

CaixaResearch Health
Call for Proposals

Code of conduct for evaluators



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1. Introduction

This document sets out the general principles that evaluators should follow when examining and rating proposals that are submitted for evaluation in the CaixaResearch Health Call – “la Caixa” Foundation. These are common sense considerations generally practiced by experts involved in the evaluation process.

These principles, which aim to guarantee the observance of requirements such as transparency and equal treatment of all proposals, are included in this document for the dual purpose of proposing:

- A formal list that can be used as a reference by the expert evaluators.
- The principles that govern the evaluation phases for this Call, which will be published and made available to all Project Leaders.

This document also includes a second section that describes situations in which a possible conflict of interest may arise.



2. General principles of good governance

1. The evaluator must complete his or her assigned tasks in complete confidentiality and by examining each candidate fairly and impartially, in accordance with the assessment instructions provided by the “la Caixa” Foundation in the Evaluation Process Guide (applicable to all Evaluators) and the Remote Evaluation Brief Guide (applicable to Peer Review Evaluators) and the Face to Face Evaluation Brief Guide (applicable to Committee’s Evaluators).
2. Each evaluator must carry out his or her work independently. He or she must not represent any organization, region, country, group or discipline.
3. If the evaluator has a direct or indirect interest in the assessed proposal or a professional, personal or familial relationship with the institution(s), the Project Leader or the team (or Principal Investigators, if applicable), the evaluator should bring the matter before the Grant Project Office (See Conflict of Interest section).
4. Evaluators should not discuss the contents of a proposal with anyone, in particular with the Project Leader (or Principal Investigators, if applicable). If such contacts are unavoidable due to specific professional context, the evaluator should inform the Grant Project Office.
5. Evaluators participating in the remote assessment process and evaluating the same Proposals should avoid contact with each other concerning the proposals being assessed.
6. Likewise, evaluators should maintain the confidentiality of the process and avoid contact with any members of the proposals being assessed.

7. Evaluators must maintain the integrity and confidentiality of the documents to which they are given access and ensure that they are inaccessible to third parties, whether or not said third parties are interested in how the assessment process is progressing.
8. The sole purpose of the documentation provided to the evaluators is to allow the proposals to be assessed properly. Therefore, the documentation should not be used for any other objective.
9. Copies or notes, in any format, obtained by or provided to the evaluator during the evaluation phases or their participation in interviews must be destroyed or returned to the Grant Project Office upon completion of the evaluation process.
10. It is of utmost importance that tasks assigned be completed within the stipulated times. Successive stages of an evaluation phase cannot start until previous ones have been completed; therefore, potential delays by individual evaluators can compromise the work of the entire grant evaluation process.
11. The grant evaluation process involves many Project Leaders and expert evaluators. It is an exercise of respect and responsibility that all parties comply with the commitments taken on in regard to the Call for Proposals.
12. The Grant Project Office will contact the evaluators who will compose the peer-review pre-selection evaluation phase and the various Expert Selection Committees sufficiently in advance as to facilitate their participation. Acceptance to participate in the process implies that the Grant Project Office allocates an evaluation position as filled. From that time onward, any resignation by an evaluator will seriously hinder the management of the evaluation process. Therefore, evaluators are responsible for assessing their availability for the whole process prior to acceptance.
13. The Grant Project Office will not review or filter any observations made by evaluators, which is why evaluators should be extremely careful with their wording and respectful of the proposals presented. In any case, observations should have a strictly professional tone and a constructive spirit.



3. Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest has to do with the possibility of misuse or abuse (whether real, apparent, perceived or potential) of the confidence that the general public, Project Leaders and the "la Caixa" Foundation place in the evaluators who have to evaluate the proposals.

A conflict of interest is a situation in which financial, personal or professional considerations can compromise or bias the neutrality, impartiality and objectivity of an individual whose position is likely to affect the result of the evaluation process, whether directly or indirectly.

Evaluators are obliged to notify the Grant Project Office of the appearance of any possible conflict of interest while carrying out their task in the evaluation phase.

For example, a conflict of interest may exist when:

- The evaluator has participated actively in the preparation of the proposal.
- The evaluator has familial ties with the Project Leader (or Principal Investigators, if applicable) or any other research team member.
- The evaluator has had, whether currently or in the past, close personal or professional relationship with the Project Leader (or Principal Investigators, if applicable).
- The evaluator has provided the Project Leader or proposal he/she is evaluating with a letter of recommendation.
- The evaluator has professional ties with the Institution(s) presenting the proposal.
- The evaluator has economic interests in the potential valorisation products of the Project.
- In regard to the application or the team, if the evaluator finds him or herself in any other situation that, whether in his or her own opinion or in the opinion of a third party, could compromise its neutrality when examining the application.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and includes only some of the most common types of conflicts of interests. Therefore, other types of conflict of interest might be considered.

The existence or possibility of a conflict of interest does not necessarily imply that the evaluator is unable to complete the examination of the proposal. Based on the particular circumstances of each case, the Grant Project Office will determine whether or not the potential conflict of interest does in fact compromise an evaluator's activity.

In cases where the Grant Project Office and the evaluator decide that the potential conflict of interest does not compromise the task of the latter, controls will be established *a posteriori* so that there is effective and reasonable assurance that ratings have not been affected in any way.