



Fondazione  
**Francesco della Valle**

PER LA RICERCA E LE CONOSCENZE  
SULLA **NEUROINFAMMAZIONE**

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# **Excellence in Neuroinflammation**

## **Young Investigator Grant**

### **YIG 2027-2029**

Call for Proposals

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**Submission deadline for applications: September 15, 2026**

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## **1. Purpose of the Call**

Francesco della Valle Foundation ETS -hereinafter referred to as “the Foundation”- aims to promote biomedical research by supporting **young** international investigators in developing innovative, original, and high-impact projects focused on Neuroinflammation.

The main objectives of the call are to:

- Foster the scientific independence of young researchers, encouraging the development of autonomous project design skills;
- Stimulate innovation and the generation of relevant data for the scientific community, with potential clinical or technological applications;
- Support professional growth by providing stable financial resources for a period of 2 years.

Beneficiaries are required to participate in an annual meeting organized by the Foundation to present preliminary results. Travel and accommodation costs for this meeting will be covered by the Foundation.

## **2. Eligibility**

The call is open to early career researchers who meet the following requirements:

- must serve as Principal Investigator (PI) of the project;
- must be no older than 40 years at the date of application;
- must hold a PhD (or equivalent degree);
- must have a salary secured for the entire period of the grant;
- must provide a letter of support from their institution, supervisor, and/or group leader;
- must submit one project only.

### **Note**

Projects involving international mobility—both incoming and outgoing—are strongly encouraged.



## 2.1 Exclusion criteria

**Applicants shall be excluded from the grant award procedure where they:**

- 2.1.1 have been sentenced by final judgment on one or more of the following charges:  
participation in a criminal organisation, corruption, fraud, money laundering, terrorist financing, terrorist offences or offences linked to terrorist activities, child labour or trafficking in human beings;
- 2.2.1 are in a situation of bankruptcy, liquidation, termination of activity, insolvency or arrangement with creditors or any like situation arising from a procedure of the same kind, or are subject to a procedure of the same kind;
- 2.3.1 have received a judgment with res judicata force, finding an offence that affects their professional integrity or constitutes a serious professional misconduct;
- 2.4.1 do not comply with their obligations as regards payment of social security contributions, taxes and dues, according to the statutory provisions of the country where they are established;
- 2.5.1 are an entity created to circumvent tax, social or other legal obligations (empty shell company), have ever created or are in the process of creation of such an entity;
- 2.6.1 have been involved in mismanagement of public funds;
- 2.7.1 were involved in the preparation of the documents for the Young Investigator Grant and this entails a distortion of competition;
- 2.8.1 fail to comply with the arrangements for the submission of their applications as set out in the call for proposals;
- 2.9.1 are subject to a conflict of interests; a conflict of interests could arise in particular as a result of economic interests, political or national affinity, family, emotional life or any other shared interest;
- 2.10.1 have misrepresented information required for participating in the contest or fail to submit such information;
- 2.11.1 are members of the Scientific Committee of the Foundation;



2.12.1 have had professional, academic, or research collaboration with any member of said Committee during the past ten years;

2.13.1 have personal relationship (such as family ties, friendship, or similar) with any member of the Scientific Committee.

### 3. Funding Framework

The grant will fund **up to two projects** (2 years each).

- Type of project: original, independent research consistent with the grant theme;
- Duration: 2 years;
- Funding: yearly grant of € 25,000 per project (total € 50,000 per year). An interim evaluation based on a semiannual reporting will be required to authorize the second installment of the funding.

No applicant can be involved in more than one submitted project.

### 4. Eligible Costs

4.1 Consumables and reagents (minimum 60%)

4.2 Travel and mobility related to the project (conference participation, training, collaborative visits)

4.3 Dissemination: costs for open access publications, workshops, and seminars, related to the project.

#### **Non-eligible costs include:**

- Overheads;
- Equipment purchases;
- Salaries or any other form of personal economical support to the PI and permanent staff at the host institution;
- Expenses not directly related to the project.

### 5. Application Procedure

Applications must be submitted online by the deadline and must include the following documents:

- a. Application form (to be completed online via the Foundation's website at the following [link](#));
- b. Candidate's CV (maximum 4 pages, including key publications and awards);
- c. Copy of the candidate's valid ID;



- d. Extended project description (maximum 8 pages). Please see section 5.1;
- e. Detailed financial plan; please see section 5.2;
- f. Host institution support letter, confirming availability of facilities and resources;
- g. Optional: letters of scientific support from collaborators.

## 5.1 Project description

The document should provide a clear and comprehensive presentation of the proposed research project (maximum 8 pages). Applicants are encouraged to write in a concise and accessible manner. The document should be structured into the following sections:

- 5.1.1 Abstract (maximum 250 words)
- 5.1.2 Background
- 5.1.3 Objectives
- 5.1.4 Methodology
- 5.1.5 Expected results
- 5.1.6 Impact
- 5.1.7 Work plan (including work package description and timeline, as exemplified below).

<i>Work Package</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Timeline (months)</i>
_____	_____ _____ _____	_____
_____	_____ _____ _____	_____
_____	_____ _____ _____	_____
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- 5.1.8 Bibliography

## 5.2 Financial plan

The financial plan must be provided in sufficient detail and include a yearly breakdown of expenses by cost category, as exemplified below. Cost categories must be selected from Section 4 (Eligible Costs).

<b>Cost Category</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Year 1 (€)</b>	<b>Year 2 (€)</b>	<b>Total (€)</b>
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## 6. Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be assessed by the international panel of experts making up the Scientific Committee of the Foundation. The evaluation will be based on the following weighted criteria:

Criterion	Weight
Innovation, scientific quality and impact on the subject of the call	50%
Candidate's potential as a future independent leader	30%
Adequacy of work plan and budget	20%

### 6.1 Innovation, Scientific Quality, and Impact (50%)

This criterion assesses the **scientific excellence and relevance** of the proposal.

- **Innovation**
  - Degree of originality of the research idea;
  - Novelty of the conceptual or methodological approach;
  - Potential to challenge existing paradigms or open new research directions.
- **Scientific quality**
  - Clarity and soundness of the hypothesis;
  - Appropriateness and rigor of the proposed methodology;
  - Use of advanced or state-of-the-art techniques.
- **Impact**
  - Relevance to neuroinflammation;
  - Potential to generate robust, reproducible, and meaningful data;
  - Translational potential (e.g., clinical, diagnostic, or technological applications);
  - Expected contribution to advancing knowledge in the field.

### 6.2 Candidate's Potential as a Future Independent Leader (30%)

This criterion evaluates the applicant's **capacity to develop into an independent researcher**.

- **Track record**
  - Quality and relevance of scientific publications;
  - Contributions to previous research projects (e.g., authorship position, role);



- Previous awards, fellowships, or funding.
- **Independence**
  - Evidence of autonomy from former supervisors;
  - Originality of the proposed research line;
  - Ability to define and lead a distinct scientific direction.
- **Leadership potential**
  - Experience in mentoring or supervising junior researchers;
  - Ability to manage collaborations and coordinate activities;
  - Coherence of career trajectory and future development potential.

**Note**

Career interruptions (e.g., parental leave, clinical duties) will be taken into account where relevant.

### 6.3 Adequacy of Work Plan and Budget (20%)

This criterion assesses the **feasibility and internal consistency** of the project.

- **Work plan**
  - Clarity of objectives and definition of milestones;
  - Logical structure and sequencing of tasks;
  - Realistic timeline within the 2-year duration;
  - Identification of potential risks and mitigation strategies.
- **Feasibility**
  - Availability of necessary infrastructure, expertise, and resources;
  - Appropriateness of experimental models and techniques;
  - Preliminary data (if available, but not mandatory).
- **Budget**
  - Justification and transparency of requested costs;
  - Alignment between budget and planned activities;
  - Efficient and appropriate allocation of resources;
  - Compliance with the funding rules.



## 6.4 Scoring System

Each criterion will be evaluated on a **0–5 scale**:

### Score Definition

- 5 Excellent – outstanding in all aspects, no or negligible weaknesses
- 4 Very good – strong proposal with minor weaknesses
- 3 Good – solid but with moderate weaknesses
- 2 Fair – several significant weaknesses
- 1 Poor – major flaws, serious concerns
- 0 Not evaluable / insufficient information

## 6.5 Final Score Calculation

The final score will be calculated as a **weighted average**:

- Innovation, scientific quality, and impact → × 0.5
- Candidate potential → × 0.3
- Work plan and budget → × 0.2

**Example:**  $(4 \times 0.5) + (3 \times 0.3) + (5 \times 0.2) = 3.9 / 5$

## 6.6 Tie-breaker rule

In case of equal scores, priority may be given to:

- Proposals with higher innovation potential
- Candidates with more limited access to alternative funding
- Candidate independence

## 6.7 Minimum threshold

Proposals must score at least **3/5 in “Scientific quality & impact”** to be eligible for funding.

## 7. Evaluation Committee

The applications will be evaluated by the Scientific Committee of the Foundation chaired by Prof Vincenzo Di Marzo (Université Laval, Canada; Institute of Biomolecular Chemistry, CNR, Italy) and composed as follows:

- Prof. Antonio Calignano (formerly at the University of Naples Federico II)
- Prof. Salvatore Cuzzocrea (University of Messina)
- Prof. Anthony Dickenson (University College London)
- Prof. Carla Ghelardini (University of Florence)



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- Prof. Sabatino Maione (University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli”)
- Prof. Rosaria Meli (University of Naples Federico II)
- Prof. Enzo Molina (formerly at the University of Parma)
- Prof. Luca Steardo (formerly at the Sapienza University of Rome)

## 8. Fund Disbursement

- Funds will be released semiannually, subject to approval of:
  - Semiannual scientific report documenting project progress;
  - Semiannual Financial report with detailed accounting of expenditures.
- The Foundation reserves the right to suspend or revoke funding in case of non-compliance or misuse of funds.

## 9. Intellectual Property and Publications

- Project results will belong to the host institution, in accordance with applicable regulations;
- Open access publication and data sharing in line with **FAIR principles** (<https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>) are strongly encouraged;
- Any publication or conference presentation must acknowledge the support of the Foundation.



## 10. Call Timeline

Phase	Date
Call publication	31 May 2026
Application deadline	15 September 2026
Project evaluation	By 30 November 2026
Result announcement	By 12 December 2026
Project start	By 4 months from the result announcement

## 11. Contacts

For further information:

- Email: [fondazione@dellavalle.info](mailto:fondazione@dellavalle.info)
- Website: <https://francescodellavalle.foundation/>

## 12. Required Attachments

- Candidate's CV (maximum 4 pages);
- Copy of the candidate's valid ID;
- Extended project description (maximum 8 pages);
- Detailed financial plan;
- Host institution support letter;
- Optional: letters of scientific support.