



## **9<sup>th</sup> Call for Research Proposals (2016)**

### **Launch document**

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#### **1. THE CALL**

SMA Europe is pleased to announce its 9<sup>th</sup> International call for SMA Research Projects.

This new Call for SMA Projects will be open to any research project (those of a collaborative nature are encouraged) aimed at finding a therapy for Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) or at elucidating the basic pathophysiological processes of the disease. Priority will, however, be given to projects concentrating on the following areas:

- a. Understanding and Function of the SMN Complex and possibly other factors, independent of SMN, as it relates to the pathophysiology of SMA
- b. Innovative Approaches for Therapy of SMA, including targeting non-SMN pathways
- c. Projects addressing bottlenecks impairing rapid translation from basic research to clinical trials, including;
  - Innovative outcome measures & endpoints
  - Appropriate methodology to follow disease progression and treatment effect.
- d. The Natural History of SMA



The overall goal of SMA-Europe is to help the dedicated international scientific and medical community in its search for therapies for SMA. Time being critical for people with SMA, preferences will be given to projects that have the greatest potential to overcome barriers to translation of advances in basic science and to accelerate the identification of effective treatments.

## **2. APPLICATION & ELIGIBILITY**

### **Applications**

The application deadline for projects is **December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

Two types of research grants will be awarded:

1. Operating Grants
2. Postdoctoral Fellowship

It is anticipated that notification of Awards will be made in the second quarter of 2017 with funding to commence as soon as possible thereafter, subject to contracts being agreed between the relevant parties. It is recognized that time lines will be affected by project specifics, notably in the case of potential part or joint funding of a clinical trial.

Grant applications should be made in the currency in which the applicant's institution would like to receive the grant, together with an equivalent amount in Euros. Payments to subsidiary institutions involved in the research must be made by the institution to which the grant award is made. SMA Europe cannot enter into contracts and agreements with partners involved in a project. However, where more than one currency is involved in one project, separate payment may be negotiated, if acceptable to the grant giving organisation.

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible as principal investigator to apply for an **operating grant**, an individual should have the skills, knowledge and resources to carry out the proposed project and coordinate a multi-team project. A principal investigator:



1. must be a professional or faculty member at an appropriate educational, medical or research institution or SME (small or medium enterprise) biotech and be qualified to conduct and supervise a program of original research;
2. must have access to institutional resources necessary to conduct the proposed research project;
3. must hold a Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Science or equivalent degree;
4. must have a track record of collaboration with others.

To be eligible to apply for a **postdoctoral fellowship**, an applicant:

1. must be a member of a research team in the laboratory of a senior investigator under whose guidance the applicant will conduct the research project;
2. must hold a Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Science or equivalent degree and demonstrate an intended commitment to SMA research in the long term.

### **3. AWARDS**

Awards are for up to two years. Under exceptional circumstances they can be for longer periods.

Please note: Funding for a second year will be strictly dependent on receiving a detailed and satisfactory annual report for consideration by members of the SMA-Europe Scientific Advisory Board, latest by month 13.

Standard operating grants have no specific limitation but usually will **not exceed €150,000 (or equivalent)**. Grants for part or joint funding of a clinical trial may be made at a higher level. Cost declaration covering only salaries will no longer be considered.

The Grant for Postdoctoral Fellowship must be within Continental European norms. Advice will be sought over appropriate levels where grants are made in countries outside Europe.



#### **4. APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

Online Application

The link to the online application portal will be accessible from November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016 on

<http://www.afm-telethon.com/research/calls-for-proposals/current-calls-for-proposals.html>

Follow: **SMA Europe 9<sup>th</sup> Call for Proposals**

#### **5. EVALUATION PROCESS**

SMA Europe has no Central Secretariat for the Administration of the Calls for Projects. As with the year before, the AFM Office will help by contacting experts in the field and by collecting their feed-back for each submitted application to the 9th SMA-Europe Call. Only the SMA Europe Scientific Advisory Board members (SMA-Europe SAB members) will have direct access to the Applications and to the respective external evaluations.

A dedicated meeting of the SMA-Europe SAB members will take place early on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2017. Thus, the final evaluation of applications and the selection of the projects to be funded will only be provided by the Scientific Advisory Board of SMA-Europe.

Each project will be peer-reviewed according to the following criteria:

1. Relevance and Significance;
2. Project quality /scientific soundness;
3. Innovation;
4. Feasibility (i.e., investigator, environment, approach);
5. The reasonableness of the budget.

**1. Relevance and significance:** how is this research relevant to a better understanding of SMA, its causes, cure and/or prevention? Does this study address an important problem or a bottleneck in R&D? Is there a sufficient body of high quality fundamental, preclinical or clinical research that supports the rationale for the



proposed study? What is the potential impact of the proposed intervention on health care and quality of life?

**2. Project quality/ scientific soundness:** Are the rationale and experimental design adapted to the study objectives?

**3. Innovation:** Are the aims of the study original? Does the proposed study design represent advancement in the field? Does the project advance international cooperation in the field?

**4. Feasibility:** Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project? Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative strategies? Is the principal investigator well suited to carry out the proposed study? Is the scientific environment adequate? Is there evidence of institutional support? Have appropriate agreements with collaborators been established?

**5. Reasonableness of the budget:** Is the budget reasonable in relation to the proposed research?

**6. Scoring and selection:** The written reviews of external referees are an important element in the decision making process, but these are not the sole criteria for deciding the success or failure of an application. In practice, only projects which attract the best scores are likely to be successful. We expect to provide feedback to both successful and unsuccessful applicants in the form of reviewers' comments plus any relevant points arising from the committee discussions, but this may not always be practical.

Whilst there are many inherent problems with the peer review process, we believe that this process constitutes the fairest and most consistent way to assess grant applications. We shall endeavor to ensure that the process is as open and transparent as possible and that we maintain the best possible communications with all our applicants.

**The selected projects will be allocated to member organisations of SMA Europe for funding. Contractual and financial responsibility for a project will be taken directly by the member organisation(s) on behalf of SMA Europe.**