

Presentation of the call for projects 2015

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1- Presentation of the International Foundation of Applied Disability Research (FIRAH)

The following two pages give an overall presentation of the project and the commitments of the Foundation in order to explain the overall context of the call for projects 2015.

The Foundation's mission

The FIRAH's mission is focused on 2 complementary areas that come together in service of the Foundation's goals:

- » A call for projects aimed at selecting and financing applied research projects.
- » The dissemination and promotion of knowledge produced both by Foundation-funded research projects or by other research initiatives, which must be made available to persons with disabilities¹, their families, professionals, trainers, researchers, policy-makers and the public at large are now available on the Resource Center Applied Research and Disability: <http://www.firah.org/centre-ressources/en/>

Generally speaking, the entire institutional project of the Foundation will pay particular attention to the balance between the financial support to applied research projects and the distribution and promotion of knowledge, meaning the "concrete implementation" of the knowledge resulting from research.

Through its activities, the Foundation gathers, studies, and promotes innovative knowledge and practices in the field of disability.

¹ We have chosen to use the term "persons with disabilities" that is used internationally in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Foundation's commitments

- » One of the major goals of FIRAH is to **change how persons with disabilities are perceived**. By avoiding stigmas and changing perceptions, we can help improve the inclusion and full participation² of persons with disabilities in society.
- » The Foundation chose to focus on disability at an international scope. The right of all citizens to equality, on which the Foundation bases its commitment, is an internationally recognized principle, included in the International Convention on the rights for people with disabilities. We hope to promote and spread knowledge and innovative practices for persons with disabilities on an international level through cross-border cooperation.
- » The social conception of disability is defined as the result of the interaction between a person's impairment and environmental obstacles. Therefore, the Foundation's goal is to support innovation in applied research on **providing individual support to persons with disabilities** and on how to **transform environmental obstacles into facilitators of social participation**.
- » Finally, the FIRAH's approach fits into a **wider framework of improving policies for persons with disabilities** and their families, which would recognize the **principles of accommodation and accessibility** for equal opportunities for all individuals, in accordance with the principles set forth in the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Foundation's final goal is to improve the social participation of persons with disabilities by improving support systems as well as working to provide an adapted, inclusive and facilitative environment.

².Social participation relates to the entire activities that a person must have to undertake to ensure a living, according to his /her lifestyle choices. It is measured against the fulfilment of activities of daily and domestic life as well as that of all social roles.

2- What FIRAH means by the term “applied disability research”

1/ Applied research

In general, we differentiate applied research and fundamental research because the main goal of the latest is not to produce new theoretical and general knowledge.

Fundamental research is mainly (though not exclusively) focused on producing new scientific knowledge, independent of any prospects for its application.

Applied research, on the other hand, seeks not only to develop theoretical knowledge and to resolve practical problems.

Therefore, we can link applied research to the improvement of living conditions. Since applied research is linked to real-life situations, any protocols must always be adapted to the specific context. In addition, all research methodologies must be precise and transparent.

For FIRAH, applied research includes the following elements:

Applied research is research, adhering to its rules: it is important here to observe a situation and setting a goal in relation with the improvement of the living conditions of persons with disabilities. The parameters for success of the research must be specified and able to be evaluated. Similarly, the hypotheses on which the work is founded must be clear.

Applied Research:

- » Most often, it may involve a multidisciplinary approach, thus drawing on a set of knowledge that takes into account a global approach of the person in order to improve his or her social participation. In this second case, work that is focused on various fields (sociology, ethnology, psychology, education, etc.) and that encourages cross-disciplinary links will be assessed in a favorable light.
- » This research may also be focused on a single discipline, for example a technical concern such as updating or improving a device that increases the autonomy of persons with disabilities.
- » The final goal of applied research is to suggest actions that should be taken to solve specific issues related to practical problems. Therefore, it must lead to changes, new actions or practices.
- » Applied research must clarify practices in order to change them for improvement. It analyzes best practices in order to test the true efficiency of these practices. To do so, it is involved for

example in analyzing and validating experimental activities with one or more hypotheses and success and failure criteria in order to produce elements of improvements and encourage wider use.

- » Applied research may define the elements of a good practice and seek how to implement them concretely (prospective study). It can help to develop knowledge so that a principle can be implemented concretely (for this FIRAH refers back to the principles of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). It seeks to find potential applications or to find new solutions to achieve a goal set in advance.
- » Applied research helps compare practices and their results as well as their strong and weak points, with a goal of improving them and updating those aspects that are positive and transferable (comparative study).
- » Applied research is focused on the needs of persons with disabilities and their families and seeks to create actions adapted to the reality of their needs. Therefore, it must be carried out in close collaboration with researchers, professionals, persons with disabilities and their families, in order to take into account the main concerns of persons with disabilities and their families.
- » Applied research can lead to actions that benefit persons with disabilities, even if this only concerns certain impairments and certain disabilities.
- » Action research is one of the types of projects supported by FIRAH, but in this case, the Foundation will finance the research part but will not support the actions of implementation of the action.

What is not funded by the FIRAH:

- The creation and the running costs of services.
- Direct assistance to a particular person with disabilities.
- Research projects on the mechanics of diseases (targeting the prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of impairment).

2 /Applied research for quality support services and an inclusive environment for social participation

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities *provides the following definition of disabilities:*

“Recognizing that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

It is in this context that the Foundation seeks to ensure the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities within an inclusive society.

To do this, FIRAH will support applied research projects and will focus the activities of its Resource Center on two variables of interaction that lead to disabling situation, namely:

- » The impairments of the person which must be improved or accommodate with quality support services.
- » The behavioral and environmental barriers that must be reduced in an inclusive and facilitative environment.

The Foundation’s research on these two variables is focused on the end goal of social participation³.

The end goal of social participation is in line with the Foundation’s desire to work on “real-life” situations and to resolve practical problems.

For quality support services

The research work and the knowledge provided in relation to this support must pay careful attention to:

- » The position and role of persons with disabilities that is ensured by processes of empowerment,
- » The training of assistants, whether family members, volunteers, or professionals,
- » The development of innovative practices such as support from one’s peers and resources such as “independent living centers”,
- » The systems and methods for evaluating the needs of persons in regards to support,

³ For example, the Foundation would not support projects that help improve impairments or alter the environment if this research does not create a link between the impact of these improvements and social participation.

- » Resources nearby that help with managing and implementing support in all areas of ordinary life places (housing, school, work, etc.).

These support processes will concern political aspects as well as the systems and services in place for these persons.

Support concerns the implementation of all reasonable accommodation related to personal assistant, technical aids and others....

For a transformation of society into an inclusive and facilitative environment

A facilitative environment concerns:

- Physical and communication accessibility
- Changing how persons with disabilities are perceived
- Access to specific support services and ordinary services

Studies that focus on positive measures for ensuring a balance between the situation of persons with disabilities and other members of society will be assessed in a favorable light.

3 / Applied research for removing technical obstacles to the accessibility of persons with disabilities

All research that has a goal of finding technical solutions to obstacles limiting the accessibility and inclusion of individuals may be supported as long as the evaluation criteria are defined for its implementation in real-life situations.

To access other information or better understand the type of projects FIRAH wishes to support, we suggest that you visit the Resource Center Applied Research and Disability:

<http://www.firah.org/centre-ressources/en/>

This resource center gathers in its documentary database numerous applied research funded by the Foundation and by many other initiatives and can also be a source of information for your project proposals. The resource center also allows you to identify operational and financial partners.

3- The 6 selection criteria for the FIRAH call for projects 2015

1) The relevance of the project

A research project will be considered relevant within the framework of this call for projects if the knowledge that it proposes to produce is focused on implementing the principles of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which are as follows:

- **Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy** including the freedom to **make one's own choices**, and independence of persons
- **Non-discrimination**
- **Full and effective participation and inclusion in society**
- **Respect for difference** and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity
- **Equality of opportunity**
- **Accessibility**
- **Equality between men and women**
- **Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities** and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities

These principles will serve as an initial filter when analyzing research projects.

It should be noted that this Convention is all-encompassing and concerns:

- all disabilities, as defined in the convention⁴
- as well as all sectors (such as health, education, employment, etc.) and areas of daily life that could concern persons with disabilities.

Finally, any research that is likely to provide a technical solution to the difficulties encountered by persons with disabilities in their daily lives (personal, familial, or professional difficulties) and, more generally, in their autonomy, is eligible.

⁴ Preamble e) of the Convention: Recognizing that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others

The innovative, realistic nature of the project and the importance of its results for persons with disabilities will make up the main selection criteria.

2) The originality of the project and its innovative character

It will be important to precise how at the beginning of the project an inventory of the field that it intends to study will be done. As part of this inventory, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the identification and analysis of applied research already conducted and the “related material”⁵ from these researches.

We are looking for projects that take into account new approaches, new concepts, and progressive changes in terminology in the field of disability.

The research may, if relevant, specify the ways in which traditional working methods will become more innovative and inclusive by analyzing questions that focus on resistance to change.

Finally, the innovative character of the research will be shown in the ways in which it measures quality of life, quality of social participation, degree of satisfaction, and the self-determination of the persons concerned.

The project’s innovative nature will be analyzed based on whether it updates and improves the various elements of its particular context which have brought about change.

3) Presentation of the project leader, the partners and the role of the different entities for the implementation of the project

Modes of participatory research demonstrating a strong and organized networking between the field stakeholders⁶ (especially persons with disabilities, their families, their representative organizations and professionals) and researchers will be prioritized.

The research project may involve different non-governmental organizations including the disability rights movement. This link with these organizations will be demonstrated through the motivations of

⁵ Shaping of the findings and knowledge gained from applied research into products, services and contents to meet the expectations and needs of people with disabilities. These “related material” will be adjusted so they can be used by field stakeholders to improve practices. The format of this related material could be training material, video, operational tools...

⁶ Field stakeholders are: Persons with disabilities, their families, and their representative organizations that represent them. All human rights organizations that include disability rights in their activities. Service providers and other organizations working in the field of disability. Service providers and other organizations working in the mainstream that are required to meet the needs of persons with disabilities such as architects, teachers, managers of companies and industries. Local, national and international decision makers. The general public.

the organizations involved as well as their role in planning, carrying out the project, sharing results and evaluating the research project.

Persons with disabilities, their families, and their representative organizations should be positioned as “subject-actors” in the research and not as “object” of research. The research projects that target problems identified by persons with disabilities and their families will be prioritized. Tangible proof of this participative approach will be required in the form of explicit letters of support.

The researchers must be presented. The proposal must specify the names of the participating researchers, their areas of expertise, their roles in the research, their previous involvement in relevant funded research projects and their previous publications relevant to the topic of the proposed research.

In the technical field, the project leaders should demonstrate their ability to meet their goals (with earlier results) and should testify to their knowledge of real problems that exist in the field of disability.

Please note that, unless special circumstances explained in the document, the contracting teams should include one or more researchers whose research is one of the statutory missions.

4) Methodology and expected results

An explicit and coherent scientific research methodology is required.

The expected results shall be identified clearly. What progress/knowledge does the proposed research provide?

These expected results shall specify, where relevant, the effects of the research on the quality of access of persons with disabilities, on decision-making, on good practices, or the effect on the social participation or exercise of rights of the targeted populations.

The inclusive aspects of education, employment, transportation, new technologies and others shall be highlighted as well.

5) Presentation of “material” realized to disseminate and used the knowledge produced by research and modalities for the transfer of these

FIRAH’s final goal is to promote knowledge in order to influence policies, systems, and practices. This is why particular attention is paid to the activities that allow the knowledge, which is produced to be transferred, both qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

For diffusion in the academic and scientific communities, the project results will be described in scientific articles published in scientific journals and presented in scientific seminars.

In addition to these scientific articles, FIRAH attaches great attention to the realization of “relative material” from the research project and adapted for different field stakeholders. The format of these “material” may be training tools, adapted documents, videos, operational tools or all other means depending on the needs of the public concerned for the appropriation of knowledge. The translation of these documents into French and English will also necessary for wider possible dissemination. Finally, these “material” must be in free access to be available to the greatest number. Project leaders are required to specify **how field stakeholders participate in the creation of relative materials** that are intended for them.

Networks and other resources that may have sustainable leveraging effects on the distribution and promotion of results should be looked for and selected according to the various target audiences.

All the proposals from project leaders consisting in diffusing their scientific articles and all other publications from the research in open source will be appreciated.

6) Presentation of realism in the relation between objectives, activities and resources

We are looking for a balance between the following points:

- The realistic nature of the project in terms of resources (human, logistical, material), the time required to carry it out, and the financial resources solicited.
- The type of human resources devoted to the project as well as the amount of time.

The link between the allocation of financial resources in research activities and those of dissemination and exploitation especially for the realization of “related material” for different actors in the field and includes translations into English and French.

Firah usually providing cofinancing, projects requiring resources complementary to those already acquired will be appreciated.

Research projects could be funded on the basis of cofinancing amounting in a range between 30 000 and 60 000 euros for a 2 to 3 years maximum time.

4- Specificities of the call of projects 2014

For this 2015 Call for projects, Firah wishes to put forward the 5 following thematics:

1. Access to education for children and youngsters with disabilities from preschool⁷ to higher education.
2. Caregiver support (family, informal or natural caregivers), especially:
 - concerning economic, professional and others arrangements in order to enable them to juggle with their actions of caregiver and their social and professional lives.
 - The advice and training of parents for supporting their disabled child during the early childhood period.
3. Mobility, as it constitutes a cross-cutting aspect to encourage the social participation of all people with disabilities (going to school, to work, access shops, cultural and leisure locations...)
4. Access to healthcare for people with disabilities
5. Ageing persons with disabilities.

Particular attention will also be paid to the projects realized outside France that involve a French partner in order to develop international cooperation in this field and to allow valorization of the research results to French stakeholders.

It should be noted that the Foundation can also select high quality projects outside the thematic above, if they meet the criteria described in this call for projects.

Finally, the projects leaders that have been funded in a prior FIRAHA call for projects will again be eligible three years after the end of the research conducted with the support of FIRAHA, except in cases where the new proposed research would be considered as a follow-up or a complement to the previous research.

⁷ Early childhood disabilities is an important theme to foster an inclusive society by developing a practice and an expertise of the acceptance of difference.

5- Format of the letter of intention for the call of projects 2014

The letter of intent will be realized using the form FIRAH provided for that purpose and is available on the website of the Foundation (www.firah.org).

It will be composed of three pages:

- General presentation of the project, one page maximum, that should include project title, project summary, key words of the project, name and contacts of the project's leader (organization and reference person), main partners' names, duration and global budget of the project along with the amount request from the FIRAH
- Demonstrate the importance and relevance of the project. (a third page)
- Expose the originality of the project and demonstrating its innovative character (a third page)
- Presentation of the project leader, the partners and the role of the different entities for the implementation of the project (a third page), with an appendix of three pages maximum (shortened CV and presentation of the organizations involved highlighting their experience and expertise on the topic addressed by the project), email addresses of each individual and organization will be listed.
- Presentation of the research methodology and expected results (a third page)
- Presentation of "material" realized to disseminate and exploit the knowledge produced by research and modalities for the transfer of these (a third page)
- Presentation of realism in the relation between objectives, activities and resources (a third page), and an annex on one page presenting the budget composed of budget lines including the main areas of expenditure.

All applicants whose letters of intention are chosen will be asked to submit a full application file on the project. Recommendations may be given following the letters of intention in order to help guide the project leaders in assembling the full application file.

Whether these recommendations were implemented will be a key factor in the final selection.

The letter of intention may be written in French or English and must be sent in a .doc format to:

firah@firah.org

6- Dates for the call for projects 2014

Online posting of the call for projects 2015

12 January 2015

Closing date for letters of intention

27 March 2015 at midnight (French time)

Announcement to project leaders regarding pre-selected and non-selected letters of intention

26 June 2015

Closing date for completed application files

2 October 2015 at midnight (French time)

Announcement to project leaders regarding the selected and non-selected completed applications

15 December 2015