for each item must be indicated. An expenses report will be required at project closure and only project-related expenses will be approved.

Please note that the Lead Applicant's Host Institution, upon indication by the Lead Applicant in the Application, may allocate a maximum of 20% of the total budget to only one collaborator from a foreign third-party Institution. This budget must be indicated in the Application, and the involvement of the foreign collaborator must be within the scope of the project, evaluated and approved by the reviewers. If approved, the Lead Applicant's Host Institution will be responsible for transferring the budget to the foreign collaborator and collecting detailed expenditure information to be reported to FT. For more details, please refer to Section III.2 and Section V.4 of the *Regolamento di Gestione del Finanziamento Seed Grant* and *Guidelines for Applicants* for the Spring Seed 2026 Call, available on the FT website.

Evaluation process

Applications that are incomplete and/or do not comply with the requirements stated in this Call and relevant Guidelines will not be accepted.

All FT staff and reviewers comply with confidentiality and conflict of interest policies.

FT will first screen all submitted Applications to verify their eligibility based on administrative requirement and alignment with the scientific scope of the Call. Applications that do not meet these criteria will be rejected at this stage.

FT will then appoint an *ad hoc* panel of expert reviewers to evaluate the scientific merit of all eligible Applications.

For Clinical trial studies, FT might also consult experts in clinical trial design and regulatory aspects to further assess the robustness and the feasibility of the proposed study.

All Reviewers involved in the evaluation process will be bound by strict confidentiality and conflict of interest rules defined by FT.

Remote Evaluation

The Reviewers will be asked to evaluate and score each proposal based on the following criteria:

A) Scientific merit:

- Significance
- Originality of science
- Appropriateness of design and methods
- Feasibility and safety
- PI and Team competence
- Budget

B) Potential impact:

- Added value: If successful, how will the project advance current scientific knowledge in the field?
- Unmet need: How will the project address existing unmet need/s of patients with rare genetic diseases?

Reviewers' evaluation guidelines are available on the FT website.

Study Section

Top scoring proposals will be discussed by an *ad hoc* panel of expert reviewers during a study section, scheduled to take place **by the end of June 2026**. Following the discussion, all Reviewers will assign a final score to each proposal.

Outcome of the Evaluation Process

Applicants will be notified of the outcome by email **by the end of July 2026** and will receive instructions on how and when to access the FT Review Report on the *FT Grant Management* system.

Awardees will receive separate administrative instructions via email to initiate the grant activation process.

FT Policies and Rules

FT, as a member of the International Research Disease Consortium ([IRDiRC](#)), endorses and applies, which “emphasize the collaboration in rare diseases research, the involvement of patients and their representatives in all relevant aspects of research, as well as the sharing of data and resources.”

In addition, all FT Applicants and Grantees are bound to comply with the policies reported below.

Safeguard of research integrity

Research integrity (RI) is the basis of responsible conduct of research (RCR); the standard principles of RI – *reliability, honesty, respect, accountability* - are shared within the international scientific community, as laid out by [the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#).

FT is fully committed to preserving and promoting the RCR within the FT-funded research community, to ensure and strengthen high-quality research and to maintain public trust in its research enterprise.

Applicants, Grantees and all research personnel (investigators, trainees, administrators and staff) related to any FT Application or FT project must strictly adhere to the highest standards of good research practices, which embrace the following contexts: *research environment, training, supervision and mentoring, research procedures, safeguards, data practices and management, collaborative working, publication and dissemination, reviewing, evaluating and editing*.

Potential research misconduct will result in FT issuing a formal notification to the Applicants' Host Institution, which should then respond according to its policy for handling allegations of research misconduct.

In particular, FT expects that organizations where the FT-funded scientists' work:

- have policies, structures and training in place that enable students and researchers to understand and adopt good research practices.
- have formal, written policies for preventing and dealing with scientific misconduct, conventionally defined as *fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism* but including other unacceptable practices, including, but not limited to, manipulating authorship, 'self-plagiarism', withholding research results, misrepresenting research achievements, and misusing seniority to encourage violations of research integrity.

Please see the FT guidelines on Research Integrity at the following [link](#).

Awarding of research funds

Awarded funds must be used exclusively for the implementation of the approved research project. FT requires that resources be managed efficiently and cost-effectively, and that all expenditures are necessary and directly related to the funded activities.

No funds will be disbursed by FT to any Host Institution until a specific agreement has been duly executed by both parties according to art. 3 of the D.P.R. 20th March 2003, n. 135.

FT reserves the right to ask for a copy of the statute of the Host Institution and of the latest available balance sheet as well as the acknowledgment of the legal status for all the Applicants working for non-profit private organizations; equally, FT can request updates of the statute and of the balance sheet in the case of

Applicants working for non-profit organizations that have already benefited from FT funds in the past. FT reserves the right to evaluate the compatibility of the statutory guidelines of the private institutions on a case-by-case basis, with the aim of ensuring social benefit and financial reliability in order, if necessary, to dictate the conditions for the assignment/payment of the contribution.

FT reserves the right to visit the Host Institution before releasing any funds and at any time during the grant period.

The funds will be disbursed in two tranches:

- fifty percent will be disbursed after the submission of all required documentation, as specified in the present Call for Applications and in the *Regolamento di Gestione del Finanziamento Seed Grant* document.
- the remaining fifty percent will be reimbursed upon completion of the project, submission of the final scientific report and approval of the administrative report demonstrating that all granted funds have been spent. Should there be any unspent residue, only the amount that has been spent will be reimbursed.

FT reserves the right to cancel payments whenever a conflict arises regarding the stipulations contained in this Call for Applications, or stipulations specifically made by FT to the Host Institution and/or Applicant.

Publications, data sharing and final scientific reports

The Grantee is required to:

1. acknowledge **Codini e Occhiali ODV** and FT in all publications arising from the project (also by specifying the **project number** in the Acknowledgements/Funder section) and send the relative PDF file to papers@fondazionetelethon.it;
2. be compliant with the FT **Open Access Policy** (<https://www.fondazionetelethon.it/en/what-we-do/support-of-research-and-patients/support-to-research/open-access/>);
3. deposit **data** generated from the research project, including source data, on appropriate open or controlled access public databases;
4. be compliant with the European General Data Protection Regulation no. 679/2016 as well as with any other applicable local law;
5. submit the **Final Scientific Report** at the end of the project;
6. support **Codini e Occhiali ODV** to disseminate **data** generated from the research project.

Development of FT funded research results

1. FT acknowledges that full ownership of all intellectual property (IP) rights arising from funded research belongs to the Host Institution/Grantee, according to IP regulations and without prejudice to the rights of potential third-party collaborators.

2. FT acknowledges the need to translate research results into therapies and to make them available to patients and recognizes that this can be achieved through the activation of industrial collaborations and partnerships that may accomplish the development, manufacturing and distribution of therapies, drugs, diagnostics and devices. FT requests that the Grantee and the Host Institution undertake all the steps required to ensure adequate protection and seek opportunities for the development of such research results.
3. Accordingly, the Grantee is required to ensure that any potential therapeutic/diagnostic approach arising from the funded research project is duly protected by a patent application through the interaction and cooperation with the Host Institution's Technology Transfer Office (or other relevant office) before its disclosure (i.e., abstracts, posters, oral presentations, papers). To this aim, the Grantee must share all disclosures with the Host Institution's Technology Transfer Office in due time for the necessary assessments of patentability and patent filing procedures.
4. To allow FT to monitor the outcomes of the research funded, the Host Institution must inform FT (tto@fondazionetelethon.it) via written communication of any new patent filings related to the project.
5. In addition, the Host Institution shall promptly inform FT in writing if it decides not to proceed with the protection of a patentable result or with the exploitation or prosecution of a filed patent. In such case, FT will evaluate, together with Associazione, the type of activity to be undertaken, and the need to formalize a specific mandate to conduct such activities.

Privacy of personal data

FT and the Host Institution will be considered as autonomous data controllers for the personal data to be processed in connection with the application.

The Host Institution is allowed to indicate the personal data of the Applicant as well as of any other researcher involved in the application, on the condition that the Host Institution: (i) has provided the involved researchers with the information about privacy policy reported on the grant tracker platform and available to download on the website; (ii) has thereby gathered the relevant consents; and (iii) will approve the application ensuring that the above conditions have been respected.

FT shall, at any time, have the right to examine such documents (information to data subjects and declaration of consent) at the Host Institution location. The Host Institution shall deliver any document, according to the FT request.

In the partnership between Associazione and FT, FT is entrusted with managing the evaluation process of the research projects, the post-award administrative procedures and the scientific monitoring that are carried out through own tools and means. Therefore, only FT is allowed to know the personal data deriving from the

evaluation process and from the administrative procedures that follow the fund allocation. No personal data will be transmitted by FT to Associazione except for specific and justified reasons in which FT may communicate to Associazione the personal data acquired only after having transmitted to the interested party the information pursuant to art. 13 of the REG.EU n. 679/2016 of Associazione and acquired consent to treatment.

Therefore, for privacy purposes, FT is the data controller, while Associazione has no role (given that Associazione does not know the personal data).

Milan - April 1st, 2026

FONDAZIONE TELETHON ETS