



CALL FOR PROPOSALS: EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS SEED PROGRAM - 2025

1. PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

This call offers **four seed grants to create a portfolio of projects led by early-career researchers** at CREAM. Its goal is to address a key bottleneck in academic careers: the difficulty for young researchers to become principal investigators (PIs).

Through this program, we aim to give postdoctoral researchers the opportunity to develop and lead original research projects, **strengthen their leadership skills, and enhance their visibility and competitiveness in future funding calls**. Each grant provides financial and institutional support for up to two years.

2. WHO CAN APPLY

Applicants must meet the following general requirements:

- 1) **Postdoctoral Experience:** Applicants must be PhD holders with less than 7 years of experience since the defense of their doctoral thesis. This period may be extended in the following cases:
 - **Maternity Leave:** An automatic extension of 18 months per child is granted, regardless of the actual duration of the leave.
 - **Paternity Leave:** The eligibility window may be extended by the documented duration of paternity leave taken prior to the application deadline.
 - **Long-Term Illness:** Extensions are allowed for documented periods of illness exceeding 90 days.
- 2) **Affiliation with CREAM:** Applicants must hold a research contract or formal affiliation with CREAM and must have a professional relationship with the institution for at least 6 months during the requested funding period. Please note that if the affiliation with CREAM ends during the funded project, the funding will be discontinued accordingly.
- 3) **Individual Application:** The application must be submitted individually, not as part of a team or group.
- 4) **Previous Funding Restrictions:** Applicants must not have previously led or co-led (as Principal Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator) any projects with funding exceeding 15,000€, MSCA-PF or La Caixa Junior Leadership fellowships included.

3. FUNDING

A total of 4 grants will be awarded.

The funds are intended to support the development of a project lasting up to 2 years, with a maximum budget of €15,000. Funding will be granted until March 30th, 2027 at the latest.

The funding should serve the development of an original research proposal. The funds may be used for:

- Developing collaborations and participating in conferences
- Acquisition of equipment and consumables
- Publication costs
- Invitation of international guest speakers
- Participation in training
- National and international short research stays
- Salary payments excluding your own position.

All expenditure must be comprehensibly justified and have a direct connection to the planned research project. In case of any expenses not mentioned in the call, you must consult with the Project Management Office

4. EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Applications will be evaluated by a panel composed of external reviewers that will be public at the end of the process. The process will be internally coordinated by CREAM researchers, with the involvement of the Academic Talent Officer, who will support the organization and ensure transparency and consistency throughout the selection procedure.

Only those individuals who are currently candidate's supervisor, or who have previously served as their PhD supervisors, will be considered to have a conflict of interest and therefore cannot be part of the selection committee.

The process will ensure representation of more than one gender on the evaluation panel and among funded projects.

The evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

- **Scientific Quality and originality (30 %):** Soundness of the research question, methodology, and theoretical framework. Novelty of the approach and potential to advance the field.
- **Potential Research Impact (20%):** Relevance and expected contribution to the field of study and/or broader societal or economic impact. Communication, dissemination, and exploitation of results.
- **Feasibility and budget appropriateness (20%):** Practicality and clarity of the work plan, including timeline and risk management. Alignment between proposed activities and the requested funding.
- **CV Relevance (20%):** Adequacy of the applicant's background and experience to carry out the proposed project.
- **Originality (10%):** the proposed research constitutes a distinct research endeavor, and the ideas and/or approaches arise from the candidate's expertise and experience, not from their supervisor/s.

5. APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Applicants must complete an online form providing their personal details:

- Affiliation with CREAF
- Exact date of the PhD defense
- If applicable, information related to individual life circumstances (e.g., parental leave, illness, etc.) that may justify an extension of the eligibility window.
- SEED Application Template (maximum 6 pages), which includes:
 - Project Information (maximum 5 pages). Please refer to the template for detailed guidance on the required sections.
 - Curriculum relevance (maximum 1 page). Please refer to the template for detailed guidance on the required format.

The application period will be open from July 21st to October 26th, 2025.

Proposals that do not comply with the requirements specified in the call guidelines—regarding format, content, or deadlines—will be rejected and will not be considered in this call. There will be no opportunity to correct formatting or content errors after submission. Please make sure to

carefully verify that your application meets all the requirements outlined in the call before submitting your proposal.

6. GRANT RECIPIENT COMMITMENTS

Researchers selected for funding must agree to the following commitments:

- **Provide the required supporting documentation**, including proof of PhD (doctoral certificate) and, where applicable, documentation related to individual life circumstances (e.g., parental leave, long-term illness, national service) justifying eligibility extensions. Failure to provide accurate and complete documentation will be considered a serious breach of the program rules and may result in disqualification or withdrawal of funding.
- Sign an official **letter of acceptance**.
- Submit a **final project report** within one month after the project is completed.
- **If the project involves data collection**, researchers must ensure that the resulting data and outputs are made publicly available in open-access repositories, in line with open science principles. Note that data collection is not a mandatory objective of the project.
- **Acknowledge the Seed Program** in all resulting publications and presentations [This result/equipment/contract/other has been carried out within the framework of the Severo Ochoa Centres of Excellence programme, Ref. CEX2023-001340-S, funded by MICIU/AEI/10.13039/501100011033”].

7. CALENDAR

CREAF reserves the right to withhold grants if applications do not meet the required standards or to revoke funding in case of violations of the program rules.

- **Open Call Launch:** July 2025
- **Application Deadline:** October 26, 2025
- **Evaluation and Selection Process:** October–November 2025
- **Funding End Date:** March 30, 2028