

2018 Call for Projects on ALS Research

2018 AriSLA Call for Research Projects: PROMOTING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ALS

Deadline: at 1.00 pm, April 20th 2018

1. Aims of the “2018 AriSLA Call for Research Projects”

AriSLA, Italian Foundation for Research on ALS – Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, opens the “2018 AriSLA Call for Research Projects”. The Call aims to significantly advance knowledge of ALS to efficiently translate research outcomes from bench to bedside in order to improve ALS patients’ care, quality of life and survival. Further, the Call intends to promote networking among nationwide ALS researchers as stated in the mission of the Foundation.

2. Call for Projects themes

“2018 AriSLA Call for Research Projects” funds only **Full Grants projects**.

FULL GRANTS, i.e. research projects with a solid background and consistent preliminary data, proposing multidisciplinary and highly translational approaches, can be submitted in the **Basic and Translational research** area (i.e. disease mechanisms, genetic studies, new disease models and markers, drug discovery, biomarker discovery, drug development, new potential treatments, etc).

The duration of the proposed project can range from 12 to 36 months.

Full Grant Applications are allowed to request a **contribution up to a maximum of 80,000 €/year**.

AriSLA reminds all Applicants and their Institutions that funds are raised through many small individual donations and therefore AriSLA feels a special responsibility to oversee an appropriate allocation of funds.

Scientific collaboration with other Italian or foreign partners are encouraged. Project partners based in Host Institutions out of Italy and for profit partners are only allowed to co-fund the project budget.

Renewal Application of previously funded Grants are encouraged and the effective exploitation of the previously obtained results will be valued.

Features required for Full research projects are the **high quality of science** and the **ground-breaking nature and originality with respect to the current science**. To be financed, Applications must be deemed of significant scientific interest and with a strong potential to impact on disease understanding, diagnosis and treatment.

Awards are contingent upon availability of funds.

3. Eligible subjects

Subjects eligible to participate as Principal Investigator in the “2018 AriSLA Call for Research Projects” are researchers of **Italian non-profit Universities and Research Institutes, either public or private**, performing research activities consistent with the statutory purposes of the Foundation. The Principal Investigator and all partners must be scientists with demonstrated scientific competence and independence, able to self-manage the proposed project.

The Principal Investigator (PI), as recipient of AriSLA funding, is the scientific coordinator of the project both in case of a single-centre project and in a multi-centre project. Partners should coherently contribute to the achievement of the project objectives.

Researchers are allowed to apply for a maximum of 2 Grants, and in any case, can be the Principal Investigator of only 1 Application in this Call.

Principal Investigators of a Full Grant Application must have proven scientific independence and for the entire duration of the Grant they must operate in the Hosting Institution. The Legal Representative of the Host Institution has to declare that the Host Institution will provide the necessary facilities and personnel to carry out the submitted research project. **If the Applicant is not holder of a permanent position, the salary of the Investigator needs to be provided through other means.**

If the application is successful but the scientific independence of the Applicant is not clearly evident to the International Scientific Committee, the Committee may recommend funding pending a statement by the Applicant’s Director (e.g. head of laboratory/department) stating that the results of the funded research will belong to the Investigator, in the form of adequate authorship in any ensuing publications (last name/corresponding author).

When submitting the Application, a formal partnership agreement among participating institutions is not required. This document will be compiled once the Project has been granted.

AriSLA funds researchers affiliated to nation-based Institutions only. The participation of foreign research groups in project partnerships led by an organization located in Italy is allowed by co-funding their own research activities.

Please note that for-profit Partners are allowed to participate in the research partnerships although will not be beneficiary of grant contribution by AriSLA.

Projects that have already been fully funded by other Agencies are not eligible to be financed.

3.1 New application or Renewal Application by former grantee

The holder of a previous AriSLA funded project may submit a New or a Renewal Application.

Please consider as “Renewal Application” the new funding requests based on data from previously AriSLA funded Grant and as “New Application” the new funding requests dealing with a different research topic.

Principal Investigators of an ongoing AriSLA grants, not yet ended at the date of November 30th 2018, are not eligible to submit new Project Application¹ as PI, but can apply as a Partner in a consortium.

¹ *Principal Investigators of ongoing projects are allowed to participate only if the contract with AriSLA is going to be concluded within November 30th, 2018. The signature of the new contract is contingent upon the end of the scientific, economical and administrative procedure concerning the previous Grant.*

Partners in a consortium of ongoing projects financed by AriSLA in previous Calls can apply for a new Grant either as a Principal Investigator or as a Partner.

3.2 Revised Application

Researchers who have submitted a new Application to the “2017 AriSLA Call for Research Projects”, which has not been funded, may participate in this Call by submitting a revised Application, modified in accordance with the comments received during the evaluation process. In this case, in the box “Changes from previous revision” special attention should be given to the issues raised by the reviewers.

4. Submitting the Application

Applications have two-steps submitting process:

1. LETTER OF INTENT (LOI)

Letter of Intent must be submitted by the Principal Investigator by filling up **Full Grant forms** available on the AriSLA website <http://proposals.arisla.org>, starting from **March 20th, 2018**. Applications must be compiled following the specific guidelines (see "**Guidelines for the submission of the *Letter of Intent***").

The *LOI* has to be only electronically submitted in English by **April 20th, 2018 at 1.00 pm**.

The hard copy of the online application does not need to be sent.

2. FULL PROPOSALS

Full Proposals have to be submitted by the PI exclusively **after the receipt of an AriSLA “Invitation letter to submit a Full Proposal”** (see paragraph 5), which will include the guidelines for the Full Proposal submission.

5. Applications evaluation and selection criteria

Each Application will be evaluated by an independent International Scientific Committee appointed by AriSLA, in order to guarantee meritocracy, transparency and impartiality of the selection process.

5.1 Methodology

Applications will be screened by a three-step peer-review:

In the **first step**, the AriSLA independent International Scientific Committee will perform a remote evaluation of the submitted *Letters of Intent*. Each LOI will be independently evaluated by three reviewers of proven expertise in the field of the topic of the research Application. Reviewers will provide a written report. During this step AriSLA may directly contact the Applicant in order to gather further elements for the evaluation. All applications will be ranked based on the evaluation criteria mentioned below and up to 35 of the top ranking projects will proceed to the second step. The results of the first-step will be communicated to the PI and the report will include the reviewers' comments.

In the **second step**, the top ranking Full Proposals presented following AriSLA invitation will be assigned to three independent reviewers of the AriSLA independent International Scientific Committee, available to take part to the Consensus Meeting in Milan (see third step).

In the **third step**, the panel of reviewers involved in the second step will provide an overall assessment and a comparative evaluation of the top scoring Full Proposals during a Consensus Meeting. The outcome of the evaluation process will be a final merit-based list.

The Scientific Committee will also review the budget, which may be reduced with respect to the original request by reviewers' suggestions and funds availability.

The conclusion of the evaluation process is expected to end within December 2018. AriSLA will take care to inform all PIs about the Scientific Committee comments.

Members of AriSLA International Scientific Committee are listed in the AriSLA website (http://www.arisla.org/?page_id=99).

AriSLA claims the right to not allocate any fund if the proposed Applications will be considered not worthy of contribution according to the evaluation process, even in presence of availability of funds.

5.2 Evaluation criteria

Applications that are incomplete or not fulfill the rules indicated in the "2018 AriSLA Call for Research Projects" and the specific guidelines will not be processed for evaluation.

The evaluation and the assessment of the overall quality of the Application will be performed by the International Scientific Committee of AriSLA Foundation.

The evaluation of the Letters of Intent will be carried out according to the following criteria:

1. **Quality and feasibility** of the scientific approach;
2. **Translational potential of the proposed research** and **potential impact** of the project results on diagnosis or treatment of the disease; how close to therapeutic development or to any other potential impact on patients are the proposed study?

The evaluation of the Full Proposals will be carried out according to the following criteria:

1. Strength of the **background** and **rationale**: availability of solid preliminary data to support the research program;
2. **Objectives** and **impact of project results**: indicate the clarity of the proposal objectives and the potential impact of project results on patients diagnosis or treatment; will the proposed study promote enhancements in prevention, diagnosis, and therapies of the disease?; results eligible for intellectual property protection;
3. **Investigators** and **collaborative potential**: competence and scientific independence of PI/partners in the field of the proposal and complementarity within the Consortium, if present;
4. Suitability of requested **budget** consistent to the activity time;
5. Sound and effective exploitation of the results derived from AriSLA previously funded Pilot/Full Grants.

As reported in the criteria the International Scientific Committee will also review the budget, which may be reduced with respect to the original request.

In particular, care will be taken to avoid overlapping funding of scientific activities already supported by other Applicant's grants, which must be accurately described in the appropriate section of the online application.

6. Eligible costs

Please note that a detailed budget is not requested for the submission of the *Letter of Intent*. It will be asked for the Full Proposal submission.

All costs allocated will be reimbursed upon expenses report.

A correct use of funds can be defined when expenses are consistent with the proposed activities, hereby criteria for costs are reported.

Non eligible costs:

- Salary of Principal Investigator;
- Salary of structured staff;
- Salaries, travel and other expenses related to sabbatical leave;
- Membership in Scientific Societies;
- Organization of meetings and workshops, if not functional for the activity of WP1;
- Construction and/or renovation of space, furniture, rental of space or rooms, call charges and/or fax;
- Setting up and maintaining animal facilities;
- Scientific equipment purchases, excluding depreciation.

Eligible costs

Please consider that VAT is a cost for AriSLA. Therefore the gross amount should be indicated for all item costs.

DIRECT COSTS

Personnel

Costs for unstructured staff are allowed, following rules of the research Institution. The PI is obliged to report every staff change that will occur during the project implementation.

Please note that only the total annual labor cost should be indicated in the proposal budget.

Material, supplies and equipment

Scientific equipment: purchasing is not eligible. However, depreciation for new equipment is recognized as an eligible cost, based on the actual use and up to a maximum of € 20.000. Different indication could be proposed by the International Scientific Committee to the Foundation during the evaluation of the project proposal.

Hardware devices: are eligible costs if closely related to the project. The eligibility will be evaluated case by case and if above € 516,46 recognized for depreciation based on the actual use and up to a maximum of € 2.500.

Reagents, consumables and lab materials: are considered eligible costs considering necessities and consistency to the project. About 30.000 euro should be considered each 100% annual personnel effort, according to the kind of material requested.

Sub-contracting (services)

Applications may be assisted by sub-contractors.

The sub-contractor is intended to be who provides external services or supplies which are necessary for the execution of the project. **Total budget request for subcontracting must not exceed 20% of the funding requested to AriSLA.**

Other expenses

In this category of expenses different costs are included: expenses for scientific publications, reprints, software (specifying the need for the project) etc.. Under this item, trips or visits to project collaborators or partners are also included. Expenses related to participation in Congresses are eligible up to a maximum of € 3.000/year.

In the production of any material or scientific publication related to the financed project has to be acknowledged AriSLA Grant (as indicated in AriSLA Foundation Dissemination Policy). Moreover, please remind that the Principal Investigator of a funded project should adhere to the Open Access Policy (as indicated in AriSLA Foundation Dissemination Policy). For this reason, it is recommended to include in this category of expenses the fee costs for Open Access publications not lower than € 3.000.

INDIRECT COSTS

Overheads

Overheads can be required and include: general expenses incurred by the Host Institution, administrative and maintenance costs, expenses for any machinery and equipment as part of the project activities.

These costs are calculated as a lump sum and allowed to a maximum of 10% of incurred direct costs.

6.1 Ineligible Applications

Applications with the following characteristics will be considered ineligible:

- Applications merely covering management cost of research centers;
- Applications aimed to finance the construction/creation of facilities, laboratories, research centers or coordination centers;
- Applications submitted by a Principal Investigator holder of an AriSLA ongoing funding at the date of 30th November 2018 (see paragraph 3 and note);
- Projects that are already fully funded by other Agencies;
- Applications not fully or correctly completed;
- Applications not written in English;
- Applications not electronically submitted by the AriSLA online submission platform;
- Applications lacking the authorization to process personal data (see Privacy Statement section);
- Applications not compliant with the AriSLA submission rules.

7. Dissemination of results of funded projects

AriSLA ensures that new knowledge generated by its research funding will be widely disseminated and readily made available for the benefit of ALS patients. In particular, the Foundation reminds the Principal Investigator:

- **the obligation to inform in advance about any publication** and to acknowledge AriSLA Foundation of all publications arisen from the project;
- **to adhere to the Open Access Policy.**

For further details please refer to AriSLA "Dissemination Policy".

8. Intellectual property

AriSLA mission is to translate research results into therapies and to make them available to patients. To achieve this goal, the Foundation requests the Principal Investigator to undertake any necessary steps to ensure adequate valorisation and exploitation of the research outcomes.

AriSLA offers support and assistance to the PI and his Host Institution with regards to intellectual property.

For further information please refer to AriSLA "Intellectual Property Rights Policy".

9. AriSLA project adoption

AriSLA claims the right to promote the "adoption" by third party institutions of the funded projects; therefore it is recommended to consult the document "Projects Adoption Policy" of AriSLA.

10. Privacy

According to the Italian Law n.196/2003 regulating the protection of persons and other subjects with regard to the treatment of personal data, AriSLA, with head office located in Via Poerio, 14 – 20129 Milan, "holder" of the information and responsible for the data processing, is legally bound to obtain the consent of the "Applicant" regarding the use of the personal data included in the Project Application (Letter of Intent and Full Proposal). It is recommended in this regard to consult the document "AriSLA Privacy Policy" for further clarification.