

CaixaResearch Consolidate
Call 2022

Evaluators
Guide



Index

Index	1
1. Introduction	2
2. Disciplinary Areas	3
3. Registry and Assignment of Evaluators	6
4. Eligibility check	6
5. Evaluation Procedure	7
5.1 Pre-selection Process.....	7
5.1.1. Procedure	7
5.2 Selection Process	8
5.2.1. Detailed Procedure	8
ANNEX I.....	11
Pre-selection criteria	11
Selection criteria.....	12

The purpose of this guide is to describe and detail the selection process for the CaixaResearch *Consolidate* Call.

The “la Caixa” Foundation (LCF) has established that the following principles should govern all evaluation processes for the CaixaResearch *Consolidate*:

- » **EXCELLENCE.** The ultimate goal of the selection process is to ensure that the projects selected are not only the best from among those presented (in accordance with the programme’s principles and selection criteria), but also that they have a level of excellence within their area and sector. As such, it is possible that if the applications do not meet the required standards of excellence, unassigned funds will remain vacant in the programme. The quality of the proposals will be assessed by specially chosen experts, who will evaluate the proposals using rubrics that prevent the application of personal criteria and protect them from possible conflicts of interest.
- » **IMPARTIALITY.** All proposals presented will be evaluated following the same processes, based on the same criteria and on their own merits, regardless of any other factor. Evaluation procedures will guarantee that the evaluators access the information necessary for the impartial evaluation of the applications and identify potential conflicts of interest.
- » Evaluators involved in the process must give formal notice of any existing conflict of interest with regards to the proposals under evaluation or to the programme in general. Evaluators may not evaluate any application in which they have any type of conflict of interest.
- » **TRANSPARENCY.** Candidates, evaluators, and the general public have access to the basic principles that govern the process of evaluating and selecting candidates and to the procedures followed for these purposes. In addition, candidates will receive information regarding the status of their application at each stage of the process.
- » **CONFIDENTIALITY.** All proposals, data, and related documents will be handled with confidentiality by the agents involved in the selection process.
- » A single-blind system will be used in the evaluation process. Under this system, evaluators will be informed of who the applicant is (in order to identify possible conflicts of interest), but not of who the other evaluators are. The applicant will not be informed of who is evaluating their proposal.
- » **QUALITY.** The processes, procedures, and selection criteria will be documented and communicated to all interested parties.
- » The evaluation and selection of applications will be carried out according to the recommendations of the European Science Foundation, as published in the Peer Review Guide (http://www.esf.org/fileadmin/user_upload/esf/European_Peer_Review_Guide_2011.pdf).

- » The software used for the presentation and evaluation of applications will ensure confidentiality. Access will be restricted through usernames and passwords.
- » Evaluators will sign an agreement that will include, in addition to any aspects related to the selection process and criteria, the obligation to state any existing conflict of interest, and to ensure appropriate confidentiality of the information provided when carrying out their task.
- » An internal audit of the process will be performed every year to verify that the established procedures are being applied and are effective, identifying therein any possibilities for improvement.
- » The CaixaResearch *Consolidate* Call includes a continuously open call with two-phase evaluation procedure: a Pre-selection and a Selection phase. The pre-selection is based on a remote assessment, while the selection is carried out by a board of experts.

2

Disciplinary Areas

Applications will be classified by Business and Scientific area in order to select suitable external experts. Applicants select the subject area that best fits their project on the application form. This self-classification will be respected as much as possible. However, the organisation can reclassify an application into a different disciplinary field if the coherence of the groups requires so.

The list of areas is as follows:

Scientific Areas:

1	Molecular and Structural Biology and Biochemistry
1-1	Molecular interactions
1-2	General biochemistry and metabolism
1-3	DNA synthesis, modification, repair, recombination and degradation
1-4	RNA synthesis, processing, modification and degradation
1-5	Protein synthesis, modification and turnover
1-6	Lipid synthesis, modification and turnover
1-7	Carbohydrate synthesis, modification and turnover
1-8	Biophysics (e.g. transport mechanisms, bioenergetics, fluorescence)
1-9	Structural biology (crystallography and EM)
1-10	Structural biology (NMR)
1-11	Biochemistry and molecular mechanisms of signal transduction
2	Genetics, Genomics, Bioinformatics and Systems Biology
2-1	Genomics, comparative genomics, functional genomics
2-2	Transcriptomics
2-3	Proteomics
2-4	Metabolomics
2-5	Glycomics
2-6	Molecular genetics, reverse genetics and RNAi

2-7	Quantitative genetics
2-8	Epigenetics and gene regulation
2-9	Genetic epidemiology
2-10	Bioinformatics
2-11	Computational biology
2-12	Biostatistics
2-13	Systems biology
2-14	Biological systems analysis, modelling and simulation

3 Cellular and Developmental Biology

3-1	Morphology and functional imaging of cells
3-2	Cell biology and molecular transport mechanisms
3-3	Cell cycle and division
3-4	Apoptosis
3-5	Cell differentiation, physiology and dynamics
3-6	Organelle biology
3-7	Cell signalling and cellular interactions
3-8	Signal transduction
3-9	Development, developmental genetics, pattern formation and embryology
3-10	Cell genetics
3-11	Stem cell biology
3-12	Morphology and functional imaging of cells

4 Physiology, Pathophysiology and Endocrinology

4-1	Organ physiology and pathophysiology
4-3	Endocrinology
4-4	Ageing
4-5	Metabolism, biological basis of metabolism related disorders
4-6	Cancer and its biological basis
4-7	Cardiovascular diseases
4-8	Non-communicable diseases (except for neural/psychiatric, immunity-related, metabolism-related disorders, cancer and cardiovascular diseases)

5 Neurosciences and Neural Disorders

5-1	Neuroanatomy and neurophysiology
5-2	Molecular and cellular neuroscience
5-3	Neurochemistry and neuropharmacology
5-4	Sensory systems (e.g. visual system, auditory system)
5-5	Mechanisms of pain
5-6	Developmental neurobiology
5-7	Cognition (e.g. learning, memory, emotions, speech)
5-8	Behavioural neuroscience (e.g. sleep, consciousness, handedness)
5-9	Systems neuroscience
5-10	Neuroimaging and computational neuroscience
5-11	Neurological disorders (e.g. Alzheimer's disease, Huntington's disease, Parkinson's disease)
5-12	Psychiatric disorders (e.g. schizophrenia, autism, Tourette's syndrome, obsessive compulsive disorder, depression, bipolar disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)

6	Immunity and Infection
6-1	Innate immunity and inflammation
6-2	Adaptive immunity
6-3	Phagocytosis and cellular immunity
6-4	Immunosignalling
6-5	Immunological memory and tolerance
6-6	Immunogenetics
6-7	Microbiology
6-8	Virology
6-9	Bacteriology
6-10	Parasitology
6-11	Prevention and treatment of infection by pathogens (e.g. vaccination, antibiotics, fungicide)
6-12	Biological basis of immunity related disorders (e.g. autoimmunity)

7	Diagnostic Tools, Therapies and Public Health
7-1	Medical engineering and technology
7-2	Diagnostic tools (e.g. genetic, imaging)
7-3	Pharmacology, pharmacogenomics, drug discovery and design, drug therapy
7-4	Analgesia and Surgery
7-5	Toxicology
7-6	Gene therapy, cell therapy, regenerative medicine
7-7	Radiation therapy
7-8	Health services, health care research
7-9	Public health and epidemiology
7-10	Environment and health risks, occupational medicine
7-11	Medical ethics

8	Applied life Sciences and Non-Medical Biotechnology
8-1	Applied genetic engineering, transgenic organisms, recombinant proteins, biosensors
8-2	Synthetic biology, chemical biology and new bio-engineering concepts
8-3	Food sciences

Business Areas:

- » Therapeutics
- » Diagnostics
- » Medical Devices
- » Digital Health

3*Registry and Assignment of Evaluators*

The “la Caixa” Foundation (LCF) CaixaResearch *Consolidate Call* will hold a registry of experts that can be used in all phases of the Call. These evaluators have expressed both their willingness to be part of the evaluation process, as well as their expertise and adequacy in the disciplinary field to which they are assigned.

Evaluation Boards will be composed in accordance with the criteria of scientific competence and diversity. As far as possible, gender parity and diversity of origin, both geographical and academic, will be sought after. Likewise, the diversity of types of institutions to which evaluators belong will also be promoted.

Evaluators involved in the evaluation process shall sign an agreement with LCF whereby they undertake to maintain the confidentiality of applications examined.

Similarly, evaluators undertake not to make any other use of the information they are provided other than that which corresponds to the evaluation of the applications.

To ensure that evaluators can score the applications free from pressure and with maximum independence, the composition of the evaluation panels is not made public while the evaluation processes are open.

4*Eligibility check*

For each application presented, the Programme office shall verify its compliance with the requirements for participation specified in the rules for participation. A broad eligibility screen will be conducted on the letter of intent, and full scrutiny will be conducted on the full submission of the projects short-listed for evaluation.

Applications that fail to comply with any of the rules for participation will be excluded from the process. Applicants will be informed of said exclusion and the reasons for it.

Therefore, evaluators must formally consider all applications assigned to them for evaluation as being eligible.

The proposal evaluation procedure consists of two phases: a Pre-selection and a Selection phase. The pre-selection phase is based on an assessment using a qualitative rating system, while the selection is carried out by a board and uses a quantitative scoring system.

To take part in the process, evaluators are required to read this Evaluators Guide and act according to the procedure stated in the evaluation stage they participate in.

5.1 Pre-selection Process

Applications that meet the requirements of the call proceed to the initial pre-selection phase and will be reviewed by three internal and external innovation experts. They will be asked to review the overall quality of the projects, with an emphasis on the criteria governing the pre-selection process (see Annex I):

- » Unmet medical need
- » Scientific rationale
- » Development Roadmap
- » Business Case

5.1.1. Procedure

The LCF Program Office will send the reviewers electronic access to the computer platform from which they can consult the applicants' Letters of Intent, as well as information regarding the application. The process will be conducted through the platform.

- » Each reviewer grades the overall potential of the applications, with a focus on their expertise, in A, B or C

A	B	C
meets all the evaluation criteria to their highest standards	meets all the evaluation criteria to a certain extent	does not satisfactorily meet the evaluation criteria; (in case of lack of familiarity with the topic, we recommend that evaluators grade applications of medium to low quality with a B)

- » Proposals assessed by two or more reviewers with an 'A' will be considered for pre-selection. Therefore, AAA and AAB-graded proposal will be automatically pre-selected.

- » ‘C’s are considered a quality threshold; therefore, any application with a ‘C’ may not be pre-selected.
- » Applicants will be notified as to whether or not their applications have been short-listed within a 4-week period.

5.2 Selection Process

The Project Leaders of pre-selected projects will be invited to submit a full application of the project. If required, LCF may carry out a thorough assessment of the project by an independent external consultant in order to evaluate specific aspects of the proposal such as the Intellectual Property strategy, the Regulatory Roadmap (if any), as well as the planned financial and development milestones.

Preselected proposals will be then invited to the next phase:

- » An interview with the Innovation Selection Board. This will give them the opportunity to solve any question not reflected in the Letter of Intent and to show the capacity of the applicant to defend their project’s viability and its potential impact to the Board.

The general aim of the interviews is to assess more precisely the consistency and soundness of the projects proposed by the short-listed candidates and the suitability of the application with regards to the objectives of the Call.

The Innovation Selection Board will be composed of experts of the different Disciplinary Areas described in Point 2 and members from LCF and CCR.

At the end of this phase, the LCF Programme Office will identify the best valued projects based on the evaluation by the Innovation Selection Board. The Board will have the opportunity to discuss and propose a provisional list of prospective projects and review whether the requested budget meets the real needs of the proposals.

The Coordination Committee, composed of LCF and CCR, will then review and select the projects that will participate in the Call and will approve the distribution of the budget allocated for the corresponding cut-off to cover the identified financing needs of the projects.

5.2.1. Detailed Procedure

Evaluators receive information about the applications and their Project Leaders (who will be interviewed) three weeks in advance to adequately prepare for the event. The LCF Program Office will send electronic access to the computer platform from which they can consult the applicants’ files and information regarding its pre-selection process. Evaluators may ask for additional information within the first two weeks after receiving access to applications. Evaluators should carefully study the information contained in each

application and prepare in advance a provisional list of proposed questions to pose to the applicants.

Typically, the interview will last no more than 20 minutes and is carried out following this format:

- » The LCF representative welcomes the applicant and will ensure that the interviews are carried out according to the scheduled planning.
- » The interview will be held in English.
- » The applicant presents, with maximum brevity (no more than 5 minutes), a summary of their statement of purpose.
- » The members of the Innovation Selection Board pose the questions they deem appropriate to evaluate the excellence of the statement of purpose and the applicant as a whole (around 10 minutes).

There are no specific guidelines on how to conduct an interview. It is the prerogative of the Board members to establish their own dynamics and tone, depth, and scope of the questions posed to each applicant. In general, the questions should be brief and it should be the applicant who holds the floor most of the time. It is not necessary that all members of the Innovation Selection Board ask the applicant questions, although it is advisable that questions be distributed evenly throughout the process.

- » At the end of each interview, the members of the Innovation Selection Board will separately enter the specific comments of the projects considering each **Evaluation Criterion** (see Annex I). A provisional classification will result from this assessment.
- » The LCF Coordination Committee, composed of members from LCF and CCR, will take the Innovation Selection Board comments into consideration and will make the final decision on which projects will be awarded grants.

Code of Conduct

- » There is no protocol specifically established to conduct interviews or to ask questions. It is assumed that questions will be raised politely and respectfully and that the process will be conducted within the limits commonly considered as reasonable and correct.
- » It is recommended that evaluators, at least in the opening minutes, establish a cordial atmosphere that encourages the applicant to relax. At any rate, that does not mean evaluators should not ask difficult questions or lead applicants away from their comfort zone, provided it is considered necessary for a more effective evaluation.
- » It is advisable to score, from the outset, interviews as they take place. However, it is convenient, once a certain number is reached (four to six), to review the initial scores to adjust them considering the development the evaluation.
- » Similarly, it is useful to take notes on each interview, since they may be necessary later in order to remember the details of the applications that the Innovation Selection Board intends to discuss further.

- » Except in cases deemed necessary, conventional questions or questions that applicants can typically expect should be avoided.
- » Avoid dealing differently with those applicants whose statements are within the field of discipline with which the evaluator is more familiar.
- » The depth and scope of the issues raised should be uniform for all applicants interviewed.
- » Avoid asking questions for which the applicant has already provided answers in their application. It is advisable, however, to ask questions that allow the information provided in the application to be treated more in depth or clarify issues that, according to the evaluator, are not sufficiently explained in the documentation provided.
- » Avoid mentioning the previous interview when a new applicant is entering the interview room or giving any information about previous applicants or interviews. Notes taken on other applicants or documents with their scores should also be kept out of sight of applicants.
- » Innovation Selection Board members should not, under any circumstance, inform applicants of their judgments regarding the statements of purpose discussed, nor suggest their qualification or predict the outcome of their application.

Annex I

Pre-selection criteria

CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
Unmet medical need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Unmet need » The potential societal impact » Identification and involvement of the different stakeholders
Scientific rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Scientific quality » Proof of concept needed » Technical feasibility
Development roadmap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » State of the IP of the Asset » The needs of the project » The team and project leader suitability to the project » The milestones to be achieved by participating in the programme
Business Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Market potential (identification of users and market size) » Business Model » Identification and comparison with competitor technologies and competitor entities

Selection criteria

EVALUATION CRITERION	DESCRIPTION
Unmet medical need	<p>This criterion evaluates to what extent the Asset addresses an unmet medical need, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » how accurately the medical need has been identified. » to what extent the proposed solution will address the unmet need. » to what extent the solution will have an impact on the stakeholders involved (health providers, patients, etc)
Technical feasibility	<p>This criterion evaluates the scientific rationale behind the Asset, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » what are the scientific fundamentals underlying the proposal. » how the current stage of development has been reached. » to what extent the possible technical limitations linked to the development of the Asset have been taken into consideration.
Development roadmap	<p>This criterion evaluates the extent to which the proposed project helps accomplish the project’s overall roadmap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » to what extent the stated actions and milestones contribute to the advancement of the roadmap. » how the participation in the CaixaResearch <i>Consolidate</i> Call implies a decisive impetus for the roadmap’s advancement. » to what extent the valorisation process needs have been depicted and addressed. » to what extent the requested support (financial and non-financial resources) is adequate to achieve the described milestones, taking into account other available resources if applicable.
Business Case	<p>This criterion evaluates the commercial potential of the Asset, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » to what extent the market opportunity has been correctly identified and dimensioned. » to what extent the Asset represents an added value in comparison to existing solutions addressing the same problem. » to what extent the Business Model has been correctly outlined and it incorporates the necessary business dimensions.
Team and implementation	<p>This criterion evaluates the capabilities of the proposed team to successfully lead the project, considering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » how team members capabilities and complementarity are relevant to carry out the project (consider here Consortium if applicable). » how the Project Leader is committed to the project and envisages leadership management in later stages of the project.
Responsible Innovation	<p>This criterion evaluates to what extent social responsibility is considered in the project conception, design, development, and outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » to what extent the involvement of social stakeholders is considered in relation to the objectives addressed. » to what extent ethical, social, legal, and environmental implications derived from the innovation development are tackled.