



INVESTIGACIÓN PARA
OTRA OPORTUNIDAD

CRIS

EMERGING

LEADER

PROGRAMME

Call for Applications 2026

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Introduction

CRIS Contra el Cáncer (hereafter CRIS) has a mission to promote research as the tool that will lead to effective, long-lasting treatments against different types of cancer. That is why it is essential to lay the foundations for solid research careers, especially by offering stable career paths and attracting the best and brightest researchers.

One of the great hurdles in research is that experienced researchers find it hard to return to Spain with competitive employment conditions or job stability in the medium term, to enable them to lead high-impact projects. This is also true for post-doctoral researchers already established in Spain looking to develop their research career by establishing their own laboratories.

In this context, CRIS is inviting applications for the **CRIS Emerging Leader Programme**, which is addressed to researchers at a defined early stage of independence, who are in the process of establishing their independent research line and have not yet consolidated a long-standing position as heads of group.

Scope of the call

This call aims to fund translational cancer research projects carried out at institutions in Spain, with the ultimate goal of improving outcomes for cancer patients. CRIS Programmes support individual projects across any area of cancer research, including (but not limited to) tumour biology, cancer immunology, precision oncology, early diagnosis, resistance mechanisms, or innovative therapeutic strategies.

CRIS focuses on research with clear translational potential and clinical relevance. Even when addressing fundamental research questions, projects are framed around clinical applicability and meaningful impact for patients, in line with CRIS strategic priorities.

Duration and budget

Projects shall have a maximum duration of five years, with the possibility of one no-cost extension of up to twelve months. Funding is awarded for an initial period of three years and may be renewed for a further two years, subject to a favourable mid-term evaluation carried out after the second year.

The maximum grant awarded will be €400,000, distributed in annual instalments of up to €80,000:

- a. **Personnel costs (PI's salary and/or staff salaries):** The maximum gross salary will depend on the salary scales of the host institution. This amount includes Social Security contributions and any other amounts payable by the host institution.

In the event that the candidate is already employed at the host institution, the financial subsidy may be used as:

- Salary supplementation: If the candidate is supported by a talent-attraction programme such as Ramón y Cajal, Juan de la Cierva, Juan Rodés, Río Hortega, Miguel Servet, or other comparable public talent-attraction programmes, part of the CRIS funding may be used to supplement the salary according to salary scales of the host institution.
- Intensification of between 50% and 100% of the candidate's working hours when the candidate is employed by a hospital. The endowment will cover the costs incurred by the institution hosting the programme beneficiary.

Up to a maximum of 80% of the total grant may be allocated to the salary of the Principal Investigator

- b. Costs associated with the research project.
- c. Moving assistance (optional)
- d. Family support (optional)

In no case may indirect costs associated with the project be applied by the host institution.

These amounts will be subject to the corresponding legal tax retention.

Applicants may find further details regarding eligible costs and funding conditions in the [CRIS Cost Guidelines](#) associated with this call.

Timeline

Opening of the online platform for Applications	Application deadline	Evaluation process	Interviews with selected candidates	Resolution of the call	Initiation of funded projects
9 March 2026 8am	13 May 2026 15pm	From June to November 2026	November 2026	31 December 2026	From February to June 2027

The timelines indicated are subject to change for organisational reasons, and all dates and times refer to mainland Spain time (Central European Time, CET).

The list of selected Beneficiaries, together with the Reserve List, will be published on the CRIS website ([CRIS Emerging Leader Programme](#) section) before **31 December 2026**. Beneficiaries can take up their position at the host institution as soon as the resolution of the call is published. In duly justified cases of force majeure, this start date may be postponed, subject to individual assessment by CRIS.

Eligibility

Beneficiary:

The [CRIS Emerging Leader Programme](#) is open to post-doctoral researchers of all nationalities as long as their project is carried out at a centre in Spain.

1. PhD and Research independence

Applications will be accepted from researchers who completed their PhD no more than 10 years prior to the year in which this call is published and who are either not yet independent researchers or have established research independence no more than five years prior to the year of publication of the call.

The date on which the candidate defended their PhD thesis will be taken as the date on which they completed their PhD and earned the title of doctor.

The period for obtaining the doctorate and the research independence can be extended in the event that any of the following situations is duly accredited:

- Maternity/paternity leave, adoption or foster care. To be applied: up to 1 year per child for men and 3 years per child for women
- Temporary disability related to pregnancy: an extension of 4 weeks for each week of justified leave.
- Temporary disability due to other causes: an extension of up to 1 year.
- Reductions or exemptions of working hours due to family illness, dependency, or gender-based or terrorist violence: an extension of 4 weeks for each week of activity as a non-professional caregiver, duly justified.
- Compulsory military service (for non-Spanish candidates): an extension equivalent to the duly justified period.

CRIS reserves the right to approve or reject any extension request, and written approval will be required in all cases.

2. Publications

Additionally, the candidate must fulfill at least one of the following requirements:

- Have at least 5 publications in scientific journals and must be the first or last author for, at least, 1 publication in Q1 journals.
- Be the first or last author for, at least, 1 publication in D1 journals (impact factor higher than 20)

Note: Only articles with a Pubmed ID will be considered. The classification of the journal in the first quartile will be verified using the last published Journal of Citation Report list as the criterion. When calculating the total number of publications, abstracts from congresses shall not be taken into account, neither will preprints, articles submitted or in review, or book chapters.

3. Secondments

The candidate must provide proof that they have spent at least 12 months abroad at some point in their research career.

Hosting Institution

The Hosting Institution must be located in Spain. Only universities, non-profit private or public research centres in Spain can host beneficiaries of the **CRIS Emerging Leader Programme**.

Restrictions

The following restrictions apply to the submission of applications:

- A researcher may apply just to one CRIS Research Programme (**CRIS Excellence, Emerging Leader, or Translational Physician Programme**) in the same call for applicants.
- An applicant that has been awarded in any previous CRIS Research Programme's call for applicants cannot reapply to the same CRIS Research Programme. He/she may only apply to a different CRIS Research Programme during the last year of the grant.
- If an applicant has been rejected previously due to a lack of scientific integrity, they may not reapply.

- Candidates who have previously applied to this Programme with the same project will only be eligible to apply again if they submit a substantially different proposal.

Proposal submission

Candidates or their institutions may raise any question about the **CRIS Emerging Leader Programme** call for applications, at www.criscancer.org/programascris or emailing convocatorias@criscancer.org.

All applications must be completed on-line using the **CRIS Emerging Leader Programme Platform**, which will be made available to candidates at www.criscancer.org/programascris.

All applications must provide two blocks of documentation.

Part A: Administrative Form

Part B: Documentation

Part A: ADMINISTRATIVE FORM

Please note that you must complete this form before you can proceed with the rest of the documentation. This section must be completed entirely in English.

The form includes the following elements:

- General information about the candidate:** Name and surname, identification document, year of birth, academic degree, and contact information.
- Details about the current institution:** Name and address
- Details about the host institution:** Name and address
- Details of the Research Project:** Title, code, research area, type of cancer, topic, and duration.

Part B: DOCUMENTATION

Candidates must provide all required documentation in PDF format, in accordance with the following requirements: each page must include a header indicating the candidate's name and the acronym of the application, and none of the submitted documents may exceed 4 MB in size.

- Curriculum vitae** of the candidate using a standardised summarised format (CVA, in its 4-page format), following an abbreviated template of standard forms for public calls for applications (<https://cvn.fecyt.es/>). This document must be provided in English.
- ID card.** Candidates must provide a clear and legible copy of both the front and back sides of their national ID card (or equivalent identification document).
- Research independence accreditation (if applicable).** The date on which the candidate can be considered as independent researcher can be accredited with official documents such as a labour contract as principal investigator, a project awarded as an individual investigator, a labour contract from contracted personnel under his/her supervision, or a certified letter from the institution.
- Doctoral certificate** and the date on which the candidates defended their PhDs. If the applicant does not have this certificate, you must provide an official document stating the date on which the doctorate was awarded.
- Documentation related to an **extension for the validity of your candidacy** (if applicable).

- f. **Candidate's track record**, reflecting key events in the researcher's career and the candidate's experience in the field of study. The provided template must be used (Maximum 3 pages).
- g. **Research Project**. The provided template must be used (Maximum 8 pages). The bibliography and figures do not count for the maximum number of pages. The format of the text should be as follows:
- Din A4.
 - Nunito, Calibri, Times New Roman, Arial or Helvetica.
 - Font size 11 or 12.
 - Single line spacing.
 - Margins: 2 cm on either side.
- h. **Project budget**. The provided excel template must be used. A financial external audit at the end of the project may be included in the budget.
- i. **Lay summary**, in Spanish, presenting the project in clear and accessible language, with a focus on its relevance and potential impact for patients. The provided template must be used. This document should include sufficient information to allow a general audience to understand the overall development and potential impact of the project. The patients' perspective and/or participation must also be considered and included.
- j. **Letter of acceptance from the host institution** signed by the managing director or scientific director of the centre guaranteeing institutional support for the researcher and the research line of the particular project. This document is indispensable for a candidacy to be validated. The template provided must be used.
- k. **Declaration on ethical issues**. The provided template must be used.
- l. **Document that proves the candidate has spent at least 12 months** at an institution outside of Spain. A labor contracts, labor certificate, house rental agreement, or any other official documentation can be provided

For supporting documentation for which no template is provided (e.g., doctoral certificate), applicants may submit the documents in the original language. However, if they are not in English or Spanish, they must be accompanied by a certified translation.

Evaluation process

The selection process is designed to identify outstanding candidates regardless of their origin, gender, nationality, or other aspects that could skew the selection. The goal is to ensure transparency, fairness, and impartiality throughout the process.

- Administrative Evaluation (Eligibility Check)
- Second Evaluation: Written Proposal Evaluation by an external agency.
- Final Evaluation: International Scientific Committee (ISC), CRIS Strategy and Patients Experts.

The selected candidates will proceed to the interview stage, conducted by the ISC, in which the final beneficiaries of the programmes will be decided.



CRIS will fund two beneficiaries under the [CRIS Emerging Leader Programme](#). In addition, a reserve list will be established, comprising candidates who, despite not being awarded funding in the first instance, are considered to have sufficient scientific quality to be funded in the event of a withdrawal by beneficiaries or if circumstances allow CRIS to allocate additional funds to these applications.

The evaluation decision will be final and not subject to appeal.

CRIS is committed to supporting its previously funded researchers throughout the different stages of their scientific careers. In line with this objective, a Fast-Track procedure is foreseen for previous beneficiaries of CRIS programmes who have successfully completed their projects.

Under this procedure, candidates may skip the external evaluation phase (Stage 2) and proceed directly to Stage 3, which includes evaluation by the ISC, assessment by patients, and alignment with CRIS's strategy. Candidates who go through this Fast-Track process do not decrease the number of places in Stage 3 for the other candidates.

More information regarding the selection process and the evaluation criteria can be found in the [CRIS Evaluation Guidelines](#).

Agreement

Applicants selected as Beneficiaries of the [CRIS Emerging Leader Programme](#) will be subject to the execution of a collaboration agreement between CRIS and the host institution. This Agreement shall define the rights and obligations of both parties and shall include, among others, provisions on the allocation of project funds, ethical compliance, scientific/economic/impact monitoring, communication obligations of the researcher, and intellectual property.

Once the contract has been signed, any transfer of the project to a different host institution shall require a formal request with supporting documentation and acceptance by the new institution, and must be approved by CRIS; if approved, the original agreement will be terminated, the remaining budget returned to CRIS, and a new agreement will be signed with the new host institution for the remaining period and funds.

Follow up and monitoring

All follow-up documentation shall be submitted through the same grant management platform used for the application process. CRIS reserves the right to audit the development of the project at any time.

Annually beneficiaries should provide the following documentation:

- **Impact report:** to collect key information on scientific progress, in order to monitor the project's development and assess the scientific and clinical impact of CRIS funding.
- **Scientific and technical report:** to describe the progress of the project throughout the duration of the programme.
- **Financial report:** detailing the costs related to the activities carried out by the candidate.

Upon submission of the **second-year follow-up report**, the documentation will undergo an external evaluation, typically conducted by the Spanish State Research Agency (Agencia Estatal de Investigación), during the third year of the grant. If the evaluation is positive, the project will continue until the end of the funding period in accordance with the agreement. If the evaluation is negative, the Principal Investigator will be asked to address the recommendations included in the evaluation report within a reasonable timeframe. If the issues are not satisfactorily resolved, CRIS will notify the Principal Investigator and the Hosting Institution of the termination of the agreement.

At the end of the programme, beneficiaries must submit the corresponding final versions of the above reports, together with a final financial audit report issued by an independent external auditor, certifying that the awarded funds have been used in accordance with the approved budget and the terms and conditions of the call.

Data protection and privacy

CRIS fully complies with current legislation on the protection of personal data.

The personal data of the researchers or any other individual listed in the application documents will be incorporated onto the CRIS database and will only be used for the evaluation of proposals or CRIS information and further grant dissemination. By applying, the participant agrees for information about the Project to be incorporated onto the CRIS database.

To learn more about the transfer of data and how applicants may exercise their rights, you may request additional information by emailing convocatorias@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 of said data.

Exploitation of the results derived from the project

Participation in the call implies that the host Institutions accept that, in the event of being awarded funding, CRIS may participate in the benefits derived from the exploitation of the project results. Should the awarded Host Institution exploit the project results directly or through a third natural or legal person following the granting of a licence, CRIS shall be entitled to receive an annual percentage of the net revenues derived from such exploitation until the total reimbursement of the grant has been completed, under terms to be agreed between the parties.

Observations

The submission of an application for this funding presupposes the candidate's express acceptance of these terms and conditions. Any breach of these conditions may lead to termination of the application or programme, revocation of the funding, and, where applicable, reimbursement of the funds received.

Beneficiaries must comply with data management and funding rules; failure to do so, including cases of double funding, may result in corrective measures or reimbursement. Data generated under the project must be managed in accordance with applicable regulations, deposited in an appropriate repository, and made openly accessible whenever possible, in line with FAIR principles, with beneficiaries retaining ownership while granting CRIS a non-exclusive licence for research and policy purposes.