

CRIS OutBack Fellowship Programme:

Introduction

The CRIS Cancer Foundation is keenly aware of the difficulty faced by clinicians and scientists who want to train themselves in the best international cancer research centres but keeping focus and interest in developing their research in Spain.

To help address this, the CRIS Cancer Foundation is holding a call for applications to the **CRIS OutBack Fellowship Programme**, which exists to train scientists and medical doctors outstanding of any nationality who wish to train themselves in any foreign country and return to Spain, in order to develop their cancer research career in Spanish research centres, hospitals or universities and become the future leaders of cancer research.

The aim of the **CRIS Outback Fellowship Programme** is to provide competitive economic conditions and incentives for these doctors to develop their training abroad and establish their career in Spain. CRIS believes that the training of researchers should go farther than the purely practical and scientific. For this reason, the awardees will be involved in a **training plan** that will provide them with **mentoring** and essential skills and insights to become future leaders of cancer research.

Call for Applications

Every year, the CRIS Cancer Foundation awards **two research grants** covering a **four-year stage** programme for contracting scientists and clinical investigators to develop their training and research activity for three years abroad (Outgoing Phase) at any hospital, research center or university, and a fourth year at any research institution in Spain (Return Phase). The CRIS OutBack Fellowship Programme includes the **option for a secondment to another institution anywhere in the world (that must be different from the return institution)**, but it is also open to short visits (not longer than 4 weeks) during the two stages to other institutions.

The programme invites applications from all **scientists** who have completed a **PhD** or those that can demonstrate **at least 4 years of experience** in cancer research prior to the year of the call for applications.

Candidates **must not have resided** or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) **in the country of the host institution of the Outgoing Phase for more than 12 months in the 3 years** immediately before the co-funded programme's call deadline.

Once the application has been submitted, the choice of host institutions will be binding. Candidates must present a **letter of interest from the host institutions of the Outgoing and Return Phases** together with the application.



The programme will effectively begin when the management of the hospital, research centre or university and the candidate sign the contract.

The programme runs for three years in its first phase, **international training phase (outgoing phase)**, and one more year during the **return phase**, at any Spanish institution. Additional to research training at the host institutions, OutBack Programme includes training sessions and webinars that will run quarterly during the development of the programme and mentoring sessions that will run annually.

Each fellow will have **three supervisors**: two primary supervisors, one at each host institution (outgoing / return phase), and an external co-supervisor (assigned by CRIS Foundation). Additionally, in case of secondment, they will also have a secondment supervisor.

Programme resources

The maximum grant awarded will be €280,000, which will be spread over four annual instalments of up to €70,000 a year.

The four maximum annual instalments of €70,000 will include:

- a. Salary: Gross €55,000 to cover labor costs of each beneficiary incurred by the hospital, research center or university that employs or will employ said individual. This amount includes local taxes contributions and any other amounts payable by the institution, as well as the gross remuneration of the beneficiary.
- b. Allowance: Annual maximum of €3,700 and it includes:
 - → Family allowance of €2,000 annually for beneficiaries with dependent children. Family support will be determined on the date the researcher joins the center and it will be reviewed annually at the time of programme renewal. In case of no applicability of family allowance, these funds could be added to the research costs.
 - → Travel allowance of €1,200 annually for travel costs and associated expenses related to Programme training/mentoring sessions or meetings.
 - → Mobility allowance of €1,250 for installation in the destination city for Outgoing and Return Phases.
- c. Costs associated with the research project up to the €70,000 maximum annual grant, including:
 - → Expenses related to the research project such as the acquisition of scientific consumables.
 - → Registration for scientific conferences and congresses, travel and expenses.
- d. OutBack Programme Training Plan. it includes training sessions or activities out of the Programme Training plan, for a maximum of €1,500 annually.

This subsidy will be managed by the institution on behalf of the beneficiary and must be justified independently. The CRIS Cancer Foundation will sign an agreement with the return host institution (which



will sign a contract with the outgoing host institution). Host institutions will receive the programme allowance and will manage the distribution of the different budget items. The budget distribution will have to be duly justified annually to CRIS Cancer Foundation.

The contractual relationship between the applicant and the institution shall comply with the law as it stands at any given time.

The investigator is the named recipient of the finance and will be recruited by the host institution of the return phase of the programme.

Requirements for applicants

Background

Applications will be accepted from cancer researchers who have completed a Doctorate in the last 5 years, or those that can demonstrate at between 4 and 9 years of full-time equivalent experience in cancer research prior to the year of the call for applications.

Fellows must **not have resided** or carried out their career **in the country of the outgoing phase host institution for more than 12 months in the 3 years** immediately before the co-funded programme's year of recruitment.

Research Career:

The candidate must provide the information related to the **track record** and the **publications** of its field of research.

Training and research plan:

Candidates must provide a **training plan** and a **synopsis** of the field of research that will be the focus of the main project of their stage. The project should demonstrate a high level of scientific and technical quality.

Candidates will have to fill in a **personalized development plan self-assessment** that includes future career perspectives, training, and skills that they want to acquire and possible secondments that they want to undergo.

Fellows must attend the quarterly session and the annual mentoring session of the OutBack Fellowship programme and will be encouraged to attend training sessions at their host institutions, partners conferences and networking events, short secondments in other institutions and any other training in transferable skills.



Primary Supervisors:

The candidate must propose a primary supervisor for the training and research project at both host institutions (for each **Outgoing/Return phase**) and provide information about his/her background along.

Nationality

CRIS OutBack Fellowship Programme is open to researchers of all nationalities.

Restrictions

The following restrictions apply to the submission of applications:

- → Return Phase must be developed at a spanish institution.
- → Candidates can only be the beneficiary of one CRIS OutBack Fellowship Programme.
- → Members of the scientific evaluation board will not be able to apply for these programmes.
- → Fellows must not have resided or carried out their work or activity in the country of the outgoing phase host organization for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately before the co-funded programme's year of recruitment.

Dissemination of results

All publications resulting from projects funded by this programme must be published as open access.

Documentation required for the application

Candidates or their institutions should visit the homepage of the CRIS OutBack Fellowship Programme webpage (www.criscancer.org/calls) or email outbackhelpdesk@criscancer.org in case they have any questions about the call for applications. All applications must be completed online.

Candidates must submit the application and required documentation through the **Programme Call Platform at** website <u>www.criscancer.org</u>. All applicants must register at the platform during the application submission period of the 2021 programme. Candidates will receive a confirmation email allowing them to access their application. There is a **guideline** for completion at the platform and assistance to candidates through the platform or helpdesk.

All candidates must provide two sets of documents, using the proposed templates when provided, which must be fully completed in English.

Part A - Administrative form: Personal and contact data of the fellow, Hosting institutions data, Supervisors data and project information.

Part B - Documentation: CV of candidates and supervisors, supervisors' and institutions' letters of acceptance. Academic certificates, doctorate certificate, institution's acceptance letters, letters of recommendation, cover letter, ethics assessment.



Part A - Administrative form:

Access to this form may be via the **Programme Call Platform (link)**. Candidates will not be able to fill in the rest of the parts of the documentation without first completing this form.

This form includes the following elements:

- a. General information about the **candidate**: First and last name, ID number, year of birth, academic background (doctorate or research experience), the position and institution where the candidate spent the last 12 months and contact details.
- b. Details of **supervisor** at each institution (Outgoing/Return): First and last name, institution and contact details.
- c. Details about the hosting **institution** at each phase (Outgoing/Return): Name and address.
- d. Complete name of the **research group** at each phase (Outgoing/Return)
- e. Details of the **project** or the techniques related to the training period of each phase: Title, acronym, abstract (no more than 4000 characters) and keywords of the research line.
- f. Commitment on **Ethics**

Part B - Documentation:

The templates for several of the documents in this section are provided on the candidacy website and the platform. These **templates must be used**; any other format will not be accepted. **Each page will have a header** indicating the name of the **candidate and** an **acronym** for their candidacy.

- a. Curriculum vitae of the candidate using a standardized format and an abbreviated template of standard forms for national public calls for applications (CVA). 2 pages maximum. Candidates shall use the template provided at the FECYT homepage: https://cvn.fecyt.es/editor/#HOME.
- b. Compliance with the mobility rule: Candidates must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in the country of the host organisation of the Outgoing Phase for more than 12 months in the 3 years immediately before the co-funded programme's call deadline. Candidates shall use the provided template.
- c. Doctoral certificate or an official equivalent document stating the date on which the doctorate was awarded. In case of not having a doctorate, the candidate must provide evidence for at least 4 years of full-time cancer research experience (employment contracts, a commitment letter signed by the supervisor and institution, ...)
- d. English Skills certificate: B2 proficiency in TOEFL or proven English test
- e. Curriculum vitae of the supervisors of each phase (Outgoing/Return) using a standardized format and an abbreviated template of standard forms for national public calls for applications (CVA or any other abbreviated CV format). 2 pages maximum.



- f. Letter of acceptance from the supervisor at each phase (Outgoing/Return) with a commitment to support the training and development of the candidate's research activity in the project area and at the proposed institution. Candidates shall use the provided template.
- g. Letter of acceptance from the hosting institution at each phase (Outgoing/Return) signed by the managing director or scientific director of the centre guaranteeing institutional admitting the researcher stage and guaranteeing training at the research line defined in the project. *Candidates shall use the provided template*. This document is indispensable for a candidacy to be validated.
- h. Ethical self-assessment form. Candidates shall use the provided template.
- i. Ethics compliance document. Candidates shall use the provided template.
- j. Personalized Career Development Plan self-assessment that includes future career perspectives, training and skills that they want to acquire and possible secondments that they want to undergo.
- k. Track record. Report detailing research experience related to the project, indicating the main research line developed by the candidate, previous publications in the field of the project and specifying the main achievements to date. *2 pages maximum*.
- I. Training and research plan. 10 pages maximum. Candidates shall use the provided template. The details of this document are set out below.
 - Summary (half a page)
 - → Keywords (at least 5 free keywords)
 - Project description, including objectives, methods and a schedule estimation
 - → Description of the training objectives, including skills, planned attendance to courses, workshops and conferences and secondments.
 - → Bibliography (not considered for the page count).

The requested documents must be submitted as scanned copies in PDF format and must not be bigger than 5mb. These documents may be provided in the language in which they were issued, but if they are in a language other than English or Spanish, they must be accompanied by a certified translation.

About the Training and Research Project Memory:

- → The template provided must be used, but must not exceed 10 pages. The format of the text should be as follows: DIN A4
- Calibri, Times New Roman, Arial or Helvetica.
- → Font size 11 or 12.
- → Single line spacing.
- → Margins: 2cm at the sides, 1.5 below.



Documents uploaded to the application in PDF format must be clear and legible, and not bigger than 5mb. In addition, each page of the original document must correspond to a page of the PDF document.

In case the candidates or their institutions have any questions, they can visit the CRIS OutBack Fellowship Programme webpage (www.criscancer.org/calls) or email outbackhelpdesk@criscancer.org.

Selection process

The selection process is designed to identify outstanding candidates interested in being trained as cancer researchers, regardless of background, independent of origin, genus, nationality or any other aspect that could skew the selection. The goal is to ensure transparency, fairness and impartiality throughout the process.

Evaluation committees will choose the candidates that, according to their criteria, prove the highest achievements and capacities.

1. Eligibility review:

All applications received will be reviewed by the <u>Programme Manager</u> and CRIS OutBack Programme Operations Team and those that do not meet the eligibility criteria set out in the terms and conditions of the call for applications will be rejected. There will then be a corrective period of ten days during which any outstanding documentation will be requested, and any corrections or clarifications should be made.

All rejected applications will receive a notification detailing the reason for rejection.

2. Technical evaluation:

Peer-review panel will be in charge of the evaluation of candidates and will be composed of multidisciplinary scientists from national and international high impact disciplines.

Candidacies will be evaluated in accordance with the General Evaluation Criteria. Each candidate will be scored by three separate evaluators following the *General Evaluation Criteria* of the Programme between 0-100. The final score will be the average of the different evaluations.

The top-scoring 20% will go onto the ethics evaluation and interview evaluation phase.

The Ethics Board will evaluate the Ethic Self-assessment form and the research plan provided by the candidates.

All candidates that will enter the interview evaluation will be contacted via email. The interviews will be conducted by an Interview Panel which includes top international researchers.



Prior to the interviews, the Interview Panel will meet to discuss the candidates put forward, discuss the most relevant aspects of their project, and prepare the questions to be asked during the interview phase of the candidates selected for the interview.

The criteria applied in this interview are set out in the *General Evaluation Criteria*:

Candidates who are offered an interview should take into account the following:

- → Interviews will last about 20 minutes.
- → Candidates must summarize in five minutes their research career and the rationale for selecting the hosting institutions and research groups for their training.
- → They will be asked questions relating to their past and future career and to their project.
- → The candidate must respect the confidentiality and identity of the evaluators that participate in the interview session.

All candidates who make it into the last assessment round will be notified of the comments resulting from the final discussions of the Interview Panel.

The outcome of the interview together with the previous scoring of the written proposal will result in the **final score** (60% written proposal (Peer-Review Panel evaluation) and 40% interview (Interview Panel evaluation)) that will constitute the final scoring list.

There will then be a redress period of ten days during which any claim will be requested and any corrections or clarifications should be made.

General evaluation criteria:

In general, two main questions will be taken into account to ensure the excellence of the candidates:

- → The background of the candidate, potential impact of the stage in their career and training workflow.
- → The selected research groups, supervisors and hosting institutions.

Below we summarize the main criteria of the *Peer-Review Guide* that is provided to the *Peer-Review Panel* including standard questions to evaluate the following items:

- → Excellence (Maximum 50 points)
 - a. Innovative and transformative nature of the project, including inter/multidisciplinary aspects and gender dimension of the research.
 - Match of proposed training and transfer of knowledge activities with future career development
 - c. Capacity of the fellow to independently carry out the project.
 - d. Match of all outgoing, return– hosting institution and supervisors with the project and fellow's profile.
- → Impact (Maximum 30 points)



- a. Impact of the project research and training for the future career development of the fellow, both in and outside academia
- b. Quality of the project in terms of exploitation, dissemination and communication.

→ Implementation (Maximum 20 points)

- a. Feasibility of the planned research and training project in terms of planned resources including work plan
- b. Risk assessment
- c. Capacity of hosting institutions to implement the project in all aspects of its aspects.

Each evaluator will prepare an individual evaluation report at the *Programme Call Platform* including the scoring, comments and observations on every item.

Below we summarize the main criteria of the *Interview Guide* that is provided to the *Interview Panel* including standard questions to evaluate the following items:

→ Candidate (Maximum 60 points)

- a. Presentation of CV, previous career path and activities
- b. Match of proposed project with past and projected future career path

→ Transferable Skills (Maximum 40 points)

- a. Ability to take part in a scientific discussion.
- b. Presentation Skills
- c. Team and leadership skills

In case of ex aequo, the Interview Panel will prioritize Candidate over Transferable Skills.

Appeals

From the date on which the notification of rejection is sent, there is a period of 10 calendar days during which candidates may lodge an appeal via email to outbackhelpdesk@criscancer.org.

The procedure for making an appeal will be kept strictly confidential and will not result in a scientific reevaluation by the panel. The independence and objectivity of the assessment is guaranteed by the selection and evaluation process.

Any appeals submitted will be resolved by the Integrity Officer, which will notify the candidate of its findings by email within 30 calendar days from the date the appeal is received.

Appointment



The list of awardees chosen by means of the Evaluation Stage will be published on the website of the CRIS Cancer Foundation in the CRIS OutBack Fellowship Programme CALL FOR APPLICATIONS section, as of December 31st 2021.

If the chosen awardees decide not to take part in the programme, the respective grant will be awarded to the next highest-scoring candidate as ranked by the complete evaluation.

The beneficiaries must begin work at their respective centre by **April 30th 2022** at the latest. **In duly justified cases,** if the proper documentation has been provided, **this date can be delayed by up to 3 months.** If this deadline is not adhered to, the funding will not be released for the programme.

Once the contract has been signed, the project could be transferred to another institution. A formal transfer request must be submitted along with all the documentation requested in the terms and conditions of the call for applications, along with an official acceptance from the new host institution. The CRIS Cancer Foundation must evaluate the transfer request and issue its approval.

If the line of research developed by the candidate during the Programme differs from the area stipulated originally in their application, it must not be too far from their initial preference, in terms of content, field or discipline. If there are significant changes, candidates must inform the CRIS Cancer Foundation.

Training Programme:

For the candidates to take ownership of their careers and obtain a multidisciplinary and intersectoral training, the CRIS OutBack Fellowship Programme will help the candidate to develop a **Personal Career Development Plan (PCDP)**. This plan consists of periodical mentoring by the programme supervisors, multidisciplinary training sessions and annual mentoring sessions.

For the development of this plan, candidates will fill in a Personal Career Development Plan self-assessment form, to identify candidate's strengths, areas of interests and short-/long-term objectives.

Follow-up and Mentoring:

Each fellow will have **three supervisors**: two primary supervisors, one at each host institution (outgoing / return phase), and an external co-supervisor provided by CRIS. In case that the fellow undertakes a secondment, there will also be a secondment supervisor. Supervisors will contribute to the advancement of the project, evaluate the scientific training of the fellows, and provide advice in scientific and other multidisciplinary issues.

Additionally, there will be a **Mentoring Panel**, composed by 5 academic and non-academic experts that will participate in the Annual Mentoring Sessions. Annual Mentoring Sessions:

The PCDP will be annually monitored and adapted by the Mentoring Panel and candidate's supervisors in an **Annual Mentoring Session**. In these sessions the fellows will perform a presentation of the project



status, state their main challenges, discuss with the panel possible solutions to challenges and problems, and make a brief statement on the different aspects of their training during the last year.

Main objectives of these sessions are:

- → Provide guidance on the future of the project and potential candidate's options.
- → Suggest, if necessary, any specific training needs to add to the overall training plan.
- → Share experiences to provide new points of view, propose experiments and focus on the objectives of the project.
- → Identify potential risks or weaknesses of the project.

Attendance to these mentoring sessions is mandatory. The date will be coordinated considering the availability of both the candidate and the members of the panel.

Training Sessions:

CRIS has developed planned a schedule of Training Sessions that is aimed to go beyond the purely practical and scientific by enhancing different aspects of a researchers' career, providing the fellows with useful professional tools in the future, promote interaction and direct communication between other beneficiaries CRIS Programmes and external entities and partners participating in the training. The skills acquired in these sessions will provide fundamental knowledge assuring fellows employability and improving their career expectations.

Sessions will be divided in three Modules:

- → Career Skills: Such as Open Science and Open Data training, project and paper writing, ethics in research, science dissemination, clinical trial planning and implementation, fundraising, leadership and group Managing...
- → Career Counseling: These sessions will be oriented to describe the scientific and medical landscape, not only locally but also internationally. These sessions will also include training on collaborations, networking and talent attraction.
- → **Knowledge Transfer:** Such as Understanding EU funding programmes, intellectual property, business model development, project communication, EU proposal writing, finances for entrepreneurs...

Training sessions will take place as webinars, and they will be provided by experts chosen from CRIS partner institutions. There will be **2 Training sessions per year. Attendance to a minimum of 75% of the sessions is mandatory,** and any missing session should be duly justified.

Fellows will send a training progress report annually that will be reviewed by the Mentoring Panel and discussed in the Annual Mentoring Session.



Secondment and short visits

Fellows have the option of a secondment phase at another host institution, that must be different from the outgoing or return institutions.

These secondments will be of a minimum of 4 weeks up to a maximum of 6 months and can be split into 2 or more stays not shorter than 2 weeks, to other institutions for intersectorial training. These secondments can take place both, during the outgoing and return phase.

During secondments, the fellow will have an additional supervisor at the secondment host institution, and the respective secondment agreement with the secondment host institution will cover any ethics aspects and ensure that these are in line with the ethical principles of Spanish institution.

CRIS Outback Fellowship Programme is also open to short visits (not longer than 4 weeks) during the two stages to other institutions.

Incompatibilities

Candidates must run the training plan in person, at the host research centres, hospitals or universities. Clinical practice and research must be carried out on a full-time basis at the host institutions.

The candidate may perform teaching activities, provided they notify the CRIS Cancer Foundation, and such activities are for a maximum of 80 hours per year.

Any chosen candidates who decide not to take part in the programme may not reapply to subsequent programmes, unless their reasons are duly justified and documented.

Any candidate who has been in contact with any member of the evaluation panels regarding issues related to the programme will be immediately excluded from the process and will not be able to reapply in the future.

Taking part in this programme is not compatible with permanent employment contracts at any other institution that is not the return host institution.

Any breach of ethical considerations will lead to immediate termination of funding and said individual will not be allowed to reapply to the programme.

Obligations



The beneficiary must agree to collaborate in communication activities and events organized by the Foundation related to these programmes.

Except for reasons of force majeure, the recipients must agree to attend the official awards ceremony for the programmes.

The return institution receiving the candidate will manage and administer the funds allocated annually by the CRIS Cancer Foundation to this programme.

The CRIS Cancer Foundation will request from the host institutions a **detailed financial report** breaking down the costs of activities carried out by the candidate. This report will be required **annually** and at the end of the programme.

At any time, the CRIS Cancer Foundation reserves the right to request accreditation by asking the candidate to provide the original documents or certified copies of any document indicated in the application or curriculum.

The candidate must submit a **scientific-technical annual report** in relation to the development of the training plan.

Host institutions and supervisors compromise to allow the applicant to sign as author in the publications derived from the projects the candidate participated during the stage.

Fellows will be required to have an ORCID membership to join Github to share their results and data in open repositories such as Zenodo.

Data protection and privacy

The CRIS Cancer Foundation fully complies with current data protection legislation.

The personal data of the researchers or any other individual listed in the application documents will be incorporated into the CRIS database and will only be used for the evaluation of proposals. By submitting an application, the participant agrees for information about their project to be incorporated into the CRIS database.

For the application and program evaluation procedure to be conducted, anyone who submits an application will need to provide their personal data for incorporation in our database. The purpose of this is to send out notifications concerning the program and application procedure.

To learn more about the transfer of data and how applicants may exercise their rights, you may request additional information by emailing outbackhelpdesk@criscancer.org and you may also exercise your rights of access, correction or erasure of your personal data, as well as limit or contest the processing thereof.

Equal opportunity policy



CRIS follows the Spanish equal opportunities policy, which is based on the national regulation/law for gender equality (Ley Orgánica 3/2007, de 22 de marzo, para la igualdad efectiva de mujeres y hombres - Ley de Igualdad ("Gender Equality Act")). The recruitment of the candidates of both genders will not be biased by their gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, social-economical background.

Equal opportunities will be granted not only during the evaluation process but also during the programme development and supervision. Evaluation Committees and Project Supervisors will be asked to scrutinize how they provide equality of opportunity and treatment to the researchers during the selection process and equality of support during their fellowships.

CRIS committees will also be gender balanced. CRIS wants to support talented women in research, as they are still underrepresented, especially in the higher categories of scientific careers. CRIS policy states that in case there are several candidates with similar profiles, quality, and experience, preference will be given to the female candidate.

To raise awareness of these topics, the Training Plan will include gender awareness sessions. Supervisors will be invited to take part in these training sessions as part of their own continuing education.

The CRIS OutBack Fellowship Programme supports researchers with disabilities by including funds for additional costs that these researchers face due to the increased costs of their mobility, to cover entry conditions/visa, to ensure necessary assistance by third persons or for adapting their work environment. It cannot cover costs which are already covered by another source, such as social security or health insurance.

CRIS will specifically encourage researchers at risk to apply to this Programme and participate in the EU Science4Refguees initiative. We will support researchers under refugee status by an adapted mobility rule. Researchers at risk will be able to apply by postal mail, too to facilitate and encourage them to apply. We will also reach out in the call dissemination via specific channels to researchers under refugee status.

In case of investigators restarting their career, the Programme will be flexible on mobility rule requirements allowing them to spend no more than 3 years in the host country in the last 5 years.

Observations

The timeframes and times contained in these terms and conditions are understood to refer to mainland Spain (Central European Time - CET).

The submission of an application for this program presupposes the candidate's express acceptance of these terms and conditions, as well as the criteria and decisions made by the CRIS Cancer Foundation regarding any queries in the interpretation of the requirements and conditions set forth herein.

If the candidate is found not to have complied with these terms and conditions, regardless of when this occurs or what stage of the application process or programme the candidate has reached, their candidacy will be terminated, and any funding granted will be revoked. If the beneficiary does not comply with the aforementioned commitments - or any others included in the conditions indicated herein - the CRIS



Cancer Foundation reserves the right to proceed as appropriate, and even request that the beneficiary returns any funding received.