



FRRB EARLY CAREER AWARD

Short version of the Call Text



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1. BACKGROUND

Fondazione Regionale per la Ricerca Biomedica (FRRB) is a non-for-profit organization governed by public law, established in October 2011 by Regione Lombardia.

Its aim is to promote and support scientific research in Life Sciences in Lombardy region (since 2011, over 100 Million euros have been committed in innovative R&D projects).

The Foundation represents one of the main strategic platforms for boosting progress, research, development and innovation within the health sector among the regional academic and industrial life science players.

Its *raison d'être* is to serve as support to and for implementing the regional health care research policy, in order to place the Lombardy regional system in a leading position in Europe within this field. In addition, the Foundation aims to distribute local and European resources to innovative basic and translational research projects, generating a positive impact on the local health care eco-system and citizens.

FRRB recognises that new generations of researchers and scientists are key for the development and implementation of innovative biomedical research in Lombardy. Acknowledging the lack of support and the barriers that early stage researchers can encounter, in particular with regard to the possibility to develop an independent career, FRRB aims to select the most promising young researchers and sustain their scientific career through the "EARLY CAREER AWARD" Call for proposals.

One of the key activities of FRRB, in accordance with Lombardy Region, is to contribute to the implementation of personalized medicine approaches through the sustainment of research projects.

FRRB, in accordance with Lombardy Region, focuses its activity on the development and implementation of Personalized Medicine approaches.

"Personalised" or "Precision Medicine" is defined by the Horizon 2020 Advisory group as: *"the medical model using characterization of individuals' phenotypes and genotypes (e.g. molecular profiling, medical imaging, lifestyle data) for tailoring the right therapeutic strategy for the right person at the right time, and/or to determine the predisposition to disease and/or to deliver timely and targeted prevention"*.

In this context, FRRB EARLY CAREER AWARD will fund innovative research projects, led by early career researchers, aiming at developing and integrating personalized medicine approaches to cure human diseases.

FRRB will fund research projects falling in one of the following research areas:

- A. Genetics, "Omics", Bioinformatics and Systems Biology
- B. Physiology, physiopathology of organs and systems
- C. Applied medical technologies, advanced diagnostics, new therapies.



2. TECHNICAL FEATURES

2.1 HOST INSTITUTION

The Host Institution must belong to one of the following categories:

- Public or private I.R.C.C.S. (Italian Scientific Institutes for Research, Hospitalization and Health Care);
- Public Health care providers (ASST).

Principal Investigators (PIs) are allowed to develop their scientific project also in Universities that have an on-going collaboration agreement with one of the organizations listed above. The Host Institution (grant holder) will always be a public or private I.R.C.C.S. or an ASST (not the University) and the PI **must** perform the project-related scientific activities for a minimum of 16 hours per week in the chosen Host Institution.

The eligible organisation (Host Institution) where the PI will be hosted must confirm its support to him/her through a binding statement (**Attachment 2**). Host Institution must provide PI with appropriate workspaces, laboratories, equipment, qualified staff (e.g. lab technicians), as well as any other resources needed to adequately carry out the research project.

Moreover, the Host Institution must be located in the Lombardy Region.

2.2 PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI): eligibility criteria

The PI, who will develop the research project in one of the organizations listed above, **must** have the following characteristics, before the deadline of pre-proposals submission (31st January 2020):

- o have been awarded his/her PhD or Medical Specialization no more than 10 years prior the deadline of this Call (from 31st of January 2010 onwards). Eligibility extensions are admitted (see note¹).
In case of double award (both PhD and Medical specialization), the first one will be considered; in case the PI has been only awarded a medical degree but no PhD and no medical specialization, the candidate will be considered NOT eligible;
- o have a h-index ≥ 10 according to Scopus (www.scopus.com/freelookup/form/author.uri);
- o have published at least 3 original scientific papers (excluding reviews) in peer-reviewed journals as first (or co-first), last (or co-last), or corresponding author (or co-corresponding author);
- o guarantee at least 30% of his/her total working time to the proposed project.

Moreover, the Young Researcher may submit ONLY ONE scientific project as PI, Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) or as collaborator. The PI of any ongoing² project previously funded by FRRB (in response to a regional or European Call) will NOT be ELIGIBLE.

¹ - maternity leave: the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD/MD will be considered reduced for a maximum of 18 months for each child born before or after the PhD/MD award;

- paternity: the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD/MD will be considered reduced by the actual period of paternity leave taken for each child born before or after the PhD/MD award;

- long-term illness (over 90 days), clinical qualification or national service the effective elapsed time since the award of the first PhD/MD will be considered reduced by the documented amount of leave taken for each event which occurred after the PhD/MD award.

² A project is "ongoing" unless the final grant reports – both the scientific and the financial one - have been submitted to FRRB.



The Principal Investigators who can apply are:

- o researchers with both temporary or permanent positions (including fellowships), already employed in one of the organizations listed in point 2.1;
- o researchers not employed, or employed in organizations other than those listed above, who declare the intention to carry out the proposed research project in one of the organizations listed in point 2.1;
- o researchers coming from other Italian Regions or from abroad who declare the intention to carry out the proposed research project in one of the organizations listed in point 2.1.

2.3 GENERAL FEATURES

FRRB EARLY CAREER AWARD is a two-stage Call for proposals:

1. pre-proposal stage : pre-proposal should contain short information about the scientific project, curriculum vitae and the budget of the proposed project;
 2. full proposal stage: ONLY the best ranked Young Researchers will be invited by FRRB to submit a more detailed scientific project.
- o the maximum available budget per project is € 600.000 for 3 years (maximum € 200.000/year).
 - o The portability of the funding is NOT ADMITTED. At the time of the pre-proposal submission the PI can identify a Co-PI, who must have the same characteristics of the PI, and who could take over the scientific activities should the PI, for any reason, be unable to lead the project. If the Co-PI is not identified at the time of the proposal submission, he/she will be identified afterwards in case of necessity.
 - o The project duration is **36 months**.
 - o The total budget of the Call is **€ 8.278.376,52**.

3. PROJECT EVALUATION

3.1 ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

FRRB will perform an eligibility check of the pre-proposals received from an administrative and technical point of view.

3.2 ELIGIBLE COSTS

According to the Call text the eligible direct costs are:

- Personnel costs (please note that the salary of the young PI is admitted)
- Travel costs
- Costs for participating in conferences, conferences, seminars and other training events related to the project
- Materials and supplies
- Equipment (on hire or eligible amortisation rate)
- Subcontracting costs (including the cost of a financial audit, compulsory at the end of the project and eligible for a maximum of € 8.000,00)
- Other direct costs

FRRB allows a flat rate of indirect costs (overheads) calculated as 20% of all the direct costs (subcontracting costs excluded).



For more information on the cost categories and the related admitted percentages please read the document “*Guidelines for submission*” published on FRRB institutional web site (<http://www.frrb.it/it/bando-giovani-early-career-award>).

3.3 SCIENTIFIC REVISION

Projects, which comply with all the formal requirements, will proceed to the Scientific Evaluation.

The Scientific Evaluation will involve two distinct Boards:

- A panel of experts, defined as “*Scientific Committee*”, who will be involved in the evaluation of pre-proposals, in remote, and in the evaluation of full proposals during a plenary session, called “*Consensus Meeting*” that will take place at the end of the entire process.
- International scientific experts, who will perform a scientific evaluation of the full proposals from remote.

The Scientific Revision is organized in two phases:

Phase 1: pre-proposal

The scientific evaluation will take into account the contents of the pre-proposal application form and the project budget.

Each pre-proposal will be assigned to two members of the Scientific Committee who will provide an evaluation according to the criteria indicated in the following table:

PROJECT PROPOSAL	Maximum score 20
Clarity and relevance of the objectives illustrated and innovation potential in precision medicine	0-10
Feasibility – preliminary data and experimental plan	0-10
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI) – TRACK RECORD	Maximum score 20
To what extent does the PI provide evidence of creative independent thinking?	0-10
To what extent does the PI have the required scientific expertise to successfully execute the project?	0-10

The maximum score of each category is 20, given by the sum of the scores of the individual sub-categories listed in the table.

In order to be admitted to the second phase, the score of each category must be higher than 15 points (threshold).

The maximum score for each pre-proposal is 40, given by the sum of the two categories; the final score of each pre-proposal will be given by the average of the evaluations of the two members of the Scientific Commission.

At the end of Phase 1, a provisional ranking list will be drafted and the best ranked projects will be invited, by email, to submit the complete project (full proposal).

Phase 2: full proposal

The scientific evaluation will take into account the content of the full proposal application form and the project budget.

Each full proposal will be assigned to two scientific experts selected according to their scientific competences.

International scientific experts will provide an evaluation remotely, according to the criteria indicated in the table below:

EXCELLENCE	Maximum score 20
Clarity and relevance of the objectives illustrated	0-10
Soundness of the hypothesis and of the preliminary data, appropriateness and feasibility of the methodology, including ethical aspects	0-10
IMPACT	Maximum score 20
Advancement beyond state-of-the-art	0-10
Quality of the proposal in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dissemination and sharing of results to the scientific community - Dissemination of results to the lay public - Description of RRI principles 	0-10
QUALITY AND EFFICIENCY	Maximum score 20
Quality and efficiency of the workplan, of the resources allocated to work packages and of the project structure in line with the objectives	0-10
Appropriateness of the technical and management structures	0-10

The maximum score of each category is 20, given by the sum of the scores of the individual sub-categories listed in the table.

In order to be admitted to the Consensus Meeting (plenary session), the score of each category must be higher than 15 points (threshold).

The maximum score for each pre-proposal is 60, given by the sum of the three categories; the final score of each pre-proposal will be given by the average of the evaluations of the two international scientific experts.

At the end of the remote evaluation, a provisional ranking list will be drafted and sent to the Scientific Commission for the final evaluation in the Consensus Meeting.

At the end of the plenary session, a final ranking list will be provided and the projects will be funded in order of ranking, up to the available resources.

4. PLANNED TIME SCHEDULE

December 2 nd , 2019, 10 a.m.	Opening of the Call for the pre-proposal submission (1 st stage)
January 31 st , 2020, 5 p.m.	Deadline for electronic submission of pre-proposals through the online platform www.bandiservizi.it
By March 2020	End of administrative and formal eligibility checks
April-May 2020	Scientific Peer Review evaluation of pre-proposals and communication of the results
June 1 st , 2020, 10 a.m.	Opening of the Call for the full proposal submission
June 30 th , 2020, 5 p.m.	Deadline for electronic submission of full proposals through the online platform www.bandiservizi.it
By October 2020	Scientific Peer Review evaluation of full proposals
By November 2020	Publication of final ranking list and funding decision