

## Call for projects Fondation ARC 2019

### SIGN'IT

### Signatures in Immunotherapy

- diagnose, predict and follow the response to treatment –

#### CFP notice

##### 1- Background

As part of its ongoing precision medicine activities, the objective of Fondation ARC in 2018 is to contribute to the implementation of a patient treatment taking into account his/her tumour abnormalities but also his/her immunological specificities.

For some years, immunotherapy has been a field in full expansion and a bearer of hope. Several families of treatments have been developed although, recently, these efforts have primarily concentrated on the development of immunomodulators of the PD-1/PD-L1 pathway. These novel approaches sometimes achieve unprecedented results and spark the mobilisation of the medical and scientific community. The accumulation of knowledge, of trials, of practices and the therapeutic achievements make of this field of oncology an area that is ready for further investigation and an object of investment that is both urgent and relevant to improving the treatment of patients.

However, even though immunotherapy is undeniably a promising area, several limitations have already been identified. For example, some cancer sites respond less well to immunotherapies and, for a given site, the latter do not exhibit the same efficacy in all patients. In current treatment practices, several questions have arisen concerning immunotherapy treatments such as toxicity, hyperprogression, pseudoprogression, resistance, etc. It is now essential to focus research efforts in order to, ultimately, deliver the right treatment to the right patient at the right time.

As part of its scientific strategy, the ambition of Fondation ARC is to accelerate the safe deployment of immunotherapies throughout France and its overseas territories for more indications and more patients (including paediatric and geriatric populations). Fondation ARC thus wishes to mobilise French expertise around original, ambitious and innovative projects on the complex questions relating to the identification and/or validation of immunotherapy signatures by capitalising on the samples and data that are already available. With this in mind, Fondation ARC has launched a specific call for projects. After a first edition in 2018, the call for projects is repeated in 2019 and will be repeated in 2020.

## 2- Objectives

The objective of this CFP is to support innovative research projects in the field of immunotherapy aimed at the identification of signatures that will assist in guiding treatment decisions and in improving the selection of patients who are likely to benefit from those treatments.

In the context of this CFP, the notion of signature is understood to mean an indicator or combination of several indicators (clinical, biological, immunological, genetic, epigenetic, anatomopathological, medical imaging, etc.) making it possible to predict the response of a tumour to the immunotherapy under investigation and to accompany the therapeutic decision-making.

## 3- Scope of the CPF and characteristics of the projects

### a. Scope of the CFP

This CFP is based on translational research projects meeting the following criteria:

- Projects applied to patients treated with immunotherap(y/ies), except cell therapy:
  - o in monotherapy;
  - o in combination: between immunotherapies or with other treatments (radiotherapy, chemotherapy, etc.). The projects analysing chemotherapy/immunotherapy combinations must be based on a randomized study design.
- Immunotherapy(ies) for the indications in which:
  - o Phase III clinical trials are ongoing or provided proof of efficacy of the treatment

or

- o A FDA approval was obtained. See the list:

<https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/InformationOnDrugs/ApprovedDrugs/ucm279174.htm>

- prospective or retrospective projects;
- projects analysing:
  - o biological samples already collected and/or being collected;  
and/or
  - o data and/or databases already available.

### Characteristics of the projects

- For projects analyzing biological samples, two third of the patients whose samples will be analyzed in the project must have been included by **April 15<sup>th</sup> 2019**;  
For projects analyzing data, two third of the data must be available for the project by **April 15<sup>th</sup> 2019**.
- The research methodology must be rigorous and based on a solid research hypothesis and a statistic and/or bio-informatics justification.

- In addition to their scientific excellence, the projects should present the most reliable ethical guarantees and have to be conducted according to the existing legislation.
  
- b- Exclusion criteria of the CFP
- Fondation ARC and UNICANCER have launched the CHECK'UP program aimed at establishing response signatures to anti PD-1 / PD-L1 treatments. Thus, projects concerning the following populations are excluded from the SIGN'IT CFP:
  - o patients with metastatic, EGFR and ALK negative, non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) with a high level of PD-L1 expression ( $\geq 50\%$ ) receiving 1<sup>st</sup>-line treated with Pembrolizumab in monotherapy;
  - o patients with an unresectable (Stage III) or metastatic (stage IV) melanoma receiving 1<sup>st</sup>-line treated with Pembrolizumab or Nivolumab in monotherapy;
  - o patients with recurring or progressive head and neck cancer receiving 2<sup>nd</sup>-line treated with Nivolumab in monotherapy.
- projects based on cell therapies;
- clinical trials. Work specific to the execution of the clinical trial (inclusion of patients, blood samples, biopsies, etc.) will not be financed. Only the analyses conducted as part of ancillary studies supplementary to clinical trials will be considered (sample analyses, data analyses, modelling, statistical analyses, etc.);
- in the case of research studies supplementary to clinical trials with industrial sponsorship, those projects where the intellectual property is exclusively industrial;

NB: The Fondation's CFPs "Programmes labellisés 2019", Programmes labellisés – Recherche Clinique 2019 and SIGN'IT 2019 "Signatures in immunotherapy" are simultaneously open for submission.

A single applicant can only apply to one of the three CFPs.

The projects in a scope of SIGN'IT 2019 "Signatures in immunotherapy" must imperatively be submitted to this CFP.

For further information concerning the "Programmes Labellisés 2019": <https://www.fondation-arc.org/projets/programmes-labellises-fondation-arc-2019>

For further information concerning the "Programmes labellisés 2019 – Recherche Clinique Fondation ARC 2019": <https://www.fondation-arc.org/projets/programmes-labellises-fondation-arc-recherche-clinique-2018>

#### 4- Eligibility criteria

- Complete applications must be submitted online by the deadlines: <http://gap.recherche-cancer.net> .
- Unless specifically indicated, the file application must be drafted imperatively in English.
- The project must fall within the field of this CPF.
- For projects analyzing biological samples, two third of the patients whose samples will be analyzed in the project must have been included by April 15<sup>th</sup> 2019;
- For projects analyzing data, two third of the data must be available for the project by April 15<sup>th</sup> 2019
- For the purpose of ensuring the feasibility of the projects, the availability and access to the samples and to the clinical data of the patients must be secured and specified. To this end, the project manager should attach a letter of commitment from the sponsor or from the biobank operations manager or from the anatomopathologist responsible for the collection to his/her application (see Appendices section), attesting to:
  - the availability of the biological samples and/or data;
  - the agreement allowing access to those biological samples and/or data;
  - the conditions and date planned for the provision and/or transfer of the samples and/or data;
  - the sharing of intellectual property rights;
  - the guarantee to respect current regulations concerning data storage (French Data Protection Authority [CNIL] declaration, etc.);
  - the quality assurance approach of the organisation (indicate any potential NF (french standard) or ISO accreditations).
- The application must be submitted in the name of a single project leader, who is to be the coordinator recognised by the participating teams and who undertakes to be fully engaged in setting up and following up the project
- The project leader must hold a full, permanent post in a hospital, university or research establishment in France; failing this, the project leader must hold a temporary post covering the relevant grant period.
- A single researcher or research team can only propose one project under this call for projects, but may be associated with several projects.
- A single applicant can only submit one project to one of the three following CFPs simultaneously opened:
  - SIGN'IT 2019: "Signatures In immunotherapy" ;
  - Programmes labellisés 2019
  - Programmes labellisés – Recherche clinique 2019
- Each of the teams involved in the application must belong to a public research body (university, public science and technology research establishment or industrial and

commercial establishment etc.) or a non-profit organisation (association, foundation etc.) or a public health institution.

- Foreign partners may participate as long as they provide their own funding for the project.

Applications not meeting the eligibility criteria will not be considered.

## 5- Selection of the projects

### Selection procedure

The assessment of the projects will be conducted as follows:

- An ad-hoc committee composed of international experts will examine the applications and will issue its recommendations. The study coordinator will respond to the possible comments issued by the committee and will make the requested improvements within a period of 2 weeks (in May 2019);
- The Scientific Board of Fondation ARC, based on the expert assessments conducted by the ad hoc international committee, will screen the applications and make its recommendations to the Board of Directors, which will then vote on the funding.

### Assessment criteria

- Clarity of objectives.
- Interest and originality of project.
- How the project is positioned in the national and international context.
- Potential scientific and medical impact of the project
- Quality and feasibility of the work plan

- Quality of methodology, statistical analysis and studied population

#### reviewing criteria:

- o Is the study population well-defined and does the selected study sample appropriately represent the envisaged study population?
- o Is the sample size justified by a sample size/ power calculation?
- o Does the applicant acknowledge potential scientific or methodological problem areas, and how are alternative approaches being considered?
- o Are quality control measures during data acquisition, data management and data analysis sufficient?
- o Is the statistical methodology well-described and does it meet the necessary standards?
- o If applicable, what is the quality of the risk prediction model

- Ethics: project to be conducted in accordance with currently applicable regulations
- Multidisciplinary approach: complementary nature of the various teams involved in the project and the scientific added value of the project as organised.
- Credibility of the timetable for achieving the results over the funding period.
- Envisaged optimisation strategy.

Every application is assessed under the confidentiality agreement and in compliance with the procedure of Fondation ARC for preventing and managing conflicts of interests.

#### 6- Funding procedures

Research projects on biological samples and/or databases:

- The funding is granted for a period of 24 or 36 months.
- Amount: from €150,000 to €600,000.

Research projects solely on databases (with no supplementary biological analyses planned):

- The funding is granted for a period of 12 months.
- Amount: from €50,000 to €200,000.

Expense types:

- operating (this includes software licences and fees and acquisition work in the field: travel costs involved in investigations etc.);
- equipment;
- recruitment of post-doctorate researchers, PhD students, engineers, technicians, data manager or other professionals for a period not exceeding the grant period.
- provision of services is authorised. However, private sector service companies (start-up, biotech, etc.) should not claim any intellectual property rights in relation to the results and potential signatures that may arise from the projects;
- Subsistence costs (attending symposiums, conferences etc.). Apart from exceptional circumstances (evidence must be provided), incidental expenses must not exceed 4% of the total.

There are no restrictions on how the budget is allocated, particularly how much is set aside for funding personnel.

Fondation ARC will not pay :

- traineeship grants and salaries of PhD research students
- the administrative body's expenses

#### 7- Timetable of the CFP

Launch of call for projects: 16/11/2018

Return of complete packages: 04/03/2019 midday

Examination of projects by an international ad-hoc committee of Fondation Arc : Beginning of May 2019

Return of modified packages as recommended by the ad-hoc committee of Fondation ARC : mid-May 2019

Selection by the Scientific Board of Fondation ARC : May 2019

Decision by the Board of Directors of Fondation ARC : June 2019

Notification of results: June 2019

#### 8- Submission procedures

The complete application package, including all items required for scientific and technical assessment of the project, must be put together in accordance with this notice and submitted online at:

<http://gap.recherche-cancer.net>  
no later than the 04/03/2019, midday

Until the package has been validated, the applicant may revisit it as many times as desired, up to the closing date of the call for projects (4 March 2019).

The application will only be accepted once confirmed by the applicant.

When the online package is validated the computer system will generate an acknowledgement of receipt and send it to the applicant.

For his/her application to be admissible, the candidate should complete it along with the obligatory Appendices (+) and Attachments (📎):

Obligatory appendices (+) to be attached at the latest by noon on 04/03/2019:

- a letter of commitment from the sponsor or from the biobank operations manager or from the anatomopathologist responsible for the collection to his/her application (see Appendices section), attesting to:
  - the availability of the biological samples and/or data;
  - the agreement allowing access to those biological samples and/or data;
  - the conditions and date planned for the provision and/or transfer of the samples and/or data;
  - the sharing of intellectual property rights;

- the guarantee to respect current regulations concerning data storage (French Data Protection Authority [CNIL] declaration, etc.);
- the quality assurance approach of the organisation (indicate any potential NF or ISO accreditations).

Obligatory attachments (📎): to be attached at the latest by [noon the 15/04/2019](#):

- If applicable, the number of patients included by **15<sup>th</sup> April 2019** the total number of patients needed as a part of the project.
- If applicable, the number of patients expected and included in each of the clinical trials as basis for the this project.
- the list of the contact persons at the different departments involved in the project (clinical, immunology, genetics, epigenetics, anatomopathology, biostatistics, bioinformatics, medical imaging, etc.);
- Signatures of the participating team leaders and/or persons in charge of the research facilities involved.
- the name and contact details of the funding administrative body's

NB : the application is only admissible if the obligatory appendices (+) and attachments (📎) have been uploaded.

However, up to 15/04/2019, the applicant will be able to supplement the package, but only by adding the following documents:

Non-obligatory appendices (+):

- Evolving publications: publications that have been accepted or given a favourable review (attach letter from publisher and acknowledgement of receipt);
- Change in administrative situation: concurrent funding obtained from another body.

For any further information:

[signit@fondation-arc.org](mailto:signit@fondation-arc.org)

Fondation ARC pour la recherche sur le cancer  
 Direction Scientifique  
 SIGN'IT  
 9, rue Guy Môquet  
 94803 VILLEJUIF Cedex