

Fondazione
CARIPOLO



FONDAZIONE CARIPOLO – FONDAZIONE TELETHON JOINT CALL FOR APPLICATIONS 2026

GUIDELINES FOR EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

Aim of the Call

This Call supports basic research projects aimed at investigating targets, such as genes/gene families, mRNAs, and proteins, whose function remains unknown in rare diseases of genetic (both monogenic and polygenic) and non-genetic origin, conducted by researchers working in Italian public or private non-profit research institutions.

For this Call, research projects can be submitted in one of the two different formats:

- **PILOT APPLICATION:** one-year research projects aimed at generating data and/or tools to elucidate the role of Tdark targets in rare diseases. Preliminary data are not mandatory; however, where available, they should be included to strengthen the scientific rationale and demonstrate project feasibility. Only single-center proposals are eligible.
- **FULL APPLICATION:** research projects with a duration up to two years, supported by a solid background. Preliminary data are required. Both single- and bi-center proposals are eligible.

External Reviewer's Role

External reviewers will support the Fondazione Cariplo – Fondazione Telethon Scientific Committee members in the evaluation process of **Full Applications only**, by providing written comments and an overall recommendation for each eligible Application.

General Instructions

The Applications and the Evaluation Form are available on the *Fondazione Telethon ETS 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).

We ask Reviewers who use AI-based generative tools – such as Large Language Models (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, ...) – to operate responsibly and in compliance with European standards, as laid out by the "[Living Guidelines on the Responsible Use of Generative AI in Research](#)". Reviewers should be aware that certain uses, such as uploading proposals and delegating evaluation to generative AI tools, may represent a breach of confidentiality obligations and other regulations.

External 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

Full Review

The present Call is a two-step process: a **Triage Phase**, based exclusively on the evaluation of the “Overall Description of the Research Project” and Biosketch sections from the Application and performed by two or three FC - FT Scientific Committee members only, depending on the number of applications received; and a **Full Review Phase** for top-ranked projects that have passed the Triage Phase.

Applications that **pass the Triage Phase** proceed to the **Full Review Phase** and will be evaluated by three FC - FT Scientific Committee members, with the support of one international **External Reviewers** selected *ad hoc* for each Application by FC - FT Scientific Officers.

External Reviewers 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.

Individual 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.

Full Review Instructions

External Reviewers are requested to log into the *Fondazione Telethon Grant Management* system portal through this [link](#), through personal login and password. If you experience any issues accessing or downloading the Application from the Fondazione Telethon portal, please consider using a different browser or enabling pop-ups.

By clicking on **Pending Peer Review**, the External Reviewer will find their assigned Applications and can access each proposal’s evaluation form by clicking on the specific project. The External Reviewer will find general information about the project in the **Review tab** and the full proposal will be visible by clicking on **Actions** and then on **View Application in Split Screen**, or by clicking on the **View/Print** button next to Application Preview.

External Reviewers will be asked to provide written comments and give an overall recommendation for each proposal based on the following criteria:

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?
- **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? Please highlight overall strengths and weaknesses.

- **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?

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?

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 essentially no weaknesses.
- B** - Excellent; Very strong with only minor weaknesses.
- C** - Good; Strong but with at least one moderate weakness.
- D** - Average; Some strengths but also some major weaknesses.
- E** - 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

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, June 23, 2026