



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation

U.S.A. – Italy
Science and Technology Cooperation

Call for Joint Project Proposals

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Submission Deadline:

July 18, 2026 at 12 p.m.

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A. CONTEXT AND LEGAL BASIS

Pursuant to the 1988 U.S.–Italy Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement (hereinafter referred to as “the Agreement”), the 2025 U.S.–Italy Joint Leaders’ Statement issued in Washington, D.C., and the Joint Declaration adopted at the 15th U.S.–Italy Joint Commission Meeting held in Washington, D.C. in 2026, the Italian side has committed to launching a Call for Proposals for the selection of joint U.S.-Italian projects in Science and Technology (S&T) eligible for financial support, in accordance with Article 3 of the Agreement.

This Call is intended to contribute not only to the funding of individual research projects, but also to the development of a structured U.S.–Italy research and innovation ecosystem integrating higher education, advanced research training, scientific mobility, research infrastructures, technological innovation, and long-term institutional partnerships.

In this perspective, the Call aims to strengthen trusted transatlantic cooperation in strategic scientific and technological domains, promote talent circulation, and support sustainable cooperation models capable of generating long-lasting scientific, technological, economic, and societal impact.

B. PRIORITY AREAS OF COOPERATION

Within the framework of this Call for Proposals, joint U.S.-Italian project proposals are invited in the following priority areas of cooperation in Science and Technology (S&T):

1. Advanced and Sustainable Nuclear Technologies: AI, Systems, and Components for Fission and Fusion;
2. Advanced Multi-Scale Materials for Extreme Environments, Neuroglia In Vitro Models, and Biocomputing;
3. Advanced Biotechnologies for Human Health: Biofabrication, Scalable Biomanufacturing, Bio-Digital/Immune Engineering, Innovative Therapies, and Industrial Translation;
4. Quantum Technologies: Quantum Sensing, Quantum Information, Hybrid AI–Quantum Algorithms, and HPC Integration.

C. FUNDING MODALITIES AND PROJECT DURATION

The financial support provided by the Italian side originates from the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI)**, the **Ministry of University and Research (MUR)**, and the **Ministry of Health (MinSalute)**.

The Italian side intends to allocate funding to support the joint U.S.-Italian project proposals selected under this Call, for a duration of **two years (24 months)**. The relevant grant agreements will be concluded accordingly.

The Call is structured into **two intervention lines** (hereinafter “Line 1 – Regular Projects” and “Line 2 – Flagship Projects”), which differ in terms of funding, participation, expected impact, and evaluation requirements. Applicants (Principal Investigators) must select one intervention line at the time of submission. Proposals may not be submitted under both lines simultaneously by the same Principal Investigator (PI). However, a PI applying under one intervention line may still participate as a research team member in a project submitted under the other line.

Line 1 – Regular Projects

Regular Projects are standard bilateral research initiatives aimed at supporting focused scientific collaboration between Italian and U.S. research teams, with an indicative composition of up to four members in each research team. These projects address specific research questions within the priority areas and are expected to deliver high-quality scientific results within a clearly defined and limited scope.

- Funding: up to **EUR 100,000** per year;
- Duration: **two years (24 months)**;
- Objective: to support focused bilateral research collaborations between Italian and U.S. teams aimed at developing high-quality scientific outputs, strengthening researcher mobility, promoting early-career talent development, and laying the groundwork for durable cooperation between the participating institutions.

Line 2 – Flagship Projects

Flagship Projects are large-scale strategic initiatives addressing complex scientific or technological challenges of particular relevance to U.S.–Italy Science and Technology Cooperation. They must build upon an existing and demonstrable collaboration between Italian and U.S. research teams. They are characterized by higher ambition, broader impact, and stronger integration between partners, including, where appropriate, interdisciplinary approaches, shared access to research infrastructures and national laboratories, involvement of additional stakeholders (e.g. industry or public institutions), and with an indicative composition of between five and eight members in each research team, as well as a clear potential for scalability and long-term sustainability beyond the project’s duration.

Flagship Projects shall include a dedicated governance structure, a clear work plan for coordination among partners, a sustainability strategy beyond the funding period, and, where appropriate, the involvement of additional stakeholders such as industry, public institutions, research infrastructures, innovation ecosystems, or other relevant actors.

- Funding: up to **EUR 250,000** per year;
- Duration: **two years (24 months)**;
- Objective: to support strategic, large-scale, and high-impact bilateral initiatives building on existing and verified U.S.–Italy scientific collaborations, with the aim of consolidating long-term research partnerships, fostering interdisciplinary approaches, promoting access to research infrastructures where relevant, involving additional

stakeholders, and generating measurable scientific, technological, societal, or economic impact beyond the duration of the project.

The contribution granted by the Italian side will be based on the approved multiannual budget of the selected project.

The contribution granted by the Italian side under this Call is intended as co-funding support for the project. Therefore, the coordinating Italian institution must provide co-funding corresponding to approximately 50% of the total eligible project costs.

Co-funding may include: (i) personnel costs **incurred by the Italian research team only**, including salaries of staff involved in the project; and (ii) indirect costs.

Other eligible costs financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI) and the participating Ministries, as specified in a subsequent administrative note, may include travel, accommodation, and daily living expenses **incurred by both the Italian and the U.S. research teams**, subject to the approval of the Italian PI.

The Italian contribution will be disbursed in accordance with the provisions of the relevant grant agreement:

- A first installment, corresponding to 100% of the Italian funding allocated for the first year, will be disbursed in advance upon submission of a formal declaration certifying the commencement of project activities. **Any unspent funds must either be refunded to the Italian funding authority or may be retained by the recipient, in which case they will be deducted from the total contribution;**
- Expenditures related to the second year shall be pre-financed by the coordinating institution and will be reimbursed by the Italian funding authority during the third year, subject to the submission and positive evaluation of the required scientific and financial reports¹, in accordance with the provisions set out in the relevant grant agreement.

D. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Proposals must meet the following eligibility criteria. Proposals that do not comply will be considered ineligible and will not be submitted for scientific evaluation.

a) Bilateral Collaboration

Projects must be jointly submitted by collaborating Italian and U.S. research teams. Each proposal must demonstrate a clearly defined and balanced contribution from both sides.

b) Thematic Scope

Proposals must address one of the priority research areas and related subtopics defined in Section B of this Call.

¹ The rules governing financial reporting may differ slightly if the funding authority responsible for the project is the Ministry of Health (MinSalute).

c) Project Leadership

Each project must be jointly led by two Principal Investigators (PIs), one based in Italy and one in the United States, who will share responsibility for the scientific direction and administrative coordination of the project.

Each PI must be either (i) an academic staff member (lecturer or equivalent) or (ii) a researcher affiliated with an eligible research organization, and should normally hold a permanent position. Fixed-term staff may also be eligible, provided that their contract covers at least the entire first year of project activities. In such cases, a letter signed by the legal representative of the institution, or their official delegate, must be provided, certifying that, should the contract terminate before the end of the project, the institution will appoint a replacement PI from within the research team to ensure continuity of activities.

Additional requirements for the Italian PI

The Italian PI must:

- be an Italian or EU citizen and legally resident in Italy.

Additional requirements for the U.S. PI

The U.S. PI must:

- provide clear evidence of available funding (e.g. grant number) to support the proposed research activities.

Priority will be given to proposals coordinated by early-career researchers, typically defined as researchers who are within 10 years of PhD completion at the submission deadline.

d) Eligible Institutions

1. On the Italian side, the PI must be affiliated with a public or private non-profit Italian academic or research institution. For funding provided by the Ministry of Health (MinSalute), only projects in which the Italian PI is affiliated with an IRCCS (Istituto di Ricovero e Cura a Carattere Scientifico) institution are eligible for support.
2. On the U.S. side, the PI must be affiliated with a recognized higher education institution, research organization, or other entity eligible for public research funding under applicable national regulations.

e) Consortium Composition (if applicable)

1. The number of members of each Italian and U.S. research team shall not exceed the maximum size established for the selected intervention line, as specified in Section C.
2. However, where relevant to the project objectives, the participation of additional partners from the public or private sector, including companies, is encouraged and shall not be counted towards the maximum team size referred to in Section D(e)(1), it being understood that Italian funding shall be disbursed exclusively to the research team members as specified in Section D(e)(1).
3. For projects selected for funding following the scientific evaluation, the participating academic or research institutions and, where applicable, private companies must

establish a legally recognized consortium under Italian law (e.g. ATS/ATI) and designate a coordinating institution, which shall be the sole recipient of funding. The coordinating institution must be a public or private non-profit academic or research institution; private companies are not eligible to serve as coordinating institution.

f) Applicant Limitations

Each PI may submit only one proposal under this Call as Principal Investigator (PI).

g) Coordination restriction across funding lines

An institution acting as coordinating institution in a Flagship Project may not act as coordinating institution in a Regular Project under the same Call, and vice versa. Participation as a partner in other project proposals remains permitted.

h) Balance and Cooperation

The project must reflect a balanced partnership in terms of scientific contribution between the Italian and U.S. teams.

i) Publication and Intellectual Property Rights

1. Appropriate protection of intellectual property rights (IPR) generated under this Call shall be ensured in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
2. Results generated solely by one participating institution shall be owned exclusively by that institution. Results generated jointly shall be jointly owned, unless otherwise agreed in a separate written agreement between the participating institutions.
3. Ownership, protection, and exploitation of IPR, as well as rules on publication and dissemination of results, shall be defined prior to the start of the project through a dedicated agreement between the participating institutions.
4. Any publication or public disclosure of project results shall be preceded by prior written notice to the other participating institution, in order to allow for the protection of potentially patentable results or confidential information within a reasonable timeframe (normally up to 30 days).

j) Ethical Requirements

1. All proposed activities must comply with applicable national and international ethical standards.
2. Projects involving human subjects or animals must obtain the required approvals from the relevant ethics committees prior to the start of the activities.
3. Applicants must declare compliance with applicable regulations at the proposal stage, in accordance with national requirements.

k) Open Science and Data Management

Projects shall promote, where appropriate and in compliance with applicable rules on confidentiality, intellectual property rights, and personal data protection, open science practices and the dissemination of research outputs.

Applicants are encouraged to adopt the FAIR principles for research data management and to provide, where relevant, a Data Management Plan describing how research data will be collected, stored, protected, shared, and reused.

l) Research Security

Projects involving sensitive, emerging, or critical technologies may be subject to additional research security assessments, in accordance with applicable national and international regulations.

Applicants shall ensure that project activities comply with relevant rules on research integrity, export control, protection of confidential information, cybersecurity, and prevention of undue foreign interference.

m) Administrative and Financial Responsibility

The PIs and their respective institutions are responsible for the proper implementation of the project and for ensuring accurate financial reporting to the funding authorities.

n) Institutional co-funding

The coordinating Italian institution must guarantee the required co-funding contribution for the project.

E. APPLICATION PROCEDURES

a) Submission

1. Each project must be submitted by the Italian PI through the national submission system, using the dedicated online application forms available at <https://pgr.esteri.it>. Proposals submitted through any other means will not be deemed eligible. When completing the online application form, applicants are required to enter "0" for the third year of implementation in order to ensure correct finalization of the submission within the system.
2. Proposals must be drafted in English and include all required documentation, duly completed and signed by the legal representative of the applying institution.
3. The Italian PI must clearly indicate at the beginning of the project title the intervention line under which the proposal is submitted by using one of the following prefixes: **[R]** or **[F]**.
4. Only proposals received in accordance with the prescribed procedures and within the established deadline will be deemed eligible for evaluation.

b) Content Requirements for Evaluation

In order to be considered eligible, proposals must be accompanied by an endorsement letter signed by the legal representative of the applying institution, or by a delegate duly authorized by formal provision.

F. PROPOSAL EVALUATION PROCESS

a) Eligibility Check and Evaluation

All proposals will first be subject to an administrative and eligibility check by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, in coordination with other funding Ministries. Only proposals that fulfill all formal requirements will proceed to the next stage of assessment.

Eligible proposals will follow two separate preliminary assessment pathways, based on the selected intervention line:

Regular Projects

1. Following the eligibility check, eligible proposals will undergo a preliminary assessment to evaluate the calibrated conformity of the project with the criteria applicable to the selected intervention line, as outlined in Section C.
2. Only proposals positively selected through this preliminary assessment will advance to the scientific evaluation.
3. Following the scientific evaluation, projects will be ranked and selected for funding in accordance with the procedure set out in Section F(c).

Flagship Projects

1. Following the eligibility check, eligible proposals will undergo a multi-tiered assessment to evaluate the calibrated conformity of the project with the criteria applicable to the selected intervention line and the extent to which it is expected to achieve its intended objectives, as outlined in Section C.
2. Only proposals positively selected by the commission will advance to the scientific evaluation.
3. Following the scientific evaluation, projects will be ranked and selected for funding in accordance with the procedure set out in Section F(c).

Proposals submitted under the Flagship Projects intervention line that, following the preliminary assessment, are considered not to fully satisfy the specific requirements applicable to Flagship Projects may, where deemed appropriate by the evaluation commission, be reclassified and considered for evaluation under the Regular Projects intervention line, provided that they meet the corresponding requirements and eligibility conditions.

b) Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be assessed on the basis of the following core criteria:

- **Strategic relevance to U.S.–Italy S&T cooperation:** clear and demonstrable alignment of the proposed research goals and expected applications with the strategic priorities of U.S.–Italy cooperation in science and technology. Proposals must provide concrete evidence of their capacity to strengthen bilateral priorities, deliver measurable added value in scientific

and technological exchange, and generate durable and structured cooperation outcomes between the two countries. In this context, proposals that build on previous collaborations – whether through joint projects or researcher mobility – will be given due consideration;

- **Mobility and reciprocity of researcher exchanges:** quality, feasibility, and balance of planned mobility activities between Italy and the United States. Proposals should demonstrate fair and reciprocal exchanges of researchers, ensuring that mobility flows are appropriately balanced and contribute meaningfully to bilateral knowledge transfer and project implementation;
- **Scientific quality and originality:** scientific excellence, clarity of objectives, and advancement beyond the state of the art;
- **Innovation potential:** degree of novelty and potential for technological, scientific, or societal impact;
- **Methodological robustness and feasibility:** soundness and appropriateness of the proposed approach, including work plan, timeline, and risk management;
- **Consortium quality and complementarity:** qualification, expertise, and complementarity of the partners;
- **Added value of bilateral cooperation:** contribution to the U.S.–Italy partnership, including knowledge exchange and strengthening of long-term collaboration;
- **Impact and exploitation potential:** expected outcomes, including scientific, technological, economic, or societal benefits, and plans for dissemination or further development of results;
- **Budget adequacy:** consistency of the proposed budget with the project objectives and planned activities;
- **Gender balance and inclusiveness:** extent to which the composition of the Italian and U.S. research teams ensures fair and balanced gender representation. Proposals should demonstrate attention to inclusiveness and, where imbalances exist, provide appropriate justification.

c) Selection Outcome

At the conclusion of the evaluation process, two separate ranked lists will be produced:

- List of selected Regular Projects
- List of selected Flagship Projects

Funding will be allocated within each list according to ranking and available budget.

G. NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS

Principal Investigators (PIs) of the projects selected following the scientific evaluation will be formally notified of the results.

a) Italian Side

The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation will directly notify only the Principal Investigators (PIs) of the selected projects by e-mail of the outcome of the selection process.

The list of selected projects will also be published on the Ministry's official website at the following address:

https://www.esteri.it/it/temi/diplomazia_scientifica/programmiesecutivi/accordi_programmi_culturali_tecnologici/.

b) U.S. Side

The list of selected projects will be published on the official website of the U.S. Embassy in Rome at the following address: <https://it.usembassy.gov>.

H. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on this Call for Proposals can be obtained from the following contacts:

Italy

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Directorate-General for Growth and Export Promotion (DGCE)

Office XI – Bilateral Scientific Cooperation

- For administrative and scientific information:
Email: dgce11.band1@esteri.it