

FLAD Science Awards on Mental Health

FLAD is launching the 4th edition of the FLAD Science Awards on clinical research in Mental Health for researchers working in Portugal to develop a collaborative effort with researchers in the USA.

1. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the FLAD Science Awards in Mental Health is to increase the competitiveness of Portuguese research groups in translation of knowledge from basic investigation to clinical practice, leading to innovation in best practices. The focus will be in prevention and clinical care in mental health. By providing financial support to high-quality young researchers, FLAD Science Awards intend to leverage/promote mental health clinical research programs in Portugal, in close interaction with leading USA research/clinical groups.

Recognizing the multi-dimensionality of this field of research, a call for applications will be launched every year, in specific topics of large but coherent mental health domains including biological, emotional, psychological, epidemiological and social well-being. A broad range of psychiatric disorders are expected to be addressed (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, anxiety, major depression, bipolar spectrum disorders, obsessive-compulsive syndromes or schizophrenia, Alzheimer's disease and the various dementias).

The calls will target clinical research projects aiming to understand how biological factors, life experiences and family history, among other determinants, can lead to mental disorders, and also to develop novel therapeutic approaches, not only pharmacological but also psychotherapeutic or other types of intervention. The goal is to promote patients' autonomy and quality of life, thus contributing to decrease the economic and social burden of mental disorders. Different approaches aiming to promote mental health and mental disorders prevention, earlier diagnosis and novel therapeutic interventions will be within the scope of these FLAD Science Awards.

More information on the call is provided on Annex to this document.

2. SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

A Scientific Committee is defined, in order to provide FLAD with independent scientific coordination and advice. The Scientific Committee is comprised of the following experts:

- Catarina Resende de Oliveira (Past Director of the Center for Neurosciences and Cell Biology and Full Professor at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Coimbra; President of the "Agência para a Investigação Clínica e Inovação Biomédica", AICIB, Portugal).

- Daniel Sampaio (Psychiatrist, Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and Mental Health, Faculty of Medicine - University of Lisbon, Founder of the Portuguese Society of Family Therapy).
- Margaret Lança (Director of Adult Neuropsychology and Psychological Testing and Training, Cambridge Health Alliance, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Department of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, President, Massachusetts Psychological Association).

3. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY/INDEPENDENCE

At the time of application:

- The applicant must hold a PhD, or equivalent degree, for no longer than 10 years. The counting of the years after the PhD degree will take maternity and paternity leaves into consideration. In the case of maternity, 18 months are subtracted to the number of years after acquiring a PhD degree for each child born after the conclusion of the degree. In the case of paternity, the months of demonstrated leave will also be considered.
- The applicant must be involved in clinical research and an integrated member or collaborator of an R&D Unit recognized by FCT (National Foundation for Science and Technology) as engaged in Mental Health research. The R&D Unit must be integrated/associated to a University and/or a Hospital of reference.
- The applicant must have attained independence as a researcher, and enough information must be provided in the application to demonstrate his/her autonomy and the scientific quality of the affiliated Portuguese research institution.
- The applicant's affiliated Health Care Unit and R&D Unit must declare its support to the applicant and his/her research plan, granting dedicated time for research, and describe the available resources to develop the intended work.
- Detailed information is also required on the expected interaction with USA researchers/institutions. The existence of a co-applicant from an US research institution is welcome in phase 1 of the application and mandatory in phase 2.
- Eligibility is not restricted by citizenship.
- Applicants can only submit one application per call.

4. APPLICATION AND REVIEW PROCESS

FLAD awards applications are reviewed by the Scientific Committee. The application/review process takes place in two phases. In the first phase, an initial review of the scientific/professional curriculum of the applicant is conducted, in conjunction with a general review of the research proposal. The top ranked applicants will then be invited to submit a research plan proposal that encompasses 3 years of work.

Each application will be assigned (at least) two reviewers for each phase of the application process, who will evaluate the application, based on the following Selection Criteria:

1. Researcher Excellence: The applicants background and experience will be evaluated with particular emphasis on clinical research experience (participation in research projects as Collaborator or Principal Investigator), main achievements and publication track record in the Mental Health field.
2. Relevance of the research project: The research proposal will be evaluated for positive contributions to mental health.
3. Scientific Merit of the proposal: The contribution of the project to address scientific gaps in clinical research, the novelty of the scientific hypothesis, the experimental design, the methodological approach and the potential of the expected results to improve mental health must be shown.
4. Research Environment: The research conditions at the host institution, regarding lab space and equipment, should be shown to be appropriate to support the proposal. A clear commitment of the Health Care Unit involved in the project is required.
5. Interaction with USA researcher(s) and institution(s): This includes the profile of USA researcher and institution together with the relevance and commitment in the interaction.

Each criterion will be scored from 1 to 5 (with decimal increases). The final score will be the arithmetic mean of the scores from the five criteria.

The Scientific Committee may consider interviewing the highest-ranking candidates for finalizing their relative positions.

TERMS OF THE GRANTS

a) Duration

Grants are awarded for three years, contingent on renewal approval each year; renewals are awarded on the receipt of a satisfactory progress report and in accordance with the opinion of the Scientific Committee.

b) Amount

The total amount for the award is € 300.000. The maximum total amount given per year is €100.000, of which €20.000 per year may be allocated to indirect costs, i.e. 20% of the total award. The contracting of human resources is supported and welcome.

The first-year grant is made available upon execution of the Contract Agreement.

The following year grants are disbursed after a positive evaluation of the annual progress report.

All amounts are transferred to the Portuguese R&D Unit in which the researcher is integrated.

5. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

a) Progress Reports

Recipients of FLAD awards are required to submit a progress report (scientific plus financial), outlining the project's accomplishments during the first 11 months of the grant, and be available for presentation and dissemination actions. Second- and third-year funding is contingent upon favorable evaluation of the previous year's progress report.

b) Final Report

The final report (scientific plus financial), a brief summary of progress toward the achievement of originally stated aims, is due 60 days after the end of the project.

6. PUBLICATIONS

Publications resulting from research activities supported by FLAD grants (or other public/private project presentations) must contain the following acknowledgement: *"Supported by (Insert project title of the grant and reference number) from the Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento"*.

7. PATENTS

Grants are awarded with the understanding that FLAD will receive written notification from the applicant of the filing of any letters of patent for any discovery made based on work funded by FLAD.

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ANNEX

CALL 2024

The call 2023 of the FLAD Science Awards on Mental Health clinical research is dedicated to promoting the creation of clinical research teams focused in the development of high quality research projects, including biological, emotional, psychological, epidemiological and social well-being.

A broad range of psychiatric disorders are expected to be addressed (e.g., autism spectrum disorder and other developmental disorders, anxiety, major depression, bipolar spectrum disorders, obsessive-compulsive syndromes, schizophrenia and other psychotic conditions, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias).

HOW TO APPLY

Step 1

- Open from November 1 to November 30, 2023, 11:59 PM (Continental Portugal Time, UTC+00:00)
- Applications must be submitted to FLAD by online form available here https://flad.secure.force.com/CandidaturaMain?language=pt_PT
- Documents to be uploaded:
 - Applicant Biographical Sketch (template provided).

Results of Step 1 (candidates elected) announced by January 15, 2024.

Step 2

- Open from January 15, 2024, to February 15, 2024, 11:59 PM (Continental Portugal Time, UTC+00:00)
- Applications must be submitted to FLAD by online form available here https://flad.secure.force.com/CandidaturaMain?language=pt_PT
- Documents to be uploaded:
 - Applicant Biographical Sketch (template provided)
 - US Collaborator Biographical Sketch (template provided)
 - US Collaborator declaration (acceptance and collaboration)
 - Term of Responsibility (signed by the Responsible Portuguese Institution Official)
 - Health Care Unit declaration
 - Indicative Timeline
 - Indicative Budget

**Interviews of the top ranked candidates, if necessary.
Results to be announced by March 31, 2024.**