

CNR-NANO Seed Research Award

1. Introduction

The Istituto Nanoscienze of CNR (CNR-NANO), on the basis of the decision taken by its Institute Board on 02/03/2016, is launching the first Call for Proposals "**CNR-NANO Seed Research Award**", with the aim of supporting original research projects by the young researchers, and of strengthening their collaboration network inside the institute. Awarded "Seed Research" Projects will be funded by CNR-NANO following the submission of bottom-up proposals, and through a peer-reviewed selection based on the sole criteria of excellence, methodological rigor, impact, and networking. The overall budget available for this Call is 60 k€ and 3-4 projects are expected to be funded, depending on their approved budget size.

2. Beneficiaries and characteristics of proposals

The Projects must be related to the CNR-NANO activities (www.nano.cnr.it), and the proposed research must be carried out (i) with the foreseen budget and (ii) mostly exploiting instrumentation already available in the Institute. The maximum allowed budget size is 20 k€ per proposal. The Project duration must be 12 months.

Each proposal must be submitted by a Principal Investigator (P.I.). The P.I. must be a CNR-NANO researcher holding a temporary position, namely:

- a CNR TD contract, or
- a CNR post-doc research fellowship ("assegno di ricerca");

The position above must be active at the time of the Call deadline.

In the aim of enlarging the networking of young researchers, the submission of projects involving two or more young researchers meeting the requirements above and from different CNR-NANO centers is encouraged. Collaborations involving researchers from outside CNR-NANO are welcome, but all the Award research budget will have to be spent within CNR-NANO and on the basis of CNR-NANO purchasing procedures. All the Award grant budget will have to be spent or allocated ("impegnato") within 12 months from the Project Starting date. Any budget amount not allocated after 12 months will be recovered by the Institute.

3. Proposal structure

The proposals must be written in English and include the following elements:

a) Name of the Principal Investigator, Project Title, Abstract (10 lines maximum, font size 12 pt), four free keywords, and indication of the ERC panel descriptor most suited for the proposal (1 A4-page in total). The list of ERC panel descriptors can be found at <https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/file/erc%20peer%20review%20evaluation%20panels.pdf>.

b) Scientific and technical description of the project (max 4 A4-pages in total, free format, font size 12 pt). This Section should include (b1) a brief description of the state of the art in the investigated field, (b2) the proposal objectives, (b3) the proposed research methodology, and (b4) the potential impact upon accomplishment of the objectives, especially in terms of new research lines opened in the Institute, improvement in future chances to obtain external grants for the P.I. and for CNR-NANO, and improvement in terms of networking.

c) Short CV and description of the P.I., focusing on her/his track record and on her/his early research achievements (max 1 A4-page, free format, font size 12 pt).

d) Description of the research team (other main investigators and young researchers involved from different CNR-NANO centers), and of needed resources (max 1 A4-page, free format, font size 12 pt). The proposed budget must be justified in detail in this Section. Allowed expenses include:

- consumables,
- small instrumentation complementing that already available in the Institute,
- costs for publications or patents,
- travels to present scientific results at conferences,
- other costs directly related to the foreseen research.

No personnel cost is allowed: the grant cannot be used to activate or to renew contracts.

e) A Gantt and a Pert Chart showing the temporal development of the Project and highlighting the interdependency of proposed tasks (max 1 A4-page in total).

Page limits must be strictly respected. Reviewers will discard any text or figures in excess to the page limits set above.

4. Submission procedure and deadline

The proposals must be submitted before 30/09/2016 by uploading a single .pdf file through the website of the Institute (Intranano, <http://www.nano.cnr.it/intranano/>) A specific section will be available soon.

Each proposal must be also endorsed by the Scientist in charge of the temporary contract (TD or "assegno di ricerca") of the P.I.. To this aim, the Scientist in charge must prepare a letter, stating that:

- if approved, the research will be compatible with the facilities and activities of the research group;

- the Project will be compatible with the expected duration of the current P.I. contract (or, that the Scientist in charge of the temporary contract is willing to renew the position for the time needed to complete the project, i.e., up to at least 31/12/2017, indicating the resources -GAE- allocated to this aim);

- the Project is close to but not overlapping with the activities of the temporary contract.

This letter has also to be uploaded in the dedicated online section.

5. Review Process

The peer review evaluation will be carried out by highly qualified, external Referees selected by the CNR-NANO Institute Board. The selection will be based solely on the scientific quality of the project and on its impact on networking. The following evaluation criteria will be pursued, leading to a 100/100 maximum score:

1. Quality and impact of the proposed research project (maximum score: 60/100)

- Does the proposed research address important challenges in the field?
- Does the research open relevant scientific or technological perspectives for CNR-NANO?
- Are the outlined scientific approach and methodology appropriate and feasible?
- Does the project strengthen the collaboration network of the P.I. and of the Institute, and/or the P.I.s and the CNR-NANOs chances to get external grants on the proposed themes in the near future?

2. P.I. and team (maximum score: 20/100)

- Are the P.I. skills and expertise suitable for the success of the project?
- Has the P.I. already shown potential for independent research and/or a good record of early achievements?
- Have the involved partners (if any) the suitable know-how and the capacity to support the project?

3. Resources (maximum score: 20/100)

- Is the requested budget appropriate to the project objectives?
- Are the project needs and resources well justified?

The proposals will be ranked according to the scores assigned by the Referees.

6. Approval of grants and Project management

Acknowledging the indications included in the evaluation from the Referees, the CNR-NANO Director will define the list of Awarded Projects, which will be then approved by the Institute Board. Approved budget sizes can be reduced compared to those originally proposed. The final list of Awarded Projects will be issued by 01/12/2016.

Funded Projects must start by 01/01/2017. The following rules will apply:

- Any small instrumentation will have to be purchased within 1 month from the Project start.
- A funded Project will be strictly related to the P.I.. Therefore, the Project will be immediately terminated if the P.I., for any reason, resigns from her/his CNR-NANO position. In this case, the Institute will immediately recover any budget amount not yet allocated.
- Acknowledgements to the Project should be included in published papers and presentation of results.
- A project description has to be presented by the P.I. during the next meeting of the institute.
- A short presentation of the granted projects will be presented in a special section of the Website of the Institute.
- A final scientific and financial report is due within 3 months after the end of the Project.

For information related to the Call: Dr. Massimo Rontani (e-mail: massimo.rontani@nano.cnr.it, tel.: 059-2055205).

Pisa, 20 June 2016

Prof. Lucia Sorba
Director Cnr Nano Institute