After completing the merit review process conducted in the first phase of this competition, 23 proposals are awarded one-year seed grants of up to R$100,000 (~US$20K). During the second phase selection process, these 23 awardees are evaluated on their performance during the one-year grant period* and 3 individuals are selected to receive an additional three-year award of R$700,000 (~US$130K) with a bonus of R$300,000 (~US$56K) for hiring and training science students from under-represented groups.

The following describes how the second phase selection process will take place.

Because one year is often insufficient to expect the publication of high-impact papers, evaluation will be based on how candidates are progressing in their funded project rather than solely on their scientific productivity. In the event that relevant scientific work is published, this should be taken into account.

*extended to one and half years due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Evaluation criteria

Our objective is to identify excellent young scientists in Brazil that are able to compete successfully at the global level with leading scientists in their respective fields. The focus of the evaluation is on the investigator’s perceived capacity to execute a strong research agenda if funded by Serrapilheira.

The criteria for this second phase evaluation are:

1. **Project development and initial results**: how candidates are progressing in their scientific project and any initial accomplishments. Evidence to assess this criterion may include: development of new methods/models; new data presented; engagement of new students and post-docs; new scientific collaborations; high quality and methodologically rigorous new publications.

2. **Adaptability**: candidates should be able to optimize their experimental plans as needed, adapting their research rapidly, conceptually, and technically. We want to assess whether candidates are equipped to meet the challenges of a constantly evolving scientific environment. Evidence to assess this criterion may include: description of pitfalls encountered, including limitations imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic; description of new research opportunities presented to them; description of
original goals that were deemed unfruitful for additional research; future research strategies; how candidates respond to publications that challenge their hypothesis or compete with their work.

3. **Scientific leadership**: we are looking for scientists who, through Serrapilheira’s support, would be able to position themselves as leaders in their communities. Evidence to assess this criterion may include: strategies to expand international and national collaborations; engagement in interdisciplinary projects, if applicable to the field; invitations from groups abroad to be keynote speakers or to participate in other projects and restricted meetings; organizing or leading community efforts such as international conferences and workshops; awards and honors conferred by professional societies or other organizations.

**Evaluation methodology**

**Step 1**
Each candidate will submit one report and CV.

The final report is due by **January 31, 2022** and should provide a summary of the project’s accomplishments in light of the evaluation criteria laid out above.

The report should be concise but sufficiently detailed to provide all information necessary for the project’s fair evaluation according to these criteria. **Reports over 10 pages will not be considered.**

**Step 2**
A single financial report will be produced by FUNARBE at the end of the funding period. During online meetings, the Serrapilheira executive team will evaluate the candidates’ motivation, curiosity, and commitment to developing high-quality research. Availability of research infrastructure will also be discussed. When dealing with research teams, the group dynamics will also be considered.

**Step 3**
The report provided by the candidates will be evaluated by two **ad hoc** international reviewers that will also have access to the initial project. **Ad hoc** reviewers should produce reviews that address the three criteria as well as strengths and weaknesses, with a summary statement.

Verbatim copies of the **ad hoc** reviews are sent to the candidates,
and they will be given one week to respond and clarify any points raised. If no response is received within a week, we will consider that the candidate does not wish to rebut the reviewers’ comments and that the original report stands.

**Step 4**
The final evaluation package will be sent to a panel composed of up to 16 scientists working in fields related to those of the candidates but not necessarily specialists in the particular field in question. All candidates will present their work online to the panel and the executive team. **It will be made clear to the panel that online interviews are meant to evaluate the project development as well as the candidate’s understanding of the field and the scientific environment.** The overall evaluation will consider other aspects as well, such as the ad hoc reviews and online meetings.

Each candidate will deliver a 10-minute presentation and have 20 minutes to answer questions.

After the oral presentation, each panel member will grade the candidate on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 is poor and 5 excellent), following the aforementioned criteria. Members of the executive team will not grade the presentations. The average ratings (grades) of the candidates will be used as starting point for further discussions among the panel members and the executive committee after the presentations. Based on these additional discussions, another ranking of the candidates is created. This final ranking does not take the candidates’ areas of research into consideration. Serrapilheira does not require that all fields be represented in the final group of grantees.

**Step 5**
After the scientific and technical review, the panel will recommend to the executive team a list of candidates with priority levels: highly competitive (must fund, the project is going very well and deserves further support), competitive (solid, incremental, similar to what others are doing) and not competitive (the trajectory of progress is not accelerated enough to justify continuing support). The panel will submit a panel summary, reporting strengths and weaknesses in relation to each of the three criteria.

**Step 6**
Based on the panel's recommendations, the executive team will consolidate and approve the final list “considering factors such as portfolio balance and the amount of funding available” (National Science Foundation, Merit Review Process, May 2019).
It must be stated that some proposals on the list may not be selected for support and, in rare cases, proposals not on the list may be selected instead. Should this happen, the executive team will submit its choice to the chair of the Board of Trustees and justify the decision to the panel chairs via email.

The executive team is free to support any project received through this call for proposals using its discretionary budget.

The final list of proposals to be supported will be submitted to the chair of the Board of Trustees for approval.

**Step 7**
All candidates will receive a panel summary reporting strengths and weaknesses in relation to each of the three criteria listed above.

**Timeline - 2022**

**January 31**
- Candidates submit final report and CV
- FUNARBE sends final financial report

**February 1**
- Executive team sends the initial project and the candidate’s report and CV to *ad hoc* reviewers

**February 1 to February 28**
- *Ad hoc* reviewers produce reviews

**March 1 to March 8**
- Candidates answer questions and comments raised by *ad hoc* reviewers

**Mid-March**
- Candidates present their work to the panel and to the executive team
- The panel recommends a list of candidates
- The executive team consolidates and approves the final list
- The final list of candidates to be supported is submitted to the chair of the Board of Trustees

**March 31**
- Award notification