

2024 Call for Applications for ALS research projects Full Proposal guidelines - Committee members

Applications to the “**2024 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, the 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 FULL PROPOSAL 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 50 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**.

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.

Particularly for this type of Application, AriSLA Foundation encourages Applications from junior investigators and investigators who are new to the ALS field.

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 ALS**. Studies integrating multiple models across species are encouraged
- **Unravel the molecular pathophysiological mechanisms of clinical heterogeneity in ALS** with the aim of classifying ALS into subgroups and define different forms of sporadic ALS based on distinct molecular mechanisms leading to neurodegeneration

Full Proposal evaluation procedure

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

Full Proposal scores range from 1 (Poor) to 5 (Outstanding).

Pilot Grants

Full Proposal evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

1. **Innovation** of the proposed project with regards to the current knowledge
2. **Relevance** of the project for ALS
3. **Significance and expected impact** of the results **on the disease** knowledge and treatment or any other influence on clinical management of patients; proximity to therapeutic development or to any other potential impact on patients of the proposed study; potential admissibility of results for intellectual property protection
4. **Objectives and methodologies**: clarity of the objectives and appropriateness of design and methods proposed to achieve them
5. **Capability to successfully carry out the project**: ability of the Applicant to finalize the proposed research according to the project duration and budget
6. **Potential** for expected results **to attract large-scale funding**

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

Full Grants

Full Proposal evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

1. Strength of the **background and rationale**
2. **Availability of solid preliminary data** to support the research program and relevance of the project for ALS
3. **Objectives and methodologies**: clarity of the objectives and appropriateness of design and methods proposed to achieve them
4. **Significance and expected impact** of the results **on the disease** knowledge and treatment or any other influence on clinical management of patients; proximity to therapeutic development or to any other potential impact on patients of the proposed study; potential admissibility of results for intellectual property protection
5. **Investigator experience and synergy with Partners** (if any): competence and scientific independence of the Applicants; complementarity and synergy among PI and Partners of Multi-centre studies
6. Sound and effective exploitation of the **results derived from previously funded AriSLA Pilot/Full Grant** (if applicable)

The ISC will also review the budget, which may be reduced with respect to the original request.

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.

ISC members are asked to **assign a numerical score to each project**, according to the scale reported below. The score will reflect the recommendation whether the project deserves to be funded. 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.

Full Proposal evaluation Scoring Scale		
Score	Project Evaluation	Recommendation
4.6 – 5	Outstanding	No concerns
4.1 – 4.5	Excellent	Only minor concerns
3.6 – 4	Good	A few critical points
3.1 – 3.5	Average	Several critical points
1 - 3	Poor	Major concerns

For each Application, ISC members are requested to **justify their score** by providing a comment on the scientific merit on the basis of the previous criteria **in the “Scientific merit” field**, also specifying if the Application has any ethical issues that need further attention. **The “Overall Comment”** should summarize the key reasons for the overall rating, indicating the relative strengths, weaknesses and overall final considerations. If the score is lower than 4, and/or identified weaknesses of the Application should be clearly specified.

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