

## 2026 Call for Applications for ALS research projects

### Letter of Intent guidelines - Committee members

Applications to the “**2026 Call for Applications for ALS research projects**” will be subjected to a two-stage process based on the evaluation of a Letter of Intent (LOI) and, for those admitted to the second stage, submission, and evaluation of a Full Proposal.

**THIS DOCUMENT IS AN OPERATIONAL GUIDE FOR ARISLA INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE (ISC) MEMBERS TO PERFORM THE EVALUATION OF THE LOI APPLICATIONS.**

#### *Review phases*

The **LOI evaluation** phase aims at selecting the top-ranking Applications that will be invited to submit a Full Proposal. Each LOI is assigned to three members of the ISC, who are asked to score it on the basis of the criteria reported below, to assess the adherence of the proposal to the priority topics suggested in the Call and provide brief written comments. Applications will be ranked according to the average score; it is anticipated that up to about 40 Applications will proceed to full review.

For the **Full proposal evaluation**, Applications will be re-assigned to three ISC members that are selected on the basis of the needed expertise, among those available to take part in the final Consensus Meeting.

#### *Type of Application*

The Call is dedicated to both **Pilot and Full Grant Applications**. Particularly for Pilot Applications, but not limited to them, AriSLA encourages Applications from junior investigators and investigators who are new to the ALS field.

**PILOT GRANTS** concern research projects with highly innovative and original hypotheses, where preliminary data are either not available or to be consolidated. As such, they are intended to collect or strengthen preliminary data for subsequent larger scale funding.

Only Single-centre Applications are admitted.

The duration of the proposed project is 1 year.

**FULL GRANTS** concern research projects with a solid background and consistent preliminary data.

Applications can either be Single-centre or Multi-centre. The Principal Investigator (PI) is the scientific coordinator of the project, either in case of a Single-centre or a Multi-centre project. In case of a Multi-centre project, the synergy derived from Partners’ contribution to the achievement of the project objectives should be evident.

The duration of the proposed project can range from 1 to 3 years.

Both types of Applications may address **basic or preclinical research areas and clinical observational studies**. Applications based on clinical interventional studies are not admitted.

In order to be fundable, Applications should be original and ground-breaking with respect to current science and of high scientific quality. All proposals should demonstrate a **strong potential to impact on the understanding, diagnosis, or treatment of ALS**. Basic research is expected to be clinically informed, integrating clinical characteristics to the interpretation of mechanistic studies.

Top priority will be assigned to proposals dealing with the following topics:

- **Development of effective clinical measures for ALS**, including both diagnostic and theragnostic biomarkers that will improve diagnosis and facilitate developing tailored therapies for the disease
- **Definition of the natural history of ALS from the pre-symptomatic to the disease state**, to improve the knowledge of how the disease begins and progresses over time and facilitate recognition of the first manifestations of the disease
- **Setting and characterization of model systems** that can provide information on human sporadic and /or genetic ALS. Studies integrating multiple models across species are encouraged
- **Unravel the molecular pathophysiological mechanisms of ALS**, also addressing clinical heterogeneity to define different forms of sporadic ALS based on distinct molecular mechanisms leading to neurodegeneration

### ***Letter of Intent evaluation procedure***

The LOI evaluation will be conducted remotely, by accessing the Applications through the AriSLA web portal (operating instructions are reported below).

**LOI scores range from 1 (Very Poor) to 5 (Excellent to Outstanding).**

### ***Pilot Grants***

LOI evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

- **Innovation and originality** of the proposed project with regards to the current knowledge
- **Relevance** of the project for ALS
- **Quality and feasibility** of the scientific approach

Please note that **preliminary data are not mandatory for Pilot Grant proposals**. Nevertheless, preliminary evidence may be deemed necessary to support the rationale and the feasibility of the proposal.

### ***Full Grants***

LOI evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

- **Innovation and originality** of the proposed project with regards to the current knowledge
- **Relevance** of the project for ALS

- **Quality and feasibility** of the scientific approach and **experience** of the Applicants in the field

ISC members are asked to **assign a numerical LOI score to each project**, choosing one of the values among the whole numbers and their point five in the table below. The score will reflect the recommendation whether the project deserves full review. It is desirable to use as much as possible the entire numerical range proposed, in order to avoid most of the projects falling within an intermediate interval, which would make the selection procedure less efficient.

LOI Scores		
Score	Project Evaluation	Recommendation
4.5 or 5	Excellent to Outstanding	No concerns - Suggested for full review
4	Good	Minor concerns – Suggested for full review
3.5	Average	A few critical points - Not suggested for full review
2.5 or 3	Poor	Several critical points - Not suggested for full review
1, 1.5 or 2	Very Poor	Major concerns - Not suggested for full review

For each Application, ISC members are requested to **select one or more of the options below, as deemed appropriate to justify their evaluation/concerns:**

- Not hypothesis-driven
- Inappropriate design and methods
- Not feasible
- Poorly written
- Weak preliminary evidence
- Poor rationale
- Weak link with ALS
- Other (please specify in the notes)
- No weaknesses

**If the score is equal or lower than 4, any concerns and/or identified weaknesses of the Application should be briefly discussed in the “Comment” field.**

The individual comments of the ISC members will be anonymously sent to the Principal Investigators of those Applications that are excluded from further review. **It is therefore important that the written material is accurate, clearly written, and does not include derogatory language.**