



MULTIROUND CALL 2025 – 2027 ROUND II

Introduction

Fondazione Telethon ETS (FT; www.fondazionetelethon.it) is an Italian charity recognized by the Italian Ministry of University and Research. Its mission is to advance biomedical research toward cures for rare genetic diseases. FT funds research projects in Italy through several funding schemes, and projects are selected through an ISO9001:2015-certified peer-review process.

Aim of the Call

The Multiround Call aims at funding basic and preclinical research projects focused on rare genetic diseases. Research projects can be submitted to one of the following tracks:

- **Track BASIC RESEARCH**

Focused on the identification of molecular and disease mechanism/s and/or identification and validation of disease target/s.

- **Track PRECLINICAL PROOF OF CONCEPT (PoC)**

Focused on the identification and validation of therapeutic candidate/s once the disease target has been validated and/or the therapeutic strategy identified.

Applicants may apply to only one track per round and submit one research project, either as Lead or as Partner, with a single or bi-centred proposal.

Each track and round has its own peer review and competitive selection process.

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

Key Dates

Call opening: **March 10th, 2026**

Full application submission deadline: **April 16th, 2026, at 1 pm**

Notification to applicants of triage phase outcome: **by the end of June 2026**

The study section will take place **by November 2026**

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

Project duration

Project duration can be **12, 24, or 36 months** for both tracks (Basic and PoC).

Budget

The maximum total budget allowed for each research project is:

TRACK Basic Research: max 300,000 € (**max 100,00 €/year**)

TRACK Preclinical Proof of Concept: max 360,000 € (**max 120,000 €/year**)

Contacts

Please contact the FT scientific staff at telethonscience@fondazionelethon.it, specifying the topic in the email subject.

Guidance on Track Selection

Projects must be positioned along the FT development pathway (Figure 1). Applicants are expected to select the track that best reflects the objectives of their proposed research.

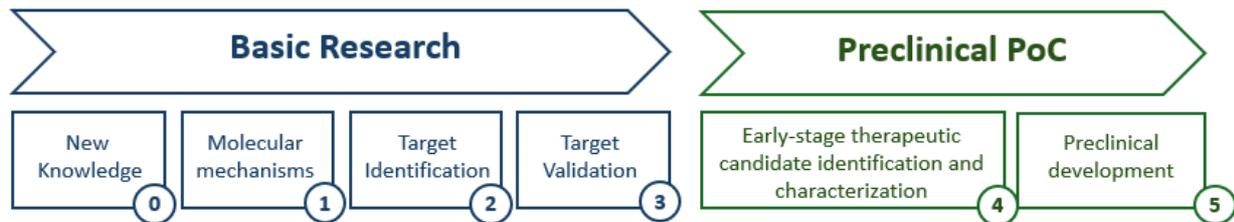


Figure 1. FT development pathway.

Track Basic Research

- **0. New Knowledge:** identification of disease-causative or modifier genes, biomarkers
- **1. Molecular mechanisms:** Discovery of novel molecular mechanisms and disease pathways.
- **2. Target Identification:** identification of a potential druggable disease target.
- **3. Target Validation:** validation of the target in an appropriate model/system (in vitro or in vivo).

Expected deliverables: disease genes and mechanisms clarified, and/or disease target(s) identified and validated; Intellectual property (if available).

Track Preclinical Proof of Concept

- **4. Early-stage therapeutic candidate identification and characterization.**
- **5. Preclinical development:** studies demonstrating the therapeutic effect of the lead candidate (i.e., small molecules, biologics, advanced therapy, etc.) in an appropriate disease model/system (in vitro/in vivo)

Expected deliverables: therapeutic candidate(s) identified and/or validated; Intellectual property (if available).

Eligibility criteria

Eligible diseases

This Call supports research projects on rare diseases with confirmed genetic causes, whether monogenic or polygenic. For disease classification, see <https://www.orpha.net/>; for genetic origin information, visit <https://omim.org/>.

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 also by FT

- Multifactorial diseases for which no familial genetic causative evidence is documented (i.e., studies focused on the identification of genetic risk factors, e.g., single-nucleotide polymorphisms or other predisposing variants)

Eligible Projects

Basic and preclinical research projects focused on rare genetic diseases can be submitted as:

- New application: A proposal for a project not currently funded, or a new attempt after a resubmission has already been submitted and rejected.
- Resubmission: An application that was not funded and has been substantially revised in response to reviewers' feedback. **Only one resubmission is permitted after an initial unfunded submission.** Resubmitted projects compete for funding alongside all other peer-reviewed applications.
- Renewal: A request for additional funding to continue a previously funded research project. Renewal applications compete for funding alongside all other peer-reviewed applications.

Non-Eligible Projects

- Projects focusing on **Tdark genes studies**. These studies may be submitted to the Fondazione Cariplo and Fondazione Telethon Joint Call for Applications. Please refer to the FT [website](#) for updated funding opportunities.
- Projects focused on **clinical studies** (e.g., patient registries, clinical trials, natural history studies).

Eligible Host Institutions

Only research proposals submitted by applicants working either in public or private **Italian non-profit research institutions** are eligible. Researchers affiliated with the FT Research Institutes (*i.e.*, TIGEM and SR-TIGET) are not eligible.

Eligible Applicants

- Applicants who hold active Multiround Grants are eligible to apply to this round as Lead Applicant or Partner only if their grant has ended or is in its final administrative year (i.e., the administrative report for the second-to-last year has already been submitted to the FT Grant Office). **Only one active grant as Lead Applicant and one active grant as Partner is allowed.**
- Applicants who hold active grants under the following funding initiatives are also eligible:
 - Fondazione Cariplo and Fondazione Telethon "Joint Call for Applications"
 - Seed Grants
 - Fondazione Telethon-UILDm
 - ERDERA JTC Call
 - Special Projects
- Applicants who currently do not hold any active Multiround grant are eligible to apply to the present Call.

Evaluation Process

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

All FT staff and reviewers comply with confidentiality and conflict of interest policies. Each application will be subject to administrative and relevance eligibility checks. Eligible applications are evaluated by the FT Scientific Committee, an international panel of distinguished experts, whose members' names will be published on a dedicated webpage. Grants are awarded through a competitive selection process.

Projects will be evaluated through the following peer review steps:

Phase I: Eligibility Check

Phase II: Triage

Phase III: Full Review

The reviewers' evaluation guidelines will be available on the FT website.

Phase I: Eligibility Check

All applications are checked for compliance with guidelines and eligibility criteria; those that do not conform will be rejected at this stage.

Phase II: Triage

In the Triage Phase, the FT Scientific Committee will score all applications based on scientific competitiveness, **focusing only on the “Overall Description of the Research Project” section.**

During the Triage Phase, applications are screened for overall scientific quality and alignment with FT's mission to identify the proposals that are sufficiently competitive to proceed to full peer review.

Top-ranking projects will undergo the Full Review.

For more details about the evaluation criteria, refer to the “Guidelines for Committee Members” document on the FT website.

Phase III: Full Review

Remote Evaluation

Applications that pass the Triage Phase will advance to the Full Review Phase and the FT Scientific Committee will evaluate the entire application. *Ad hoc* external reviewers will also be asked to provide written comments and an overall recommendation.

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

- Scientific rationale and unmet medical need
- Background and preliminary data
- Design and methods
- Project feasibility
- PI and team competence
- Budget

For more details about the evaluation criteria, refer to “Guidelines for Committee Members” document on the FT website.

Study Section

Top-scoring proposals will be discussed by the FT Scientific Committee in a dedicated Study Section. Following the discussion, all Panel members will score each project, and the highest-ranked projects will be recommended for funding. The FT Scientific Committee will also review the proposed budgets, which might be adjusted from the original requested amounts.

Awards are subject to the availability of funds. FT wishes to remind applicants and their Institutions that funds are raised through many small individual donations. FT, therefore, bears a particular responsibility to ensure funds are allocated prudently and transparently.

Outcome of the Evaluation Process

Phase I: Eligibility Check. Only applicants whose applications do not comply with guidelines and eligibility criteria will be notified by email by mid-May 2026.

Phase II: Triage. All applicants will be notified of the triage outcome by email and only rejected applicants will receive access to the FT Review Report by mid-July 2026.

Phase III: Full Review. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of the Full Review by email and will receive access to the FT Review Report by the end of 2026.

Awardees will receive 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.org), endorses and applies [IRDiRC's Policies and Guidelines](#), 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 own policy for handling allegations of research misconduct.

FT expects that organizations where the FT-funded scientist's 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 [webpage](#).

Awarding of research funds

Awarded funds must be solely used to carry out the approved research. FT requires resources to be managed efficiently and cost-effectively, and that all expenditures are necessary and directly related to the funded work.

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

FT will perform direct management of funds at no additional costs based on a contract conferring a mandate without representation, and FT will be appointed as data processor by the Host Institution. In exceptional cases, and when justified by valid reasons, the Host Institution may request FT's approval to manage the funds for personnel and overheads (External Management).

FT reserves the right to ask for a copy of the Host Institution's statute and of the most recent available financial statements, as well as documentation of legal status for Investigators working for non-profit private organizations. For organizations that have previously received FT funding, FT may request updated versions of these documents. FT will assess on a case-by-case basis, whether the statutory guidelines of the institution's statutory provisions are compatible with FT's requirement, to ensure social benefit and financial reliability and, where necessary, may set conditions for the award and/or payment of the grant.

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

The release of funds is subject to the submission of all required documentation, as specified in the present Call and in the "Regolamento di gestione del finanziamento Multiround" document.

Recipients must provide a detailed annual administrative report to obtain the subsequent year's payment.

FT funds management: fifty percent of the final year's budget 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.

FT reserves the right to suspend or cancel payments in the event of a non-compliance with the terms of this Call, or with any specific conditions agreed with the Host Institution and/or Investigator.

Publications, data sharing, and final scientific reports

All Grantees are required to:

- Acknowledge FT in all **publications** arising from the project by specifying the **project number** in the Acknowledgements/Funder section and send the relative PDF file to papers@fondazionetelethon.it;
- 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/>);
- Deposit **data** generated from research projects, including source data, in appropriate open or controlled access public databases;
- Be compliant with the European General Data Protection Regulation no. 679/2016 as well as with any other applicable local law;
- Submit a mid-progress report and a Final Scientific Report.

Development of FT funded research results

FT has the goal to translate research results into therapies and diagnostic tools 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 and diagnostics.

FT requests that full ownership of the intellectual property rights arising from FT funded research vest in the Host Institutions, and that **the Host Institutions undertake all the steps required to ensure adequate protection, promotion, and opportunities for the development of such intellectual property rights.**

Accordingly, all FT Grantees are required to ensure that the patentable results arising from FT funded research projects are duly protected through the interaction and cooperation with their Host Institutions'

Technology Transfer Office before any disclosure of said results, as this may facilitate the full realization of their translational potential. In light of the above, the Grantee expressly undertakes to communicate manuscripts and abstracts to the Technology Transfer Office (or other relevant office) of the Host Institution before submission for publication, to allow the necessary assessments on patentability and activities for protection through patent application filing or other intellectual property rights.

Grantees and/or their Host Institutions must promptly inform FT via written communication of any new patent filings and execution of agreements with for-profit entities related to FT's funded research. Moreover, **Host Institutions must promptly inform FT via written communication if they intend to abandon** a pending/granted patent related to the FT-funded project or its exploitation.

FT offers advice and assistance regarding intellectual property issues and technology transfer activities through the FT Business Development Office. Further details will be provided in the grant agreement "Regolamento di gestione del finanziamento Multiround".

On a case-by-case basis and on terms and conditions to be mutually agreed between FT and the Host Institution, FT reserves the right to obtain an exclusive mandate to promote and negotiate the exploitation of the results of FT-funded research projects with third parties.

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 (Key Personnel and Collaborator), 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.

Milan – March 10th, 2026

FONDAZIONE TELETHON ETS