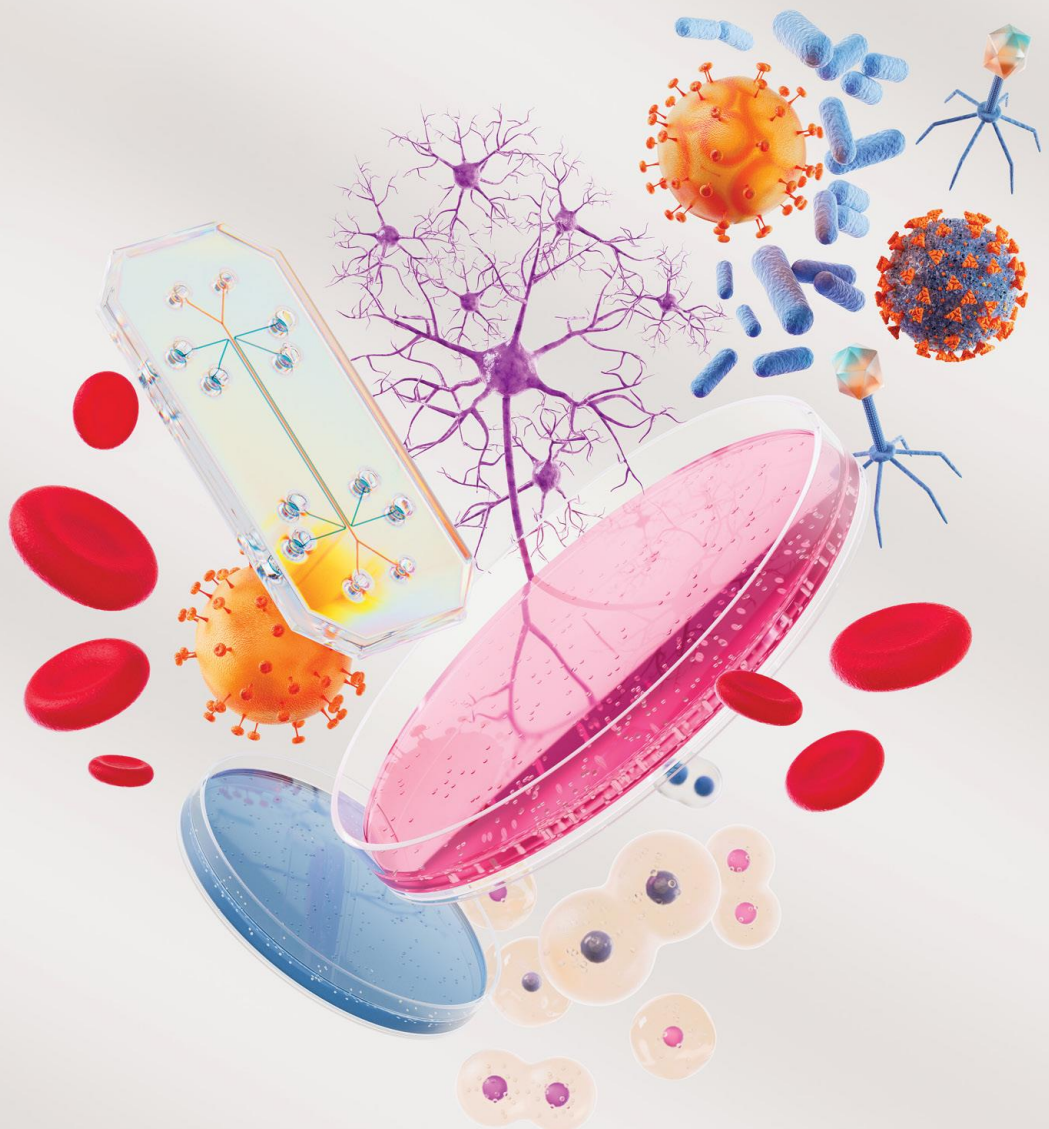


CaixaResearch Health

Call for Proposals

Code of conduct for evaluators



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1. Introduction

This document sets out the general principles that experts should follow when evaluating proposals that are submitted for evaluation in the selection process or any post-award activity provided by "la Caixa" Foundation within the framework of the CaixaResearch program. These are common sense considerations, in general practiced widely by experts involved in selection processes.

Therefore, a CaixaResearch collaborator is whoever participates in the evaluation, follow-up or advising of projects within the CaixaResearch program. This includes, but is not restricted to, remote evaluators, panel evaluators, mentors, consultants, coaches and trainers.

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

- » a formal list that can be used as a reminder by the evaluators.
- » the principles that govern the selection processes for the CaixaResearch program that will be published and made available to all applicants.

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

2. General principles of good governance

1. Collaborators must complete the tasks assigned, upholding confidentiality and examining each application or project fairly, impartially and equally, in accordance with the evaluation guidelines provided by the promoters and organizers of the program.
2. Collaborators carry out their tasks as independent observers. They do not represent any organization, region, country, group or discipline.
3. If a collaborator were to have a direct or indirect interest in the evaluated application or project accompanied, or any personal or familial connection to the applicant or project leader, the Program Office must be notified immediately (see "Conflicts of interest").
4. Collaborators must not discuss the contents of the application with anyone, least of all with the applicant.
5. Evaluators who participate in the independent evaluation processes (pre-selection of proposals) and who evaluate the same applications must not contact each other with regards to the applications examined.
6. Collaborators must not perform any commercial activity with regards to the applicants or project leaders (e.g. distributing business cards). Direct contact with the applicants or project leaders must be made through the Program Office or with the latter's consent and knowledge (e.g. CC in all email contact).
7. Similarly, evaluators must maintain the confidentiality of the process and avoid contact, with regards to the applications examined, with people who may have written letters of

- recommendation for the applicants being evaluated or with doctors or researchers leading their theses or research projects.
8. Collaborators must not notify anyone of the names of other participating experts or those who have participated in the committees, panels or expert advice until the selection process has concluded and/or the names of the selected participants have been made public.
 9. Collaborators should ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the documentation they have been given access to through online channels and ensure that it is not accessible to third parties who may or may not be interested in the evolution of the selection process.
 10. The documentation provided is used exclusively for evaluating the applications or providing project guidance. Therefore, it must not be used for any other purpose.
 11. Hard or electronic copies, notes and documents obtained by or submitted to the collaborator during the independent evaluation, participation on panels or project mentoring or consulting must be destroyed or returned to the program office once the process has concluded.
 12. It is of utmost importance for each call that the deadlines established for the tasks assigned are met. Project development or subsequent stages of a selection process could be compromised if established deadlines are not met.
 13. Compliance with commitments undertaken with regards to a call is an exercise of respect and responsibility.
 14. Collaborators should be extremely careful with their wording and respectful with the presented proposals. In any case, observations should have a strictly professional tone and a constructive spirit.
 15. The Program Office will contact collaborators who are to take part in the activities of the CaixaResearch program well in advance. Acceptance to participate in the process implies that the Program Office has covered this position. From that moment on, should a collaborator renounce their participation, the management of the associated activities would be seriously hindered.
 16. Collaborators are not allowed to use AI tools when evaluating proposals, except for translation or grammar correction purposes, provided that such tools do not jeopardize the confidentiality of the information.

3. Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest is the possibility of an unsuitable use or abuse (whether real, apparent, perceived or potential) of the trust that the general public, applicants, project members and the promoting and organizing entities of the program have placed with the experts who will participate in CaixaResearch program activities.

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

Collaborators must immediately notify the Program Office should a possible conflict of interest arise during the performance of their duty. In particular, a conflict of interest must be reported if:

- » the collaborator has actively intervened in the preparation of the proposal;
- » the collaborator has a familiar and/or a close personal or professional relationship with the Project Leader any other team member and/or any advisor to the project;
- » the collaborator has actively intervened in the development of the project that is the subject of the proposal;
- » the collaborator has been recused by one of the applicants or has a clear friendship or enmity with any of the applicants;
- » the collaborator has had professional ties with the institution(s) presenting the proposal within the last three years;
- » the collaborator has been the PhD supervisor of the Project Leader or any other team member in the last ten years;
- » the collaborator has collaborated on publications or patents with regard to the proposal in the last five years;
- » the collaborator currently invests (>10,000 euros) in legal entities with interests in the field of the proposal;
- » the collaborator holds intellectual property rights that might be affected by the outcome of the work of the proposal;
- » within the past five years, the collaborator has provided any expert opinion or testimony in the field of activity of the proposal for a legal entity or other body as part of a regulatory, legislative or judicial process;
- » with regards to the proposal, project, applicant or project leader, the collaborator finds them self in any other situation that, in their opinion or that of a third party, could compromise their ability to examine the application or provide project advice with neutrality.

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.

Reporting a conflict of interest does not imply that the collaborator cannot complete the evaluation of an application, or that a project may not benefit from collaborator guidance. The Program Office must determine, according to the particular circumstances of each case, whether or not the conflict compromises the activity of the collaborator. If the Program Office and the collaborator resolve that the potential conflict of interest does not compromise the task, effective and reasonable controls will be established to guarantee that the process has not been affected in any way.

Importantly, if a non-reported conflict of interest arises after or during the evaluation of a proposal, LCF will take appropriate measures. Nevertheless, under no circumstances will the disclosure of an unknown conflict-of-interest after the evaluation imply the repetition of the project evaluation.