



# iCARE-2 Program

## Tips for applicants

iCARE-2 fellowship program has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 800924.

AIRC  
Milan, April 2019



- 
- **What is iCARE-2?**
  - Evaluation criteria
  - Tips



## **iCARE-2 (international CAncer REsearch fellowships)**

is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie action co-funded transnational mobility post-doctoral fellowship program intended to foster worldwide cancer research by training competitive researchers.



## The fellowship must be focused on training



on **SCIENCE** in the field of ONCOLOGY.

**BOTTOM UP approach.** Any project applied to cancer in any field can be submitted.

**INTERDISCIPLINARITY** is welcome, since cancer can be studied from different points of view.



on **TRANSFERABLE SKILLS** such as research integrity, intellectual property rights, grant writing, leadership, data management, science communication.

Fellows must receive training in these topics by attending events held by the Hosting Institution or by other organizations.

- 
- What is iCARE-2?
  - **Evaluation criteria**
  - Tips



# Evaluation criteria

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 **Quality of the Hosting Institution/laboratory and training (HI)**

 **Curriculum vitae of the applicant (CV)**

 **Research project**

## Aspects to be evaluated:

- Quality of the Hosting Institution and Laboratory
- Mentoring capacity/ability of the head of the hosting lab
- Resources available to support research (grants)
- Possibility to attend international meetings
- Training activities



## These issues must be tackled in these sections of the application:

- «Letter of acceptance by the Hosting Institution»
- «Biographical sketch» and «Publications» of the head of hosting lab
- «Experience of the head of the hosting lab as a research supervisor»

## Aspects to be evaluated:

- Quality of the CV of the applicant, in relation to the career stage
- Education & training
- Research & professional experiences
- Publications
- Research interruptions (maternity, illness ...)
- Mobility (short and long visits ...)
- Motivation and interest in a career in cancer research

## These issues must be tackled in these sections of the application:



- «Biosketch of the applicant»
- «Personal Statement»
- «Certificate of graduation»
- «Publications of the applicant» (highlight your name in the author list)
- «Letter of presentation»



## Aspects to be evaluated:

- Relevance to cancer
- Innovation and originality
- Feasibility (also in terms of work doable by 1 fellow)
- Research plan
  - written in a logical, clear and convincing way
  - the role of the fellow must be well described
- Preliminary data (if available)

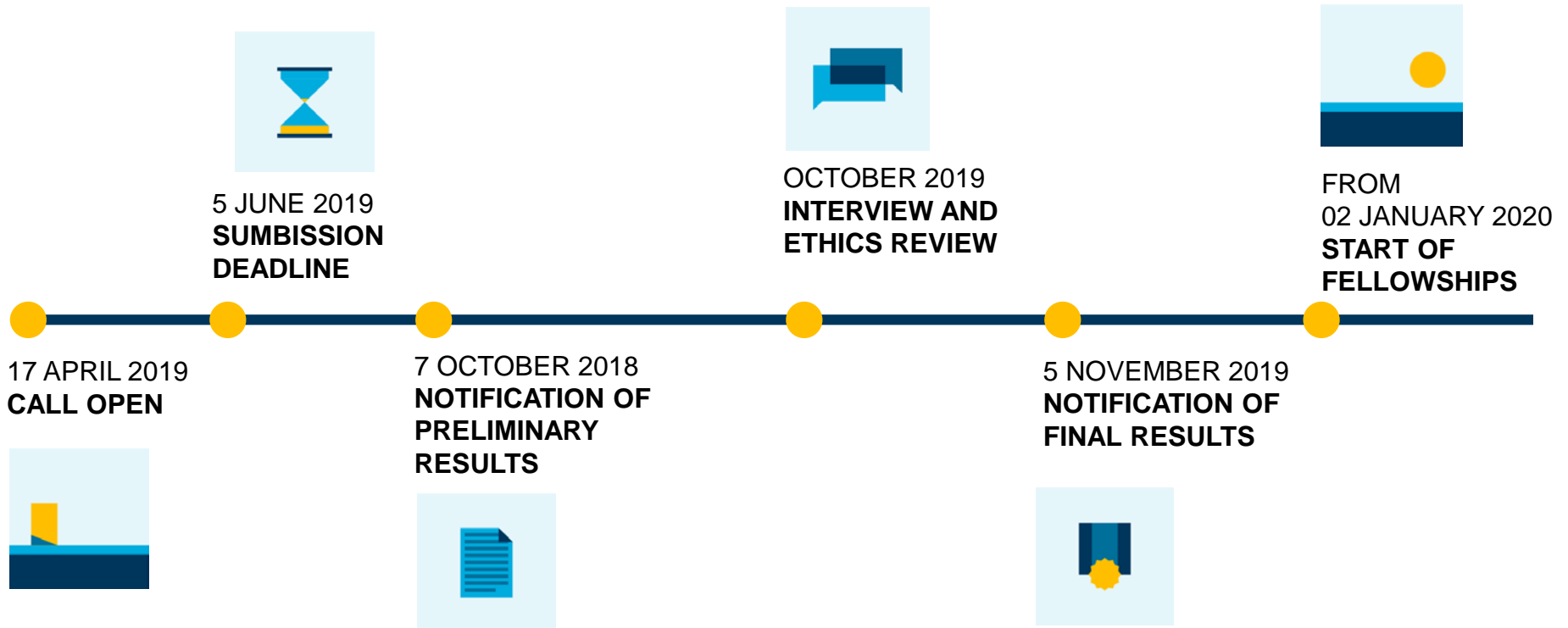


**These issues must be tackled in this section of the application:**

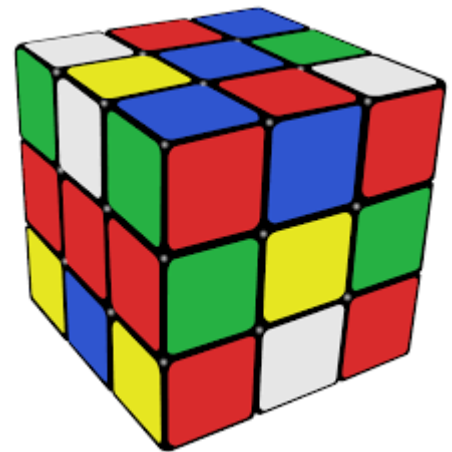
- «Proposal Main Body»

# Timeline of iCARE-2 2019

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- 
- What is iCARE-2?
  - Evaluation criteria
  - **Tips**



- **Call**  
(It includes a **Guide to proposal preparation**)
- **Tips for applicants**
- **FAQ on iCARE-2 website ( [www.icare-2.airc.it](http://www.icare-2.airc.it) )**



# Choose an effective title

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## Ask yourself:

- Which is the question?
- Which is the scientific problem?
- Which is the type of cancer?



## Examples of **strong titles**:

- “Control of immune-mediated antitumor activities of IRF-8 by epigenetic drugs in colorectal cancer”
- “Dissecting p63 functions in skin cancer initiation and progression”
- “Plasma microRNA profiling as first line screening test for lung cancer detection: a prospective study”

## Examples of **weak titles**:

- “Post-translational modification of proteins” *too vague*
- “Terminal differentiation opposes transformation, functional bases” *too vague*
- “The energy sensing LKB1-AMPK $\alpha$ 1 pathway regulates IGF1 secretion and consequent activation of the IGF1R-PKB pathway in primary hepatocytes.” *too long, too specific, too many abbreviations*

## Highlight your role in publications

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Provide complete and accurate information about **AUTHORSHIP**

because:

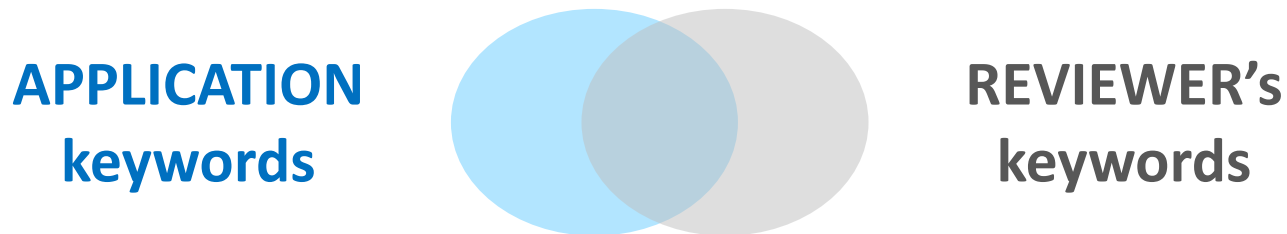
- your track-record is considered part of the **feasibility** of the project.
- it helps reviewers evaluate your **expertise** and **level of independence**



# Choose appropriate keywords

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Keywords chosen by applicants and reviewers help make a tentative **match between an application and appropriate reviewers.**



The complete list of keywords is available here:

<https://www.direzionescientifica.airc.it/DataFiles/Calls/SupportInfo/Keywords.pdf>

# Choose appropriate keywords

You can select up to 5 keywords – we suggest to follow this approach:

**Type of cancer**

+

**Topic**

+

**Experimental model**

+

**Technique used**

Melanoma  
Solid tumors  
Leukaemia  
Thyroid ca.  
Breast ca.  
Glioma  
Colorectal ca.  
...

DNA damage  
Nanotechnology  
Biomarkers  
Immunotherapy  
Microenvironment  
Epigenetics  
p53  
...

Clinical studies  
Pre-clinical studies  
Mouse models  
Animal models  
Zebrafish  
Yeast  
Organoids  
...

MRI, PET, ...  
Biophysics  
NGS  
Imaging  
Metabolomics  
Drug screening  
Systems biology  
....

**Avoid to choose a set of keywords that are:**

- **too vague** (e.g. genetics + animal model + genomics)
- **too similar** with each other (e.g. DNA damage + DNA repair)



You should answer the following questions:

- What is your key aim?
- **What is the impact on cancer?**
- Why is your question important and how you will answer?
- What advance will be made?

# Abstract

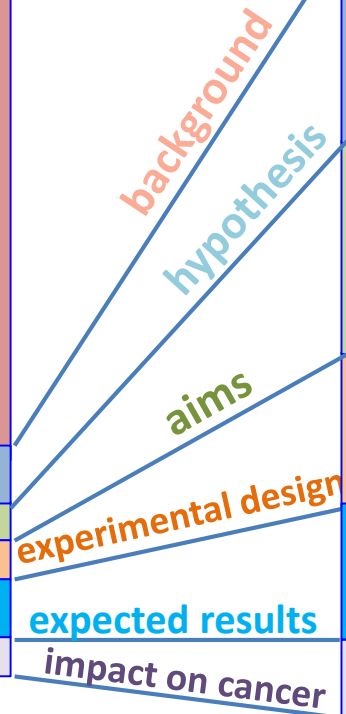
Keep it short. Get it focused and balanced: do not give too much of introduction in the **background**, go straight to the point describing the **hypothesis**, the **impact on cancer**, the **aims**, **experimental design**, **expected results**.

**NO**

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<p><b>Experimental design</b> Nulla porttitor mattis rutrum.</p>
<p><b>Expected results</b> Nulla porttitor mattis rutrum. ultrices nec accumsan odio accumsan. Duis id rutrum nisl. Curabitur pharetra commodo consectetur.</p>
<p><b>Impact on cancer</b> Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet.</p>

**YES**

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<p><b>Impact on cancer</b> Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.</p>



# Proposal Main Body

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The project **MUST** be:

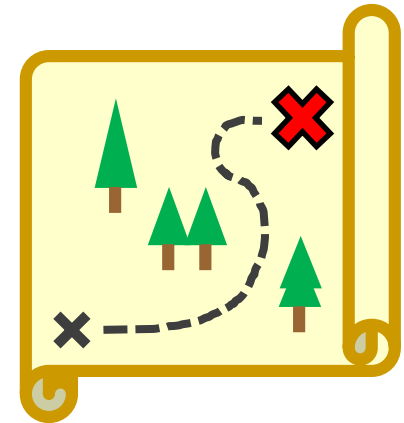
on **CANCER**



**FOCUSED**

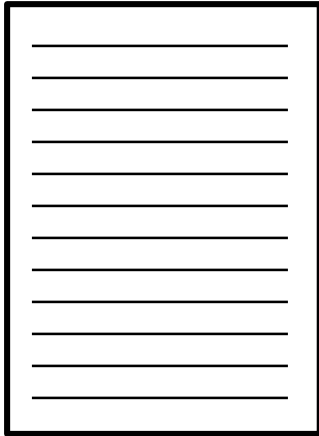


**CLEAR and  
FLUENT**



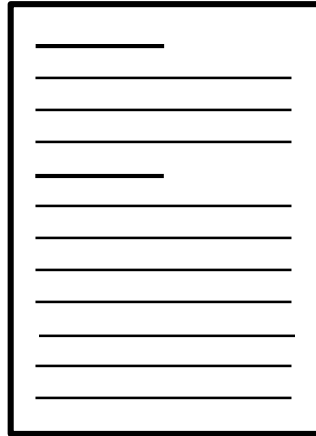
# Work on the visual appeal of the proposal main body

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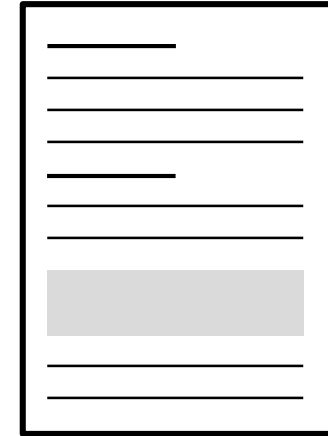
## No visual cues

No information to the reader about breaks, topic change, or points of interest



## Text broken into sections

The reader is informed on switch of topics without even reading the content



## Use of schemes/figures

The reader can see at a glance important information, without reading the text

*Figures must have good resolution, even after PDF conversion.*

# Proposal Main Body: Lessons from Reviewers' comments

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## Focus and keep it simple

*“Clear hypotheses are lacking and the PI has simply proposed «to do everything».”*

*“The usage of many **acronyms** does not help - e.g. inhibitors are sometime called PPI or sometime DI etc.”*

## Define a clear - cancer relevant - hypothesis

*“There is a **lack of clear goals/aims/impact when it comes to cancer** research except for some rather general statements.”*

*“Overall, the project is diffuse. Since **no clear questions** are put, no clear answers can follow.”*

## Avoid fishing expeditions

*“This is mainly a ‘fishing’ expedition. On the one hand, it is possible for fishermen to catch fish. On the other hand, one would like some indication that fish are really present in these waters.”*

## Write a compelling story

*\*“A **collection of tasks** not related to each other **is not a project.**”*

## On Feasibility

### Support hypothesis with preliminary data (if available)

*“While the initial idea is excellent, the proposal is poorly prepared and **does not contain any preliminary data** to support the feasibility of the proposed approach.”*

### Make sure your numbers are statistically significant

*“The experimental plan is seriously flawed. Some of the studies are **too small to achieve statistically powered results.**”*

### Show you and/or your supervisor are experienced in the proposed research field

*“The head of the hosting lab does not seem to have a broad expertise studying epigenetic mechanisms, raising some issue on the ability to support this project”.*

### The workload should be appropriate for one person

*“The research proposal reads more like a grant rather than a fellowship application. A more personalized description of the work to be done by the fellow would have strengthened the proposal”.*

# Ethics self-assessment

iCARE-2 Program is co-funded by AIRC and the EU.

Applicants must complete the **Ethics self-assessment** to show that proposals comply with the ethics directives of H2020.

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1. **Download the Ethics Self-Assessment template** available in the online form

T

2. **Fill in** the requested fields according to your project

H

I

3. **Upload** the completed form

C

4. Click on **“Check you forms”** to verify that the form has been correctly filled

S

*...it takes time!!!*



**Mark your calendar and do not miss the deadline!**

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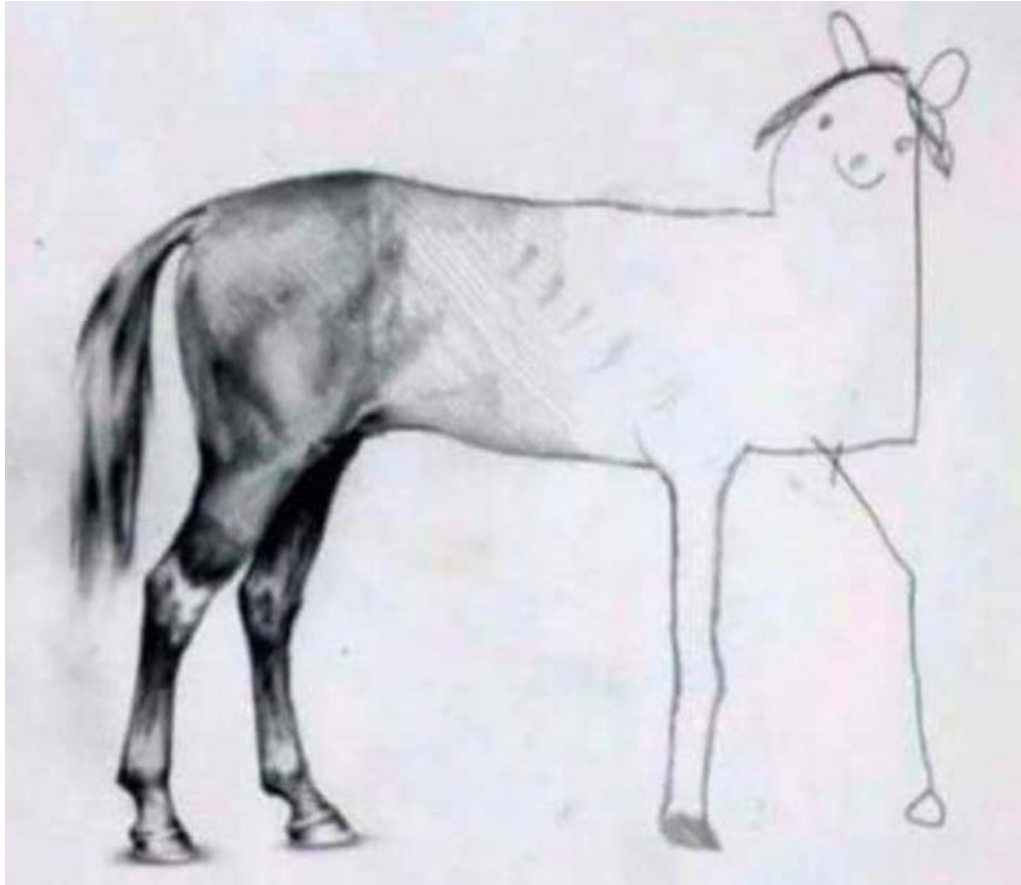
**THE APPLICATION  
CANNOT BE SUBMITTED and  
CANNOT BE MODIFIED  
AFTER THE SUBMISSION DEADLINE.**





## Don't let your abstract (and your application) look like this ...

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Reviewers evaluate information present in different parts of the application.



Use the **same degree of care** in preparing all sections of the application!

## Contact us:

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[cofund@airc.it](mailto:cofund@airc.it)



0039 02 7797 410



AIRC Calls for proposals can be found at:

<https://www.direzionescientifica.airc.it/>

**iCARE-2 Website:** [www.icare-2.airc.it](http://www.icare-2.airc.it)