



SPRING SEED GRANT 2026

GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS

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.

- 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.
- **The research proposal must focus on a well-defined goal achievable within the 12-month timeframe.**

Reviewers' Role

Reviewers will support the evaluation process by providing written comments and a score for each eligible Application assigned for review.

General Instructions

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

For questions concerning access to the *Fondazione Telethon Grant Management*, the Reviewer is kindly asked to contact our IT Admin (telethonscience@fondazionetelethon.it).

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.

Please note that the System allows the creation of an account associated with **ONLY** one email. In case the email address is no longer valid, the Reviewer is kindly asked to contact our IT Admin (telethonscience@fondazionetelethon.it) to update it.

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.

Review Process

The Review process for the Seed Grant Call entails three consecutive phases:

1. Fondazione Telethon ETS (FT) first verifies that all submitted Applications are eligible based on administrative criteria and scientific relevance to the Call. FT also selects an *ad hoc* panel of expert reviewers.
2. Reviewers remotely evaluate the scientific merit of the eligible Applications and provide written comments and a score.
3. The evaluation process ends with a final discussion during an online study section.

Remote evaluation Instructions

Reviewers are requested to access the Fondazione Telethon Grant Management system portal at this [link](#) through personal login and password. By clicking on **Pending Panel Review**, the Reviewers will find the list of all Applications assigned for review and can access each Application's evaluation form by clicking on the specific project. Reviewers will find general information about the project in the **Review** tab, and the whole proposal will be visible either by clicking on **Actions**, then **View Application in Split Screen**, or by clicking the **View/Print** button next to **Application Preview** (please allow some time for the system to load the PDF file). If you experience any issues accessing or downloading the Application from the Fondazione Telethon website, please consider using a different browser or enabling pop-ups.

Written comments

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

Individual written comments will be incorporated anonymously into a consolidated Review Report that will be returned to the Applicant. Reviewers should therefore ensure that their comments are accurate, clearly written, and free of derogatory language.

In the evaluation form, Reviewers are asked to **provide a summary statement highlighting the key reasons for their recommendation** (max 3,000 characters) according to the evaluation criteria specified below. Additional comments are optional.

Evaluation criteria:

A) Scientific Merit - Evaluate the overall scientific merit of the proposal by providing an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses based on the following parameters:

- **Significance** - Is the link to the rare genetic disease properly addressed? Does this study address an important problem? What will the effect of these studies be on the concepts or methods that drive this field?
- **Originality of science** - Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches, or methods? Are the aims original and innovative? Does the project challenge existing paradigms or develop new methodologies or technologies?
- **Appropriateness of design and methods** - Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well-integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Are preliminary results (if available) adequately supporting the hypothesis to be tested? **Please note that preliminary data are not mandatory.**
- **Feasibility and Safety** - Is the project feasible in the 12-month timeframe? Does the Applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative plans? Please evaluate the adequacy of the proposed protection for the humans, the animals, or the environment (if any), to the extent they may be adversely affected by the project proposed in the Application.
- **PI and Team Competence** - Is the applicant appropriately trained and well-suited to carry out this work? Is the proposed work proportionate to the applicant’s experience?
- **Budget** - Is the budget appropriate for the proposed research? **Of Note:** A maximum of **€ 50,000** for 12-month projects is allowed.

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?

Score

Reviewers are asked to provide a score, which should reflect the written comments, according to the following scale going from **1.0 (poor)** to **5.0 (outstanding)** by 0.1-unit increments:

Score range	Value	Description
4.6 – 5.0	Outstanding	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
4.0 - 4.5	Excellent	Very strong with only minor weaknesses
3.6 - 3.9	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
2.0 – 3.5	Average	Some strengths but also some major weaknesses
1.0 - 1.9	Poor	A few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

Definitions:

Minor: an easily addressable weakness that does not substantially reduce the project's value

Moderate: A weakness that reduces the project's value

Major: A weakness that severely limits the project's value

Once the revision is completed, Reviewers can submit it by clicking on the **Submit** button. All submitted reviews are available from the Homepage, under the **My Reviews** tab.

Study section

Based on the Reviewers' written evaluation and scores, projects will be discussed during an online plenary meeting, chaired by one of the Reviewers.

Each project will be introduced by one of the Reviewers, who will shortly describe the project and illustrate strengths and weaknesses. The other Reviewers will also contribute with their statements. Finally, a discussion will be opened before restating the individual scores.

Projects with a final score in the excellent or outstanding range will be suggested for funding.

Milan - April 1st, 2026

FONDAZIONE TELETHON ETS