



Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment

CoARA Boost Cascade Funding Programme

Call Text – Second Round

Opening: 21 February 2025

Closing: 23 April 2025 at 17:00 CEST

Funding Call information, documents and templates:

<https://coara.eu/second-call-for-cascade-funding/>

Funding Call Application Platform:

https://esf.smartsimple.ie/s_signup.jsp?token=XVtQC1oGYV5ZSxtZXxJXR1JWYUIIH3Rt



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1. Key figures

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| Available funding | Up to 1.22 M € |
| Funding per project | 30,000 EUR to 60,000 EUR: a lump sum, depending on the type of project |
| Number of projects to be funded | 20–25 projects |
| Target applicants | Legal entities interested in reforming research assessment practices in their institutions |
| 2nd call opens | 21 February 2025 – 23 April 2025 |
| Duration of the projects | Implementation within 12 months after signature of a Third-Party Project Agreement – TPPA |
| Start of the projects | Within 1 month from TPPA signature |

2. Context of the call

Over 800 research organisations, funders, assessment authorities, professional societies, and their associations have agreed on a common direction and principles for reforming the assessment of research, researchers and research organisations, outlined in the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#). They have also committed to implement changes within their organisations.

The [Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment](#), CoARA, offers a platform for collaboration and mutual learning. However, given the complexity of the reform process, **providing support for institutions to test, design, and carry out in-depth institutional changes** is crucial to implement the Agreement commitments.

The CoARA Boost project, funded by the European Union, strengthens CoARA's operational capacity. It provides a means to develop a critical mass for reforming research assessment, to generate gravitas for new members as well as to investigate and implement new models for research assessment. Find out more about the project here: [CoARA Boost Project](#)

The Cascade Funding Programme within CoARA Boost represents more than half of the project's overall budget. This programme will support a minimum of 50 organisations in tackling specific challenges related to reforming research assessment and implementing the Agreement commitments. By supporting different types of proposals, the programme will maintain a balanced portfolio of projects. The cascade funding programme consists of two rounds of open calls, the first one was launched in April 2024 and second one in February 2025.

3. Summary of the call

CoARA Boost's Cascade Funding calls facilitate institutional change and targets pilot and exchange-of-knowledge initiatives. It will fund +20 projects facilitating knowledge-exchange, piloting new initiatives within institutions, and enabling lasting institutional change. As such, it encourages and supports research organisations to investigate and test what will efficiently work 'in real life'. More specifically, the Call aims to:

- Facilitate the exchange, transfer and adaptation of proven good practices and their adoption in research organisations.
- Catalyse the set-up or transformation of research assessment practices and tools in line with the commitments of the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment.
- Support the development and testing of new and innovative research assessment approaches, models and procedures.

Projects can be proposed by any of the organisation types specified below through a cascading grant mechanism. By the end of the programme, it is expected to have **a diverse portfolio of projects available that will translate the shared vision outlined in the Agreement into tangible, lasting institutional changes in research assessment practices.**

4. Eligibility criteria

The primary targets of the CoARA Boost Cascade Funding Programme are legal entities of the following types:

- Academies, learned societies that implement some form of research assessment;
- National/regional authorities or agencies that implement some form of research assessment;
- Public or private research funding organisations;
- Research centres, research infrastructures;
- Universities;
- Other relevant non-for-profit organisations that implement some form of research assessment.

Applications from faculties of universities are also eligible. However, the application needs to be formally in the name of the university (applicant), and not the faculty.

As the call is meant to support institutions from across the European Research Area (ERA), only legal entities based in the EU Member States and [countries associated to the Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation](#) (see under the heading “Third countries associated to Horizon Europe”) are eligible to apply.

The proposal is submitted by a designated point of contact authorised to do so on behalf of the organisation they are affiliated with.

A maximum of one application per organisation is allowed for all calls.

Consortium members of the CoARA Boost project are not eligible to participate in the call. In the case of beneficiaries that are umbrella organisations, their member organisations are eligible. Nominating organisations of the CoARA Steering Board members are also eligible, as the Steering Board does not directly participate in the evaluation of the proposals. The Steering Board will not have any role in both the evaluation and selection of winning applications.

To ensure diversity in the allocation of resources, [beneficiaries of the first round of the CoARA Boost Cascade Funding](#) are not eligible to apply.

5. Cost eligibility

Cascade Funding will be aimed at covering costs that are exclusively considered eligible by the provisions of the WIDERA-2023-ERA-01-07 call.

Further eligibility details can be found as part of the [FAQs](#).

6. Scope

The total budget for the call is up to 2.33 M€, of which 1.12 M€ has been released for the first round and up to 1.22 M € are released in the second round.

Proposals may be funded up to 30.000–60.000 € each (including indirect costs, see specified below per cost).

25 projects were selected and funded within the first round:

- 3 Teaming Projects,
- 13 Institutional Pilot Projects,
- 9 Institutional Change Projects.

Except for the teaming projects (see below), the cascade funding program is designed for mono beneficiaries (i.e., one organization per application).

In the case of teaming calls, co-applications from max. 3 organisations are welcome. There are no restrictions in place regarding the type or country/countries of these organisations, apart from the basic eligibility criteria specified above.

7. Types of projects

The CoARA Boost cascading grants are a tool for organisations to implement the 10 commitments that are enshrined in the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#) (ARRA) and facilitate institutional change in the context of research assessment. The activities eligible for support must demonstrate the commitment to a systemic change with medium-term or long-term trajectories and impact. The grants will support organisations to develop, pilot and implement, assessment criteria, tools and processes; while avoiding contradictions across assessment systems, types and purposes, through continuous dialogue. There is room for diverse starting points and approaches. As part of the Call, three types of projects will be supported. These reflect different stages of an institution's reform journey, namely:

1. knowledge exchange (teaming projects),
2. piloting (institutional pilot projects),
3. paving the way for a lasting change (institutional change projects).

Their description is provided below.



Teaming projects

Organisations are encouraged to share practices and experiences to foster mutual learning and ensure continuous mutual improvement, while respecting organisations' autonomy. Teaming projects **facilitate the transfer and adaptation of experience and practices from a more advanced/experienced organisation to one or more less experienced ones**. In addition to knowledge transfer between institutions of the same type, co-piloting innovations across different types of organisations, such as universities and national evaluation agencies or academies and open infrastructure providers, are also welcome to co-apply as a team.

Examples of activities

Projects could involve transferring or benefitting from existing knowledge, testing the feasibility of adapting and implementing solutions that work in another institutional context, enhancing capacity-building or enhancing open infrastructural components of responsible research assessment. These projects could allow the organisation of demonstration sessions, seminars, training as well as short visits. Other examples include the review, transfer and adaptation of documents, procedures and workflows.

These examples of activities are provided as a source of inspiration: innovative ideas are welcome.

Maximum grant amount: 40 K€ (in total for all the organisations taking part in the teaming project)

Maximum project duration: 1 year



Institutional pilot projects

Institutional pilot projects offer an opportunity for institutions **to experiment with and evaluate new assessment approaches, procedures, frameworks, and tools in the context of a clearly defined initiative** (such as a pilot competitive call in a university or the development of a concept). These projects help institutions develop, pilot, and implement assessment criteria, tools and processes while ensuring consistency across assessment systems, types and purposes. While the institutional change projects will address issues that are relevant for the entire institution's assessment mechanisms and pave the way towards lasting change, institutional pilot projects target a specific action and should allow grantees to explore new modes of operation. Applications for pilot projects at the level of faculties are eligible if the application is submitted by their institution.

Examples of activities

As institutional pilot projects should respond to specific needs within the organisation, the types of funded activities will vary from one project to another. As an example, they could involve the following: development and deployment of (IT-based) workflows, adoption of qualitative KPIs, adoption of open infrastructure, bringing more diversity to the assessment of research outputs and academic activities, balancing quantitative and qualitative criteria, training, implementing practical ways of recognising diverse research contributions, core narrative CV with different disciplinary expectations, more credit given to research project proposals whether successful or not, more credit for outreach activities, crediting societal impact and knowledge valorisation, valuing institutions contributing to move away from rankings and impact factors i.e. more responsible use of metrics, present alternatives in terms of data used to assess research groups and institutions, integration of Open Science, research data sharing contributions into research(er) assessment, simplifying research evaluation systems of increasing their flexibility etc.

Applicants are also encouraged to gain inspiration from 'Annex 4: Toolbox: practical tools and options to consider' of the [Agreement](#). Projects could involve piloting the implementation of the [SCOPE](#) framework within their organisation or testing and implementing practical solutions, such as recommendations, guidelines and tools developed by CoARA Working Groups.

Maximum grant amount: 30 K€

Maximum project duration: 1 year



Institutional change projects

Institutional change projects **provide the means to accelerate change in procedures and process in an organisation**. These projects should enable a review of internal assessment processes within the awarded organisation, aiming to align them more closely with the Agreement's commitments. If the granted organisation does not have a (well-developed) assessment structure, these projects should allow to set up such structures.

Examples of activities

As for the pilot projects above, institutional change projects should respond to specific needs within the organisation and the types of activities funded will vary from one project to another.

All the activities listed under the "Institutional pilot projects" section are welcome, except on a different maturity level and possibly on a different scale. While institutional pilot projects are designed to explore the feasibility and test innovations associated with the reform of research assessment within an organisation, institutional change calls are instruments to sustainably integrate such changes in the applicant organisation's institutional policies and practices and thus to make a lasting change. Institutional change calls are recommended to organisations who already have a reform policy in place but need resources for implementing certain elements of it or invest in more thorough reflections, consultation, documentation and knowledge sharing within and possibly beyond the scope of the applicant organisation (for instance, to CoARA members). In this case, the added value of the project is to be clearly indicated in the work plan to avoid funding projects that would happen to be implemented anyway.

Maximum grant amount: 60 K€

Maximum project duration: 1 year

8. Evaluation process

All applications will be assessed by a review panel composed of experts in research assessment, set up by the CoARA Secretariat/European Science Foundation (ESF). Reviewers are selected from the contact database of CoARA, from the contact

database associated with CoARA's collaboration history with experts and expert groups in research assessment as well as from a pool referrals from the CoARA Boost consortium and the Steering Board. In addition to relevance of topical expertise, the CoARA Secretariat will also adhere to diversity measures in terms of geographical coverage (balanced representation of all European regions at least 5% of the reviewers outside of Europe), type of institution in affiliation (proportionate to CoARA membership), gender (no more than 2/3 of the pool of selected reviewers should represent the same gender) and career stage (at least 25% of the pool of selected reviewers should be early career researchers). The review panels will assess applications submitted to the type of project that fall within their policy and/or research expertise. Each submission will be pre-assessed by 2 panel members: one Lead Reviewer panellist and one Secondary Reviewer panellist who will provide written pre-assessments of each application. The Lead Reviewer panellist will present these pre-assessments when introducing the application during the panel. For equal treatment of applications, all panel members will be asked to read all proposals belonging to their panel prior to the panel discussions.

Following the three themes of the call specified in the call for proposals, one topical panel will be dedicated to each, namely:

P01 – Teaming projects

P02 – Institutional change project

P03 – Institutional pilot projects.

The evaluation procedure consists of the following stages:

| Phase | Process | Timeline |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------|
| Formal eligibility check | Performed by the CoARA Secretariat | End of April 2025 |
| Pre-assessment | All applications will be made available to the review panel prior to the panel meetings. Each application will be pre-assessed by one Lead Reviewer panellist and one Secondary | May 2025 |

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| | <p>Reviewer panellist. They will have access to each other's reviews.</p> <p>For equal treatment of applications, all panel members will be asked to read all proposals belonging to their panel prior to the panel discussions.</p> | |
| Review panels | <p>During the review panel meetings (teleconference), each application will be presented by their reviewers and discussed by the full panel. Each application will be presented by Lead Reviewer panellists who will introduce both pre-assessments alongside the application.</p> <p>The review panel will then agree on an overall mark for each application and produce a ranked list of applications.</p> | June 2025 |
| Panel chairs' meeting | <p>During the panel chairs meeting (teleconference), chairs of the topical panels bring results of their respective topical panels together. They agree on the overall ranking (i.e. rankings from each panel) and make final selection decisions.</p> | End of June 2025 |
| Panel meeting outcomes – consensus reports | <p>The panel members will then produce a consensus report for each application, summarising the panel discussions. Narrative comments (not scores) from the consensus reports will be communicated to the applicants.</p> | <p>Mid-July 2025</p> <p>Project start: 1st of September 2025</p> |

Further information on diversity measures when compiling the pool of reviewers as well as a detailed description of the evaluation process can be found in document 2: EVALUATION GUIDELINES.

Contact information

Any questions regarding the call can be directed to the CoARA Secretariat: funding@coara.org

In case of technical questions concerning the submission platform SmartSimple (operated by [ESF](#)) please reach out to: esf-panels@esf.org

An online information session for interested parties has been organised on the 30 of January 2025 at 14:00 CET, the materials presented during the session are available here: <https://zenodo.org/records/14794738>.

Feedback to applicants

All applicants submitting a Cascade Funding Project proposal will be informed of the outcome of the selection process by mid-July 2025. A brief evaluation report with narrative comments from the panel consensus reports will be provided.

9. Application Form

1. The first part of the application form should be completed directly on the SmartSimple platform. For technical guidelines on the Platform, please refer to Document 3 Guidelines for Applicants.
2. The second part of the application form must be uploaded on the SmartSimple platform. The Application Template can be downloaded from the [webpage of the Call](#): Annex 2_Application Template and Annex_4 and Annex_5 Project Budget.
The use of the Application Template and Use of Resources Templates are mandatory – please refrain from deleting any sections and adhere to the specified page limit (please do not exceed 5 pages, all included, i.e., figures, tables, charts, etc.) – font-size Arial 11. These forms must be entirely filled and uploaded on the online SmartSimple platform in PDF format as specified on the application platform.