

Request for Proposal (RFP) for Grant Writing Services

1. Background

The European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL - www.easl.eu/) is a non-profit organisation based in Switzerland (Geneva). EASL started as a small group of 70 hepatologists from 15 European countries who came together to share best medical practice in April 1966. Since then, EASL has evolved into a major European Association with international influence, dedicated to the liver and liver disease.

EASL's mission is to be the Home of Hepatology so that all who are involved with liver disease can realize their full potential to cure and prevent it. To this end, EASL:

- Promotes research in the science of liver disease (hepatology)
- Provides state-of-the-art education for physicians and scientists
- Fosters public awareness of liver diseases and their management
- Acts as an advisor to European Health authorities
- Facilitates scientific exchanges and catalyzes European multi-center controlled trials
- Supports young investigators to ensure that the liver remains at the forefront of Research

EASL has over 4,000 members from all over the world. Our members include hepatologists, nurses, clinicians, etc. The Association provides an annual platform, the International Liver Congress™, for 10,000 liver experts to meet and discuss the latest scientific research.

The Association is managed by the EASL Governing Board, consisting of 11 elected members who are all active in the medical field.

In September 2015, EASL opened an office in Brussels. The Brussels office is dedicated to EU Affairs and consists of 2 EASL staff members.

2. Purpose

In keeping with its mission to promote research and provide education, EASL offers its members a range of fellowship opportunities. At present, EASL members have a choice of 4 types of fellowship programmes, each of which is tailored to a specific target audience (<http://www.easl.eu/research/support/easl-fellowship>).

EASL seeks to expand its fellowship range currently on offer. With a view to opening up to non-members and further fostering researchers' training, mobility and career development, EASL would like to establish a Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND Fellowship Programme, aimed at experienced researchers. To this end, our organisation will apply to the Horizon 2020 MSCA-COFUND-2019 call. In the event of a successful application, the ensuing MSCA COFUND Fellowship Programme would co-exist alongside the existing EASL fellowship programmes, rather than replacing any of the latter.

In this context, EASL seeks to contract a tenderer/consultant who will draft a successful application to MSCA-COFUND-2019.

3. Working methods

Throughout the entire grant preparation process, the tenderer/consultant will work in concert with our internal COFUND Working Group (WG), the members of which have been appointed by the EASL Governing Board. The Working Group consists of 6 EASL members, each of whom has been selected in accordance with the following criteria:

- Strong affinity with selection and evaluation procedure(s) of existing fellowship programmes
- Strong ability to identify the training needs (in terms of research skills and transferable skills) of fellows
- Affinity with the supervision/mentoring needs of research fellows
- Experience of (co-)managing/coordinating a fellowship programme
- Interdisciplinary mindset

The contractor will be supported by the Research Policy Officer in the EASL Brussels office and colleagues in the Geneva office dealing with the fellowship programme.

4. Tasks and deliverables

The main responsibilities of the consultant/tenderer will be threefold. First, the consultant/tenderer will use his/her expertise to guide the EASL COFUND WG members in coming up with suitable ideas and content for the MSCA COFUND proposal. Second, he/she will prepare a detailed budget for the implementation of the proposed MSCA COFUND Fellowship Programme. Finally, he/she will write the MSCA COFUND grant proposal (i.e. fill out parts A and B of the European Commission proposal template).

The tasks of the consultant/tenderer will include the following:

- Plan and attend meetings with the EASL COFUND WG members.

With regard to the meeting format, a combination of face to face meetings and conference calls is expected.

During the WG meetings, the consultant/tenderer is expected to advise the WG participants on the various aspects that need to be developed and thought out under the criteria of « excellence », « impact » and « quality and efficiency of the implementation ». Such aspects include, but are not limited to, the selection process for fellows, supervision and training arrangements, plans and procedures for exploitation and dissemination of results, financial management and risk management/contingency plans of the programme, etc. It is important that the consultant/tenderer informs the WG participants about the expectations of the European Commission regarding each of these aspects.

- Work with the WG members to devise suitable suggestions/ideas regarding the content to be developed under the criteria of « excellence », « impact » and « quality and efficiency of the implementation »
- If necessary, support/guide WG members in identifying suitable partner institutions

- Write consecutive draft versions of the MSCA COFUND proposal (part B), based on the input received during the WG meetings
- Rework consecutive draft versions of the MSCA COFUND proposal (part B) in accordance with comments/feedback received from WG members and EASL Governing Board members
- Liaise with the EASL Finance Department and the EASL Treasurer to agree upon and draw up a budget for the implementation of the proposed MSCA COFUND Fellowship Programme
- Assist EASL staff, where necessary, in completing Part A of the proposal template
- Submit the final version of the MSCA COFUND proposal (Parts A and B of the Commission proposal template) – as approved by the EASL Governing Board - through the electronic submission service of the European Commission. Submission should take place at the latest by 17:00 CET on 25 September 2019 (i.e. one day prior to the submission deadline imposed by the Commission).

The consultant/tenderer will be tasked with the following deliverables:

- A kick-off meeting with EASL COFUND WG members at the 2018 International Liver Congress, EASL's flagship annual congress (ILC 2018 will be held in Paris from 11-15 April). Most (if not all) WG members will be attending the ILC
- A reasonable number of follow-up WG meetings between May 2018 and September 2019
- A first outline of a grant proposal to be circulated by email among the WG members for feedback (by 27 August 2018 at the latest)
- A PowerPoint presentation, outlining the main elements of the draft grant proposal, to be put forward for discussion at the September 2018 meeting of the EASL Governing Board (by 6 September 2018 at the latest)
- A preliminary budget (approved by the EASL Finance Team and the EASL Treasurer) to be put forward for discussion at the September 2018 meeting of the EASL Governing Board (by 6 September 2018 at the latest)
- A second draft of the grant proposal to be circulated by email among the WG members (by 10 December 2018 at the latest)
- A PowerPoint presentation, outlining the main elements of the reworked grant proposal, to be put forward for discussion at the January 2019 meeting of the EASL Governing Board (by 3 January 2019 at the latest)
- A final budget (approved by the EASL Finance Team and the EASL Treasurer) to be put forward for approval at the March 2019 meeting of the EASL Governing Board
- A third draft of the grant proposal to be circulated by email among the WG members (by 10 May 2019 at the latest)
- A PowerPoint presentation, outlining the main elements of the reworked grant proposal, to be put forward for discussion at the June 2019 meeting of the EASL Governing Board (by 30 May 2019 at the latest)
- A final version of the grant proposal (Parts A and B of the proposal template), based on the comments received during the June 2019 EASL Governing Board meeting, to be submitted for approval at the September 2019 EASL Governing Board meeting (by 29 August 2019 at the latest)

5. Required qualifications of the tenderer/consultant

A tenderer/consultant must have the following qualifications:

- An excellent command of written and spoken English
- Previous experience of active and leading participation in a successful application to the MSCA COFUND scheme or related EU schemes
- Experience working for and/or with medical associations will be considered a plus
- Excellent planning and time management capabilities
- Affinity with the field of hepatology will be considered a plus
- Availability/flexibility to travel within Europe to attend those WG meetings that will be held face-to-face

6. Timeline

The proposed timeline for the tendering procedure is as follows:

Publication of tender on http://www.easl.eu/	20 December 2017
Processing of and response to any requests for additional information	20 December 2017 - 25 January 2018
Receipt of Tenders	31 January 2018
Verification of Tenders and Assessments	February 2018
Selection by the EASL Governing Board	06 March 2018
Notification concerning intent to award	08 March 2018
Final contract awarding	23 March 2018
Project start	26 March 2018
Project completion and submission of application and final report	25 September 2019

No rights can be derived from this time schedule. All dates in this guideline are subject to express confirmation and can be modified unilaterally by EASL.

7. Budget and payments

The maximum available budget for the tender is €40,000 including all taxes, overheads and communication costs, but excluding reasonable travel and accommodation costs, which will be covered directly by EASL.

Payments will be made according to the following schedule:

20% (of the price offered by the consultant/tenderer)	This payment will be made as soon as the consultant/tenderer starts work on the project
80% (of the price offered by the consultant/tenderer)	This payment will be made in 4 installments: 1) Upon successful delivery of the first draft of the grant proposal

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Upon successful delivery of the second draft of the grant proposal 3) Upon successful delivery of the third draft of the grant proposal 4) Upon submission of the final version of the application through the electronic submission service of the European Commission

8. Proposals from consultants/tenderers

The tender will consist of the following two parts:

a. Technical tender

- An overall workplan for the period between the start of the assignment and the submission deadline for the MSCA-COFUND-2019 call (1-2 pages). In addition to outlining how the consultant/tenderer will carry out his/her tasks, the workplan should also describe how he/she plans on realizing a fruitful interaction with the EASL COFUND WG.
- A preliminary planning for the EASL COFUND WG meetings. The document should include:
 - An estimate of the number of WG meetings to be held
 - An estimate of the number of hours to be dedicated to each specific WG meeting
 - A planning, for each WG meeting, outlining the topics to be discussed
- CV of the staff/consultants who will be providing the services. The CV should demonstrate previous experience with regard to writing MSCA COFUND grant proposals (incl. topics/fields of science and success rates) or proposals under related EU schemes

b. Financial tender

- A unit price in EUR

If the Tenderer cannot meet the aforementioned budget criteria (see section 7), the Tender will be rejected, and the Tenderer will be excluded from further participation in the Tender procedure.

9. Process

EASL will issue the ToR for tenderers/consultants to submit a proposal in December 2017.

EASL will assess the proposals submitted and will select the best consultant, based on level of experience (both with MSCA COFUND and medical associations), the proposed unit price, the workplan and preliminary planning.

After the assessment of the proposals submitted, EASL will submit written notification to all Tenderers concerning the intent to award the contract to one of the Tenderers. Any exclusion information will only be provided about the Tenderer's own Tender. The notification concerning the intent to award does not yet entitle the winner to claim the awarding of the contract, since this notification does not include acceptance of the offer. At that time, there is no agreement between EASL and the intended winner. After having dispatched the notification of intent, EASL will contact the intended winner as soon as possible to proceed with the contract award. The consultant/tenderer will, thus, be contracted by EASL.

10. Submission of tenders

Qualified candidates are invited to submit their proposal and CVs by **31 January 2018**. Tenderers shall submit tenders by letter:

- a) Either by post or by courier not later than 31/01/2018 to the following address:

EASL Office C/O Laura Capitaine
Norway House
Rue Archimède 17
1000 Brussels
Belgium

The evidence of the date of dispatch shall be constituted by the postmark or the date of the deposit slip.

- b) Or delivered by hand not later than 17H00 on 31/01/2018 to the aforementioned address. In this case, a receipt must be obtained as proof of submission, signed and dated by the staff member at Norway House who took delivery.

Tenders (originals plus two copies) must be placed inside two sealed envelopes, one inside the other. Both envelopes should mention the following reference: COFUND EASL TENDER. The inner envelope, addressed to the EASL Brussels office indicated in the invitation to tender, should be marked: INVITATION TO TENDER FOR – « MSCA COFUND » - NOT TO BE OPENED BY THE INTERNAL MAIL DEPARTMENT. If self-adhesive envelopes are used, they must be sealed with adhesive tape and the sender must sign across this tape.

The inner envelope must also contain two sealed envelopes, one containing the technical tender and the other the financial tender. Each of these envelopes must clearly indicate the content (« Technical » and « Financial »).

Any other method of transmission of the tender (i.e. e-mail, etc.) is not permitted and will automatically render the tender null and void, even if the tender has also been sent by the required method specified above.

Tenders must be:

- Signed by a duly authorised representative of the tenderer
- Perfectly legible so that there can be no doubt as to words and figures

11. Period of validity of the tender

The period of validity of the tender, during which tenderers may not modify the terms of their tenders in any respect, is twenty-one (21) months from the final date for submission.

Submission of a tender implies acceptance of all terms and conditions set out in this invitation to tender, in the tender specification and in the draft contract and, where appropriate, waiver of the tenderer's own general or specific terms and conditions.

Submission of a tender is binding on the tenderer to whom the contract is awarded for the duration of the contract.

12. Contacts between EASL and tenderers

Contacts between the EASL staff and/or agents acting on behalf of EASL in the tender process and tenderers are prohibited throughout the procedure save in exceptional circumstances and under the following conditions only:

a. Before the final date for submission of tenders

At the request of the tenderer, the EASL Brussels office may provide additional information solely for the reason of clarifying the nature of the contract. Any requests for additional information must be sent by email to laura.capitaine@easloffice.eu. Please submit your questions by no later than 25 January at 16:00. Requests for information received after the aforementioned date and time will not be processed. The subject field of the email must state « EASL COFUND call for tender ».

In order to ensure the equal treatment of all candidates, no enquiries or information requests made using any other methods will be answered.

b. After the opening of tenders

If clarification is required or if obvious clerical errors in the tender need to be corrected, the contracting authority may contact the tenderer provided the terms of the tender are not modified as a result.

13. Relevant jurisdiction

The relevant jurisdiction for the resolution of any disputes arising out of this call for tender is Switzerland. This contract shall also be governed by the applicable data protection and confidentiality provisions under Swiss law.

14. Statement of Non-Commitment

Issuance of this RFP does not commit EASL to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred in preparation of proposals responding to the RFP.

EASL's contractual obligation commences only upon signature of the contract with the successful tenderer. Up to the point of signature, the contracting authority may either abandon the procurement or cancel the award procedure, without the candidates or tenderers being entitled to claim any compensation. This decision must be sustained, and the candidates or tenderers notified.