

Second Phase Evaluation of our First Call for Proposals

This note concerns the selection process of the second phase of the first call for proposals (CFP) launched by Instituto Serrapilheira (Serrapilheira) in 2017. It is important to remember that in the first phase of the CFP, 65 researchers were selected to receive a one-year grant of up to R\$100.000 (approx. USD 30, 000). The selection was announced on December 20, 2017 and the disbursement of funds was initiated on **March 10th 2018** and finalized on **May 20th 2018**. The end of the first year will therefore be **March 10th 2019**. To ensure that the evaluation process is fair to all, evaluators should take into account the date on which the candidate was actually able to access the grants. The variability among candidates is due to differences in how efficiently each research institution handled the contract signature process.

While the first phase evaluation, conducted by Brazilian and foreign reviewers, was essentially based on the quality of the projects, the second phase evaluation should also focus on the capacity of each of the 65 researchers to implement his or her project in a productive way. In addition to the technical implementation, Serrapilheira will also observe the dynamics within the research team (when a team is involved) and the capacity of the project to produce novel and innovative scientific knowledge.

From a pool of 65 researchers, we will select up to 12 in the second phase. The selected researchers will receive a three-year grant of up to R\$ 1 million (approx. USD 300,000).

Evaluation criteria

Our objective is to identify excellent young scientists in Brazil. Thus, we are looking for scientists who are able to compete with the best scientists in their respective fields worldwide. Our sole evaluation criterion is scientific excellence.

Serrapilheira receives many more proposals than it can fund. Therefore, we ask peer-reviewers and Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) members to keep in mind that every proposal that is funded means that another good proposal must be rejected. To be funded by Serrapilheira, scientists and their proposals should meet three general criteria:

1. The project should be of extreme importance to other scientists in the specific field, including when it challenges traditional ideas.
2. The project and/or the scientist should be innovative and show a novel approach to the research problem.
3. The scientists should exhibit a comprehensive understanding of the field and of the scientific environment they are confronted with.

In general, to be acceptable, the candidate's project should represent an advance in understanding likely to influence thinking in the field. There should be a discernible reason why the work deserves funding by Serrapilheira as opposed to other granting agencies.

Here are the main guidelines for the second phase evaluation process of our first CFP:

- a. When evaluating a candidate, each evaluator should read the initial project, the reviews (where available) the project received during the first phase, mid-term and final reports provided by the candidates as well as the financial report.
- b. Because one year is often insufficient to expect any relevant scientific production, the evaluation should be based on the way candidates are leading their scientific project rather than on their scientific productivity *per se*. Of course, in the event that relevant scientific works are produced, these should be taken into account. We are looking for

scientists who exhibit the sort of independent thinking and pragmatic realism that enables success within their scientific fields. At the second stage, our focus goes beyond assessing the candidates' projects; we are evaluating the capacity of the candidates to implement them.

- c. We are looking for scientists capable of re-thinking, re-organizing, and optimizing their experimental plans and evolving their research rapidly, conceptually and technically. Markers for this evaluation may be the response that researchers find to various elements such as (1) experiments that did not work, (2) technical mishaps, (3) publications that change the *state-of-the-art* or other predictable and unpredictable events. We want to assess the capacity of candidates to adapt within a constantly evolving scientific environment.

- d. We are looking for scientists who are rapidly acquiring scientific maturity in the way they (1) conceive their scientific production, (2) integrate themselves into their scientific communities, (3) demonstrate their capacity to explicitly follow a strategic approach and position themselves to most impact their community.

Evaluation methodology

Each candidate will submit two reports:

- i) The mid-period report should be submitted by **September 10th 2018** and should provide a summary of the project's developments – with a focus on reporting any potential problems encountered during the work. It is important to note that problems should not, *a priori*, negatively impact our evaluation. However, in the event that the project is found to be profoundly altered from the original proposal, SAB members will ask grant recipients to write up a new project description, which will be re-evaluated. In this case, SAB members should alert the **candidate by the end of September** that a new project description must be provided. Each candidate will have **until the end of October** to do so.
- ii) The final report will be submitted by **February 10th 2019**.

Final evaluation package

Initial project and the reviews the project received during the first phase

From the candidates:

- mid-term report
- final report

From the SAB member and external reviewers:

- two new reviews

From FUNARBE:

- financial report

From the executive team:

- one report

Each report should be concise (3 to 5 pages), but sufficiently detailed to provide all information necessary for the project to be fairly evaluated. Short guidelines will be provided to the 65 researchers, as well as to SAB members, to facilitate the writing and evaluation of these reports.

A single financial report will be produced by FUNARBE at the end of the period. The Serrapilheira executive team will evaluate the candidates' motivation, curiosity and commitment as well as the available research infrastructure. In case of research teams, the group dynamic will also be considered.

For each candidate, Serrapilheira requires that two reviews be produced. In case the SAB member is capable of properly evaluating the candidate, we expect to receive one review from the SAB member and one review from an external reviewer. In case the SAB member feels he or she cannot properly evaluate a given candidate, we expect two reviews by two external reviewers. External reviewers will be chosen by SAB members.

Members of the SAB (or external reviewers chosen by SAB members) must interview all researchers in the candidate's field to gain more insight into the relevance of the project (each candidate will be interviewed once).

Based on the reviews, SAB members will select up to three candidates to present their work to the Scientific Advisory Board and to the executive team. SAB members should not select three if they believe that fewer than three merit selection for the second phase. Selecting no candidate is acceptable to Serrapilheira. In the event that more than three candidates are considered to be of extreme relevance, SAB members should contact the President of Serrapilheira to determine how to deal with what should be considered an unusual situation.

A meeting of the SAB will then be organized in Rio (March 20-22nd 2019), where all previously selected candidates will present their work. Each candidate will present for 10 minutes and will respond to questions for 10 minutes. The time for each presentation will be very strictly controlled.

After the presentations, the SAB will debate internally in order to arrive at a ranked list of the researchers. It is important to emphasize that no rules to balance scientific fields will be observed. In other words, Serrapilheira does not require that all fields should be represented.

Based on this list, the President of Serrapilheira will decide which scientists will be funded or not.

In the final instance, the process of the evaluation procedure will be validated or invalidated by the board of trustees.

All candidates will receive a final feedback on their projects, written by the SAB members.

Timeline

2018

September 10th

- Candidates submit mid-term report

2019

February 10th

- Candidates submit final report
- FUNARBE sends final financial report
- Executive team sends report

February 11th

- Executive team sends the first evaluation package to the SAB

February 11th to March 10th

- SAB member and external reviewers produce two reviews
- SAB member and executive team pre-select up to three candidates

March 20th to 22nd

- Pre-selected candidates present their work to the SAB and to the executive team
- SAB provides a ranked list of researchers

March 25th to 26th

- The president of Serrapilheira decides which scientists will be funded

March 27th

- Award Notification