



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Airalzh Starting Grants

(AiralzhSG-2024)

The background

Around 50 million people worldwide suffer of Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia. This estimate is set to increase dramatically to about 130 million by 2050, given the progressive ageing of the world population. The Associazione Italiana Ricerca Alzheimer Onlus (Airalzh) aims to face the challenge of the social and economic impact of dementias by financing scientific research. Airalzh's commitment is aimed primarily at ensuring a future in the development of research skills in this field in Italy. In particular, Airalzh identifies two areas of interest on which to invest: in the prevention of dementia and the identification of early stages of disease. This especially against the evidence that the symptoms of the disease appear when the histopathological feature is compromised, and considering the numerous failures of clinical trials for the development of new drugs that are often administered in the overt phase of disease.

Our Mission and Goals

Airalzh raises funds for research into Alzheimer's disease and other dementias in Italy. **With this call we aim to consolidate the growth of deserving dementia researchers in Italy.** For the next three years Airalzh plans to invest a substantial part of the funds by financing researchers' projects, aimed at basic and clinical research on the study of the initial stages of the disease, with the identification of diagnostic markers, possible pharmacological targets and new technological approaches and Alzheimer prevention, as it is estimated that approximately one third of Alzheimer's cases are attributable to modifiable risk factors. Prevention could lead to a reduction in cases of disease or in any case delay its onset.

In addition, **Airalzh with this call would promote the translational approach of research projects**, in order to implement the intersection between biological basic research and clinical or behavioral discoveries, thus improving the assessing of methods of prevention, diagnosis and therapy.

1. ELIGIBILITY

Subjects

The Starting Grant **Principal Investigator** (PI) should have already shown evidence of the potential for research independence in Alzheimer's disease or other forms of the syndrome of dementia, with at least 5 years of experience since completion of PhD or Specialty, by having produced **at least 5 publications as a main author** (first or last author, including co-first or co-last) **in the last 7 years** (years 2018-2024) in the field of Alzheimer's disease or other dementias in peer-reviewed journals.

The PI cannot be a post-doc and must not depend formally on another scientist as a supervisor at the time of application. Examples of eligible positions are Researchers type A/B, Assistant Professors, Junior or Senior Group Leaders and any higher level positions.

Applicants who have applied for the AGYR2024 Call or have received grants from previous AGYR calls that will not expire before December 31st 2024 are not eligible to apply.

PhD defense date: the reference date is the certified date of the successful PhD defense or dissertation (and not PhD award ceremony or PhD thesis submission). Whenever the PhD certificate does not show the PhD defense date, applicants should provide a written confirmation from the awarding institution stating the date.

The PI must remain eligible for the entire duration of the project and must immediately inform Airalzh of any events or circumstances that would affect the fulfilment of the eligibility criteria. A collaborator can be nominated by the PI to continue the prosecution of the project (**CoPI**) only if present from the beginning in the research project.

Hosting institutions

The research project must be implemented in research centers, public or private, located in Italy and having in their statute the indication of no-profit research institutions. The hosting institution of PI must guarantee the independence and declare to support the proposer's research by providing spaces and tools, including administrative facilities, for its development. In this regard, a declaration signed by the Legal Representative of the hosting institution is required, to be attached to the Preliminary Application Documents (PAD, see paragraph 6) in the first phase of the request submission.

In the case PI and collaborators belong to different institutions, Hosting Institution of PI will be the only reference for relations with Airalzh.

2. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The project must be original, in English, and must refer to one of the following research areas:

A) Early stages of disease, with the identification of diagnostic markers, possible pharmacological targets and new technological approaches

B) Prevention: lifestyles and Alzheimer's disease

It is desirable that the project is based on a **translational approach**, in order to implement the intersection between biological basic research and clinical or behavioral discoveries, thus improving the assessing of methods of prevention, diagnosis and therapy. The translational approach, although not mandatory, will be positively evaluated.

Proposals are submitted by the PI, who has scientific responsibility for the project, on behalf of the host institution.

3. PROJECT FUNDING

Airalzh offers two Airalzh Starting Grants (AiralzhSG 2024).

Each project will be funded with 150,000 €, divided into 3 tranches of 50.000,00 €,

- the first tranche at the beginning
- the second after 12 months
- the third after 24 months

the second and the third tranches will be provided following the submission of the annual reports

Financing support will be in the form of a Liberal Donation; the host structure must have the possibility to accept this form and it must be declared in the PAD (see paragraph 6). After the selection of the projects to be funded, Airalzh will issue a formal communication to the PI's legal organization, declaring its willingness to provide a Liberal Donation; following this, the hosting institution will have to send to Airalzh a formal acceptance decision; after the transmission of the funds, the administrative management of the donation is entirely under responsibility of the receiving administration.

A financial and scientific report must be sent to Airalzh every year, in order to get the financial support for the 2 and 3 year.

4. ELIGIBLE COSTS

The sum paid, managed administratively as mentioned above by the hosting structure, can be used to finance:

- a) Consumables and supplies
- b) Small bench instrumentation
- c) Services
- d) Overheads (max 5%)
- e) Publications
- f) Meetings and travel
- g) Personnel (max 60%)

In case the Hosting Institution covers the PI's salary, the grant can only support personnel working 100% of their time on the project.

5. EVALUATION PROCESS AND ADMISSION TO PROJECT FINANCING

Throughout the evaluation process, the Technical-Scientific Committee (CTS) and the board (CD) will comply with the rules of transparency and in opposition to the conflict of interest, as established by the Airalzh regulations.

PHASE I – The participants to the call submit all documents indicated as PAD (Preliminary Application Documents, see paragraph 6). These will be first evaluated for the possession of the eligibility criteria by the Airalzh scientific secretariat. The proposals to be admitted to Phase II will be selected for the relevance of the project to one of the research areas of the call and to the objectives of Airalzh by a commission nominated ad hoc by the CD board.

PHASE II - The PIs of the selected proposals will then be invited to produce a Full Application Project (FAP), which will be submitted to the peer review process by at least two/three members of the Technical-Scientific committee (CTS). The CTS may request the opinion of anonymous reviewers. This review process will allow an impartial and competent scientific evaluation of proposals. The CTS, in compliance with the rules of procedure, will examine the

evaluations of the reviewers, draw up the merit ranking and assess the adequacy of the financial contributions requested.

The merit ranking will then be submitted to the attention of the CD which will establish the projects eligible for funding on the basis of the budget available for this call. The final ranking of the projects admitted to funding will be signed by both the CTS and the CD.

All PIs will receive notification of the final decision from the Airalzh scientific secretariat, with the reviewers' comments attached. The final judgment is unquestionable.

Phase II evaluation criteria

Full projects' evaluation will be performed on the basis of the following criteria:

1. EXCELLENCE (weight 30%)

- clarity of the project aims
- quality of research strategies
- originality and innovation of the project
- contextualization with respect to the state of the art
- preliminary data significance

2. OUTCOMES (weight 30%)

- Expected results and their impact on the scientific community
- potential benefits for human health

3. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, TEAM AND ORGANIZATION (weight 30%)

• Adequacy of the skills expressed by the PI and by any unit and members of the team involved in the research project.

- Impact of the project in terms of scientific and professional development of the PI.

4. BUDGET and PROJECT DURATION (weight: 10%)

- Budget suitability, coherence and duration of the project.

6. Submission process

PHASE I – Preliminary Application Documents (PAD)

All documents must be submitted, as one PDF (named PAD- name-surname-AiralzhSG2024), by 5 p.m. on June 21th 2024, by e-mail to the address: segreteria scientifica@airalzh.it

The Application should include:

- (1) Curriculum Vitae of PI
- (2) List of Grants received and published papers of the last 7 years (5 as first/last author).
- (3) Synopsis. Description of the previous research experience and an abstract of the proposed project (the Synopsis should not exceed two double-spaced page with a one-inch margin on each side, using font size 12, excluding bibliography) indicating the research area, and the translational approach (if applicable).
- (4) Budget: a detailed description of the costs justified by their relationship to the project (see par.4)
- (6) Letter from Host Institute (see par. 1 for details)

PHASE II – Only PI that pass Phase I will be invited to submit a full project in Phase II. The notice will take place by July 24th 2024, The final project (**FAP**) **must be submitted by 5 p.m. on September 30th 2024** on the Airalzh website in the reserved area with the access methods that will be transmitted to the interested PIs.

7. Available budget

The budget available for this call is 300,000 Euros.

Contacts: Call available on the website www.airalzh.it

Email: segreteria scientifica@airalzh.it

Call	Airalzh Starting Grants AiralzhSG 2024
Type	Two-step call
Scadenza	Phase I June 21 th 2024 Phase II September 30 th 2024
Budget disponibile	€ 300.000
Goals	Support basic and clinical research projects on prevention and early stages of Alzheimer's disease, possibly with a translational approach Offer researchers of any age to develop and enhance independent careers
Main funding limits	Maximum grant € 150.000
Contacts	Call on www.airalzh.it e-mail: segreteria scientifica@airalzh.it