
Deliverable 3.6

Title: Grant Lab Strategy



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Call: HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-01

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v2.0	23/09/2025	Barbara Cagniard, Charlotte Godard	Minor comments addressed. Version approved at the WP level.
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Confidentiality

Does this report contain confidential information?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is the report restricted to a specific group?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>If yes, please precise the list of authorised recipients:</i>

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Executive Summary

The Grant Lab Strategy is a cornerstone of the CLARA Horizon Europe project (ID: 101136607), supporting its strategic goal of sustainable growth, financial resilience, and deep integration into the European Research Area. The Grant Lab aims to build institutional capacity to secure public funding while creating a robust platform for sharing knowledge and fostering collaboration in the development of competitive proposals for national, EU, and international R&D grants. The strategy establishes the CLARA Grant Office, which brings together experienced professional grant managers from partner institutions. This office will operate as a virtual collaborative space where managers and researchers can co-develop projects, share knowledge, exchange ideas, and adopt a common approach to securing funding. By fostering cooperation under shared interests and mutual benefits, the CLARA Grant Office will strengthen the long-term sustainability of the CLARA Center of Excellence.

In addition, the CLARA Grant Office will serve as a hub for capacity building and innovation. Regular meetings that facilitate the exchange of information on ongoing workshops, seminars, and training sessions will help strengthen grant-writing expertise and promote best practices throughout the consortium." This joint effort ensures that funding opportunities are not only identified but strategically pursued, maximizing impact and reinforcing CLARA's role as a leading center for collaborative research and excellence.

1. Objectives of the Grant Lab Strategy

CLARA Grant Lab Strategy aims to leverage national and EU resources to drive strategic investments while enhancing competitiveness in grant programs, including Horizon Europe. The initiative seeks to expand leadership roles in consortia coordinated by CLARA partners and develop sustainable funding streams through Knowledge Exploitable Results (KERs). The CLARA Grant Lab is a virtual strategic platform where expert project managers, researchers, and institutional stakeholders collaborate to design, prepare, and implement competitive project proposals.

1.1. Key objectives:

- Move from reactive grant writing to strategic funding acquisition.
- Mobilize national and EU resources for strategic investments
- Increase success in competitive grant schemes, including Horizon Europe
- Strengthen leadership roles in consortia coordinated by CLARA partners
- Establish sustainable funding channels through Knowledge Exploitable Results (KERs)
- Provide tailored support to researchers, esp. early-stage researchers (e.g., ERC, MSCA)
- Foster interdisciplinary grant writing teams within and beyond CLARA

1.2. Impact and Expected Outcomes

- Improved success rates despite competitive thresholds (<15%).
- Increased number of projects led by CLARA partners.
- Integration into strategic interdisciplinary consortia of scientific excellence.
- Strengthened institutional branding and R&D impact.
- Collective intelligence pooling from CLARA partner's project management experience and track record.

The Grant Lab Strategy related KPIs of the CLARA Project

#	KPI	Target value (end of Project)
6	Submitted joint projects	32
7	Awarded joint projects	8
8	Budget of awarded joint projects (EUR in ths.)	10000

2. CLARA Grant Lab Strategy Survey

The questionnaire on the CLARA Grant Lab Strategy was shared with CLARA team members to gather input and preferences from partners regarding the strategy's development.

Methodological Aspects:

- The questionnaire used a Likert-scale format to measure levels of agreement on key statements.
- Participation was voluntary and responses were kept confidential
- The data were analyzed quantitatively to identify common preferences and qualitatively to capture additional comments or suggestions.

The survey responses highlight the need to define the operational model of the CLARA Grant Lab. Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of **collaboration and knowledge-sharing** over the direct sharing of grant department staff across institutions. There is strong support for expanding the Grant Lab team to include broader expertise and for extending the dissemination of accumulated knowledge beyond the consortium. These insights suggest a strategic shift toward a **sustainable, advisory-focused, and knowledge-driven model** that respects institutional boundaries while maximizing collective expertise and impact.

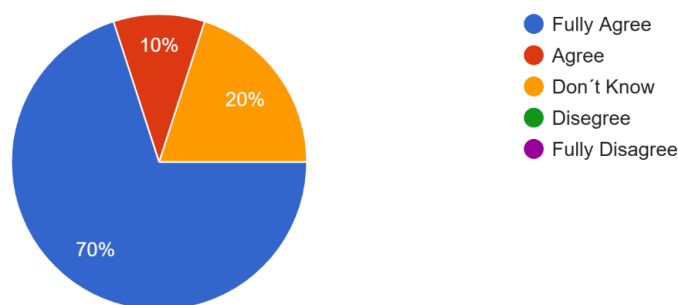
Particularly, the results indicate strong support for establishing the CLARA Grant Office as a virtual collaborative platform involving grant managers from all partners. Respondents widely agreed on the importance of **funding scouting, proposal support, researcher and administrative staff training, maintaining a central knowledge hub, and representing CLARA in European-level networks**. These areas are seen as essential to strengthening collaboration, improving proposal quality, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the center.

While most functions received unanimous or near-unanimous support, some areas showed more mixed views. Budget planning, award negotiation, and post-award services received a combination of agreement and disagreement, suggesting that partners may prefer to handle parts of these tasks at the institutional level. Free-text feedback emphasized the importance of not only sharing knowledge within CLARA but also disseminating it more broadly to external stakeholders.

In summary, the survey confirms broad endorsement of the Grant Lab strategy, with particular enthusiasm for its role in building capacity, enhancing collaboration, and increasing CLARA's visibility and influence in European research networks. Areas with mixed responses highlight the need for further discussion to define responsibilities between the central office and individual institutions.

CLARA Grant Office: Do you agree that the CLARA Grant Office should be established as a virtual, distributed platform involving grant managers and a...ervices, e.g. the development of joint proposals?

10 odpovědí



3. Pilot period

From the launch of the CLARA Project until September 2025, CLARA partners carried out a Grant Lab pilot ([database in a xlsx format](#) is available as the CLARA internal tracking tool, see Annex 1), to test and validate the core principles and foundational components of the emerging CLARA Grant Lab Strategy within 14 proposal ideas.

The set of these 14 proposals can be viewed as a pilot for developing a common CLARA Grant Lab Strategy, testing joint processes of idea generation, partner engagement, and submission routines. The activity concentrated largely in 2025, with some preparatory projects already starting in 2024, provided an experimental ground for assessing collaboration dynamics across the network. While most proposals were either in preparation or already submitted, the portfolio also included cancellations, a suggested idea, and one awarded project, offering a complete spectrum of outcomes to learn from. The diversity of scales, from flagship initiatives such as the Czech AI Factory with a forty-million-euro budget, through GUIDE at seventeen million each, down to smaller community-oriented efforts like CLARA DAYS or Widera actions like HOP on FLUIDX-AD, allowed partners to explore how different project sizes and formats can be aligned under a shared strategy.

The distribution of coordinators further underlined the pilot function of these activities. INDRC took a leading role in more than half of the proposals, consistently linking with CIIRC, ICRC, and VSB, with support of CLARA advanced partners as well as partners such as the University Hospital Oslo, Technical University of Denmark, and the University of Exeter, which broadened the international scope. The awarded ELEGANCE project, alongside high-value submissions in the pipeline, confirmed that CLARA partners can secure competitive positions within Horizon Europe calls when acting jointly. This pilot phase therefore not only tested operational routines but also demonstrated the potential for scaling into a coordinated Grant Lab Strategy, one that integrates flagship projects, mid-scale research initiatives, and smaller networking actions into a coherent portfolio guided by common priorities.

4. Building Blocks of the CLARA Grant Lab Strategy

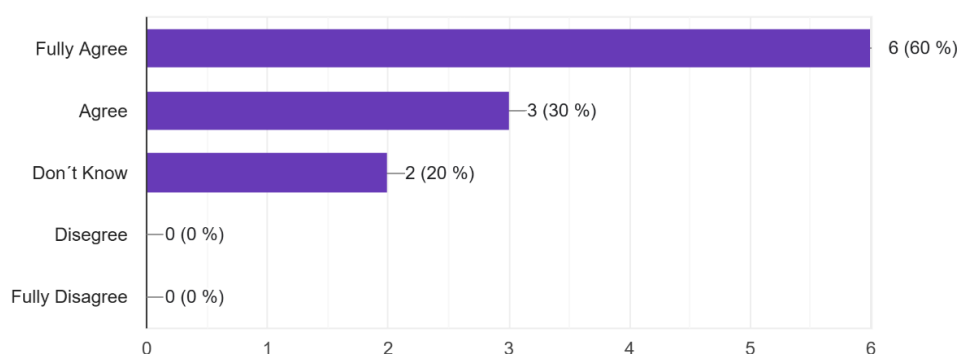
The CLARA Grant Lab Strategy is built around five main building blocks: Strategic Positioning, ensuring alignment with European and global research priorities; Pipeline Management, coordinating and prioritizing opportunities across partners; Proposal Incubation, supporting idea development and collaborative design; Capacity Building, strengthening skills, networks, and resources; and Monitoring & Impact, tracking progress and outcomes to maximize scientific and societal value.

4.1. Strategic Positioning

- Building strategic alliances (e.g., in partnerships, consortia)
- Participating in stakeholder events, info days, and preparatory networks
- Using past project insights to shape future proposals

Grant Lab Think-Tank: Represent CLARA in EU-level networks (e.g., EARMA, NCPs, ADRA, Teaming Club) and participate in European Commission even...public consultations on draft work programmes.

10 odpovědí

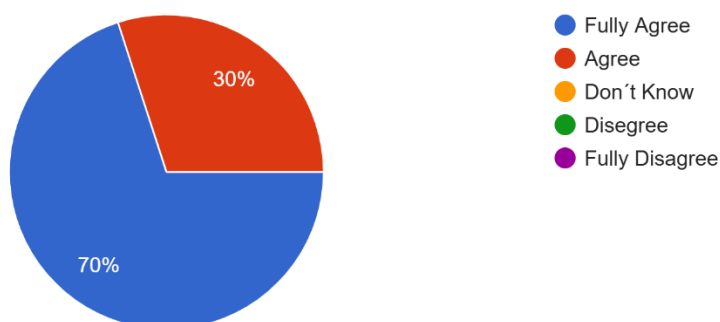


4.2. Pipeline Management

- Mapping upcoming calls (e.g., Horizon Europe work programmes)
- Forecasting grant opportunities aligned with organizational strengths
- Coordinating expression-of-interest (EoI) and proposal timelines

Funding Scouting: Monitor and disseminate EU and international calls (Horizon Europe, ERC, MSCA, etc.)

10 odpovědí



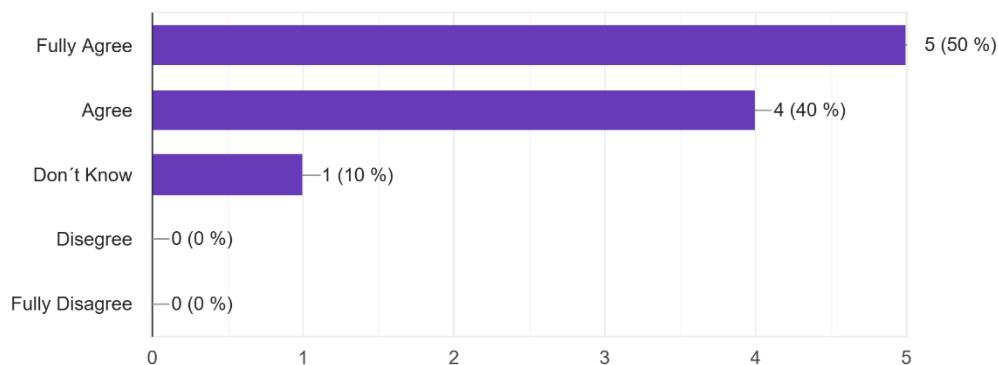
4.3. Proposal Incubation (the “Lab” aspect)

- Internal workshops to develop proposal ideas

- Co-creation labs with researchers, policymakers, SMEs, etc.
- Peer review to strengthen narrative

Proposal Support: Guide researchers in developing proposals (e.g. templates, timelines).

10 odpovědí

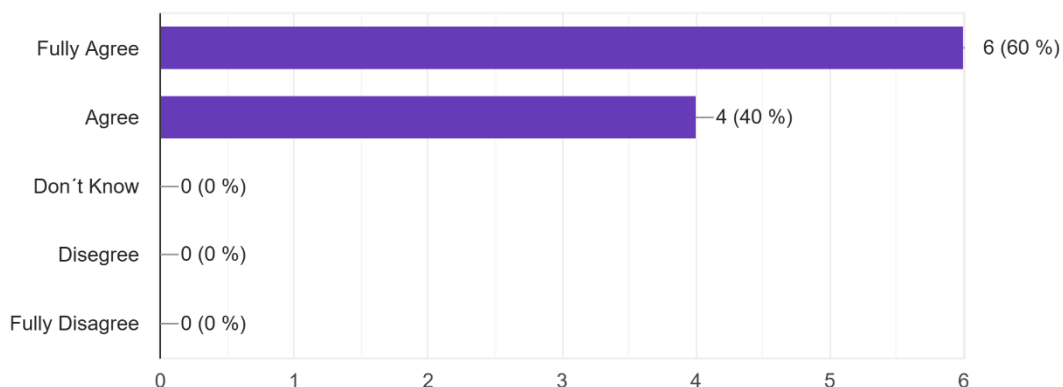


4.4. Capacity Building

- Training researchers in grant writing
- Templates, boilerplates, impact toolkits (e.g., for exploitation, dissemination, ethics)
- Technical support for budget building and submission portals

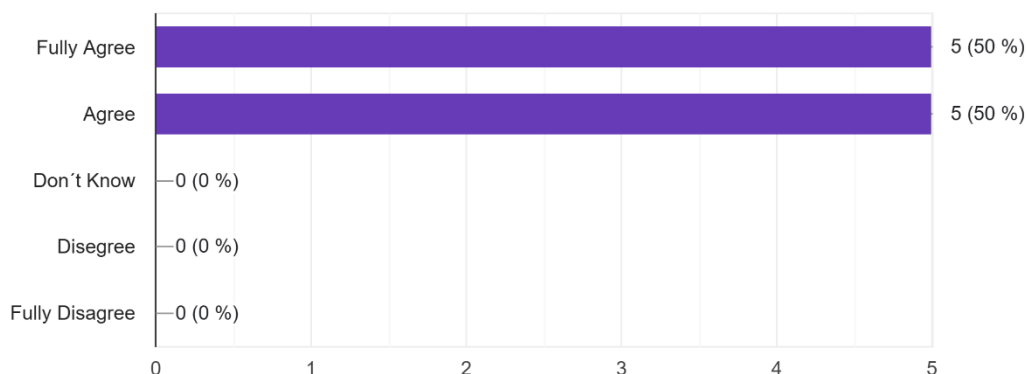
Researcher Training: Workshops on proposal writing, budgeting, ethics, and project management.

10 odpovědí



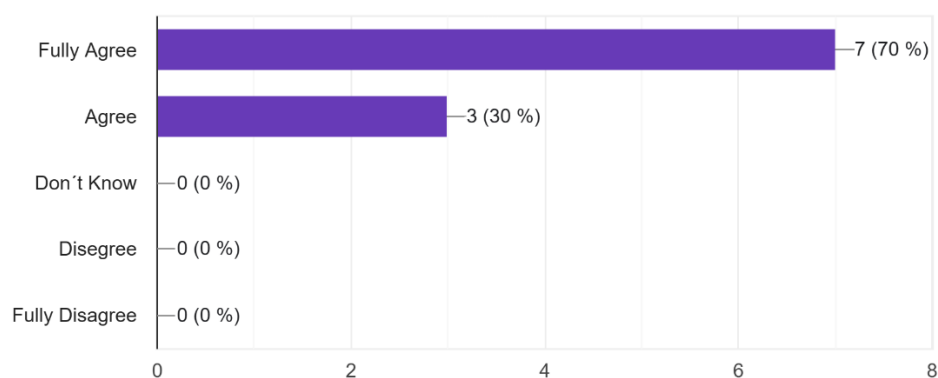
Admin Staff Training: Training for internal staff on EC financial rules, reporting, and compliance.

10 odpovědí



Knowledge Hub: Maintain internal knowledge base: templates, checklists, FAQs, guidelines.

10 odpovědí

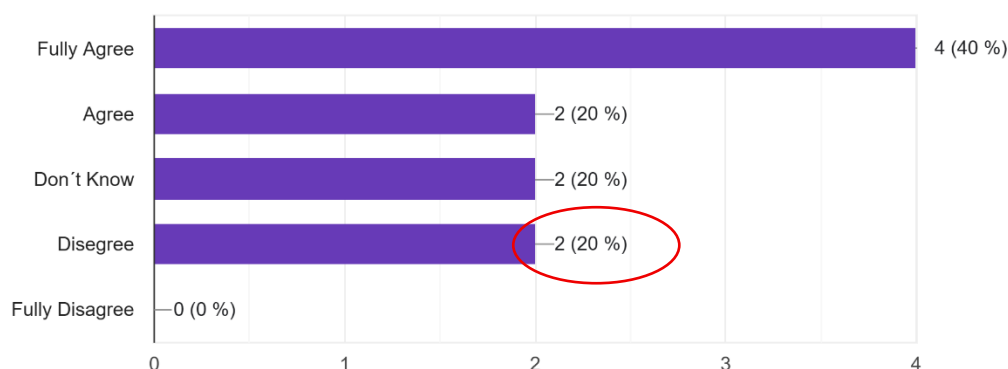


4.5. Monitoring & Impact

- Post-award project support (reporting, audits, amendments)
- Tracking success rates and improving through feedback
- Long-term vision alignment (e.g., with institutional R&I strategy)

Post-Award Services: Project Reporting Support; Budget Monitoring; Audit Preparation; Amendments Management.

10 odpovědí



5. CLARA Grant Lab Tools

5.1. Funding Scouting

The CLARA Grant Office will establish a centralized funding scouting system that continuously monitors EU and international calls, including Horizon Europe, ERC, MSCA, and other strategic funding opportunities. A shared repository of opportunities will be maintained, complemented by summarized highlights in a quarterly CLARA internal newsletter for easy navigation of the most relevant calls. To measure the effectiveness of these efforts, an Impact & Metrics Dashboard will track proposal submissions, success rates, awarded funding, and alignment with CLARA's strategic goals and KPIs. This will provide partners with a transparent view of how collective efforts translate into measurable impact. The primary objective is to strategically identify funding opportunities that position CLARA partners to collaborate on joint grant applications, thereby maximizing impact and resource alignment across the consortium.

Action task 1: Each partner shall designate a dedicated project manager to participate in the activities of the CLARA Grant Office. Project managers shall allocate strategic areas of interest among themselves, within which they will systematically monitor available calls for proposals and funding opportunities. Collectively, they will ensure thorough coverage and effective coordination across all relevant domains. Regular meetings (at least quarterly) will be set up to implement main activities of the Office.

Action task 2: The CLARA Project Manager shall establish the Grant Office file incl. the Impact & Metrics Dashboard as a shared repository on OnlyOffice. Project Managers within the CLARA Grant Office shall use this platform to share information on proposal submissions, success rates, awarded funding, and related metrics, in order to systematically track progress and performance across the consortium

5.2. Template & Best-Practice Library

To reduce duplication of effort and improve the quality of submissions, the Grant Office will host a centralized library of resources. This will include supportive templates, budget models, compliance checklists, and a curated selection of successful past applications. By streamlining access to shared knowledge and proven strategies, the library will serve as both a practical toolkit and a source of inspiration for new proposals. The collection will be regularly updated to reflect evolving EU requirements and lessons learned from recent funding experiences.

5.3. Partner Matchmaking Tool

Collaboration lies at the heart of CLARA's mission. To facilitate effective partnerships, a Partner Matchmaking Tool was developed as a structured database (Table in xlsx format) with contacts to link internal CLARA researchers with potential external collaborators, including universities, research institutes, industry partners, and NGOs. This resource will draw on existing stakeholder networks (see Deliverable [D2.6 Stakeholder Networks](#).) while remaining dynamic and open to new connections. By bridging internal expertise with external opportunities, the tool will accelerate the formation of strong, competitive consortia.

5.4. Internal Review system and Reviewer Feedback Archive

To enhance the competitiveness of proposals, the Grant Office will coordinate a structured peer review process that provides constructive feedback before submission. The CLARA Scientific Advisory Board shall oversee the peer review of grant proposals. Additional opportunities to enhance proposal quality will be pursued, such as obtaining feedback from experienced Horizon Europe evaluators through initiatives like IDEAL-IST or Technologické centrum (service provider in Czech Republic). This process will ensure that proposals are refined, aligned with evaluation criteria, and strategically positioned for success. In addition, a Reviewer Feedback Archive will be created to store Evaluation Summary Reports (ESRs) and other external feedback from past submissions. This archive will serve as a valuable learning resource, helping researchers and grant managers avoid repeated pitfalls and continuously improve the quality of applications.

5.5. Training & Guidance Hub

Capacity building is key to long-term sustainability. The Grant Office will serve also as a **Training & Guidance Hub** to strengthen internal expertise in grant writing and management. Project managers will share opportunities for **live workshops and webinars** on essential topics such as proposal development, budgeting practices, compliance requirements, and emerging trends in EU and international funding. Learning materials — including recorded sessions, slide decks, and self-paced modules — may also be shared. These resources may be developed by consortium partners or sourced from external providers, such as National Contact Points for EU research. Over time, this hub will evolve into a knowledge-sharing platform where best practices are not only taught but also co-created by CLARA partners.

6. Conclusion

The CLARA Grant Strategy promotes collaboration and respects institutional autonomy while maximizing efficiency, expertise, and visibility. If implemented, the recommended actions will contribute to establishing a **sustainable, impactful, and widely recognized model** for the CLARA Grant Office. The survey on the CLARA Grant Lab Strategy was designed to gather input from partners and identify shared priorities for its future development. Using a confidential, voluntary questionnaire with Likert-scale responses and open comments, the exercise combined quantitative and qualitative insights. The findings highlight strong support for a collaborative and knowledge-driven model that emphasizes shared expertise and advisory functions, rather than direct sharing of institutional staff. Respondents underlined the importance of broadening the Grant Lab team's skills and ensuring that accumulated knowledge is disseminated not only within CLARA but also to external stakeholders.

There is clear consensus on establishing the CLARA Grant Office as a virtual platform that unites grant managers across partner institutions. Core functions that received strong endorsement include funding scouting, proposal support, training for both researchers and administrative staff, maintaining a central knowledge hub, and representing CLARA in European networks. These elements are widely regarded as essential to strengthening collaboration, improving proposal competitiveness, and securing the long-term sustainability of the Center of Excellence. Some functions, however, attracted mixed views, notably budget planning, award negotiation, and post-award services, suggesting that these may be better handled through a hybrid model combining central guidance with institutional autonomy.

To translate this vision into practice, the strategy proposes five key instruments: a centralized funding scouting system with an impact dashboard; a template and best-practice library to streamline proposal development; a partner matchmaking tool to foster internal and external collaborations; an internal review system with an archive of past reviewer feedback; and a training and guidance hub offering learning resources. Together, these tools will position CLARA as a collaborative, capacity-building, and strategically aligned platform, reinforcing its visibility and influence in European research networks while maximizing the collective impact of its partners.

7. Action tasks

Action task 1: Each partner shall designate a dedicated project manager to participate in the activities of the CLARA Grant Office. Project managers shall allocate strategic areas of interest among themselves, within which they will systematically monitor available calls for proposals and funding opportunities. Collectively, they will ensure thorough coverage and effective coordination across all relevant domains. Regular meetings (at least quarterly) will be set up to implement main activities of the Office.

Action task 2: The CLARA Project Manager shall establish the Grant Office file incl. the Impact & Metrics Dashboard as a shared repository on OnlyOffice. Project Managers within the CLARA Grant Office shall use this platform to share information on proposal submissions, success rates, awarded funding, and related metrics, in order to systematically track progress and performance across the consortium.

Action task 3: Main activities of the CLARA Grant Office will be presented at CLARA website.

Annex 1 – CLARA GRANT LAB Pilot Proposals (2024–2025)

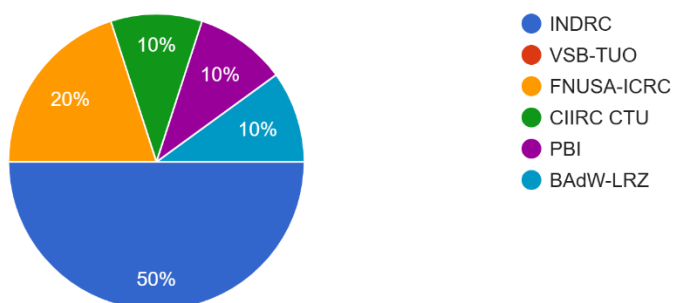
#	Acronym	Proposal Title	Call ID	Deadline	Coordinator	CLARA Partner	CLARA PI(s)	Status	Budget (EUR k)
1	EURO-TWIN	Advancing Personalized Brain-Body Health Monitoring through Virtual Human Twin Technology	HORIZON-JU-IHI-2025-09-02-single-stage	29.04.25	Oslo University Hospital	INDRC, VSB	Ara Khachaturian	Canceled	-
2	GUIDE	Generative AI for Understanding and Discovering Disease Mechanisms, Biomarkers, and Therapeutics	HORIZON-HLTH-2025-01-TOOL-03 (GenAI4EU)	16.09.25	INDRC	INDRC, VSB	Ara Khachaturian Vít Dočkal Vít Vondrak	Submitted	17,000
3	MIND ME	Multimodal Intervention combining Digital training and MEDicinal (CBD) integration for severe mental disorders	HORIZON-HLTH-2025-01-DISEASE-02	16.09.25	NUDZ	INDRC, CIIRC	Vít Dočkal, Olga Štěpánková	Submitted	8,000
4	CLARA DAYS	CLARA Open Days, Young AI Research Forum 2025	Capacity Building for Ukraine	Continual	INDRC	All	Vít Dočkal	Awarded	30
5	ELEGANCE	Machine learning for integrated multi-parametric enzyme and bioprocess design	HORIZON-MSCA-2024-DN-01-01	27.11.24	Technical Univ. of Denmark	CIIRC, ICRC	Jiří Damborský, Josef Šivic	Awarded	4,470.7
6	AURELION	Europe's Virtual Human Twin for the 21st Century	HORIZON-HLTH-2025-01-TOOL-03 (GenAI4EU)	16.09.25	University Hospital Oslo	INDRC	Jean Marie, Václav Snášel	Submitted	17,000
7	INSPIRE R	Integrative Staff Exchange Program for Ethical GenAI and ML in Protein Dynamics & Cellular Resilience	MSCA Staff Exchanges	08.10.25	INDRC	CIIRC, ICRC, PBI	Vít Dočkal	Postponed	-
8	HOP on FLUIDX-AD	HOP on FLUIDX-AD	HOP Facility	On 04.09.25	University Hospital Oslo	INDRC	Clara Testbed	Submitted	600
9	HOP ON EXP	HOP ON EXPOSIGNALZ	HOP Facility	On 04.09.25	INDRC	-	-	Canceled	-
10	BioPIC	Robot Enzymologist	ERC-2025-SyG	06.11.24	University of Exeter	CIIRC, ICRC	Stanislav Mazurenko, Josef Šivic	Submitted	-
11	CZAI	Czech AI Factory	EUROHPC-2024-CEI-AI-02	30.06.25	VSB-TUO	CIIRC, INDRC	Vít Vondrak	Submitted	40,000
12	DEEPTCH4EU	Advancing Responsible Deep	HORIZON-WIDERA-	18.09.25	INDRC	All Czech CLAR	Vít Dočkal	Canceled	-

13	BrainSense	Tech Commercialization BRAINSENSE – Brain Research by AI-driven Network for Synthesis & Extraction of Neuroinflammatory Science	2025-06-ERA-01 Catalyst Grant	15.07.25 LOI	INDRC/USC	A (assoc.) INDRC	J-M. Bouteiller	Submitted	-
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Annex 2 – Survey results

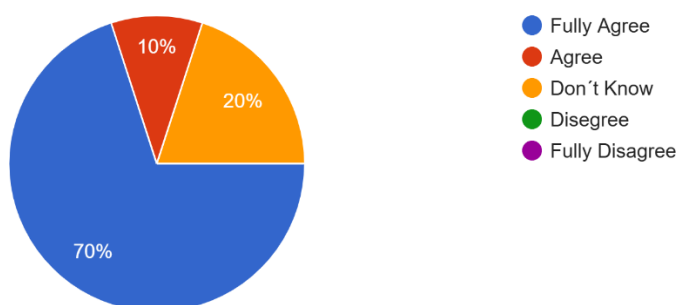
Which CLARA Partner do you represent?

10 odpovědí



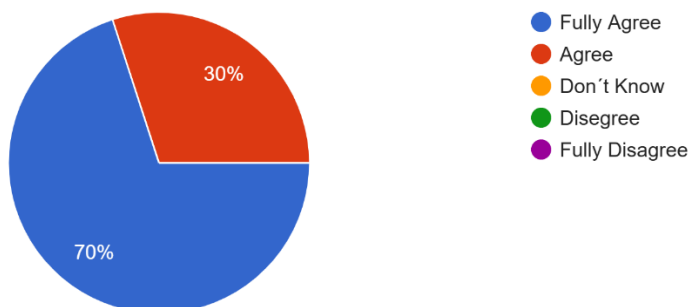
CLARA Grant Office: Do you agree that the CLARA Grant Office should be established as a virtual, distributed platform involving grant managers and a...ervices, e.g. the development of joint proposals?

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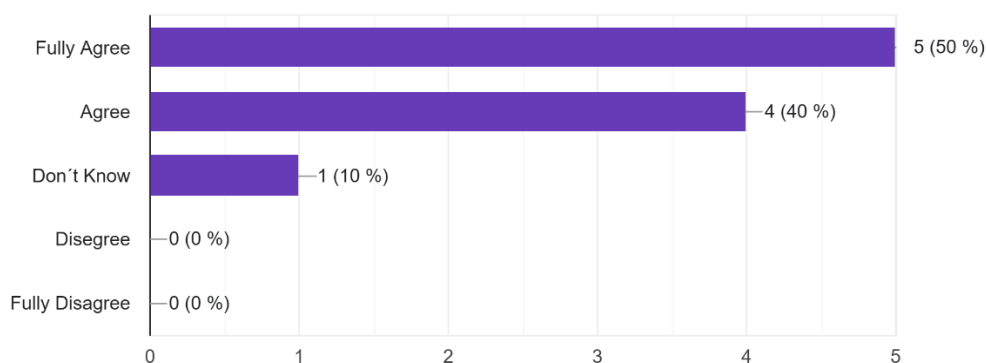
Funding Scouting: Monitor and disseminate EU and international calls (Horizon Europe, ERC, MSCA, etc.)

10 odpovědí



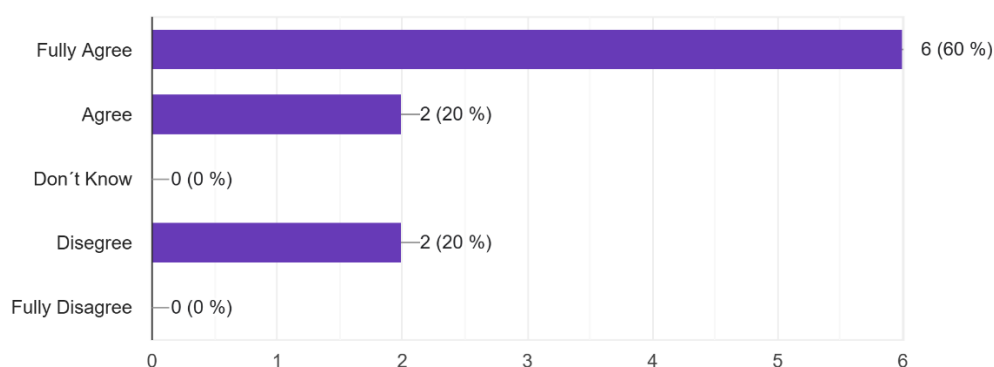
Proposal Support: Guide researchers in developing proposals (e.g. templates, timelines).

10 odpovědí



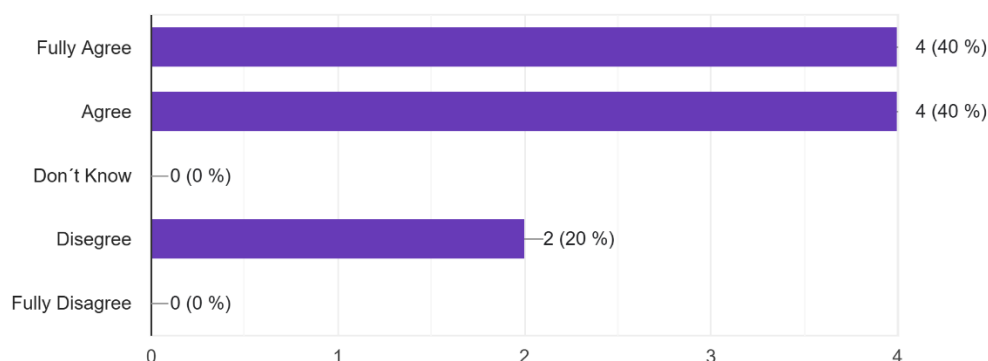
Non-Scientific Writing Support: Support writing of impact sections, management plans, gender and ethics.

10 odpovědí



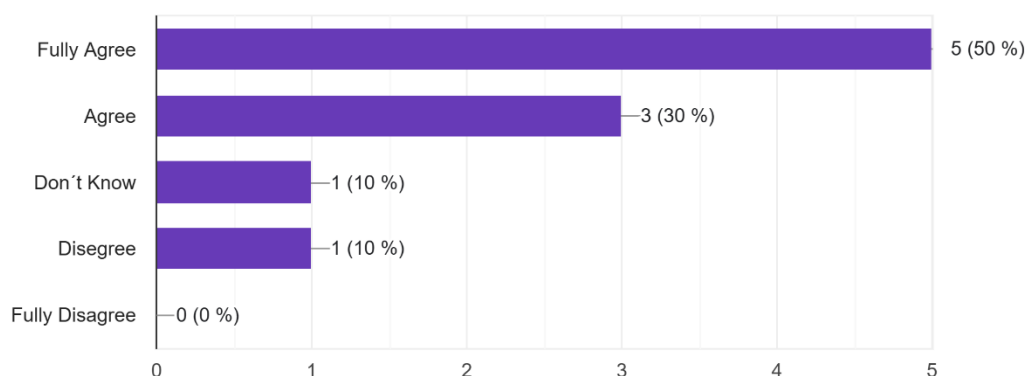
Budget Planning: Assist in preparing budgets compliant with EU rules (personnel, travel, overhead).

10 odpovědí



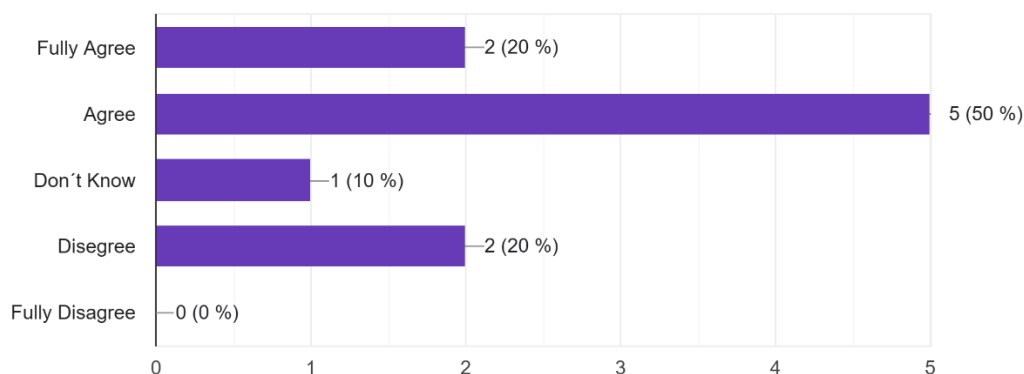
Compliance Checks and Submission Support: Ensure eligibility, ethics, and administrative conformity with call requirements.

10 odpovědí



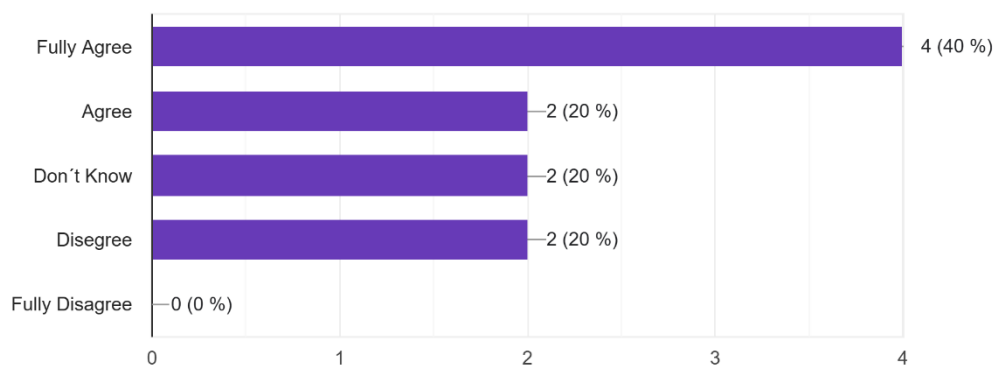
Award Negotiation and Setup: Grant Agreement Review (Review and negotiate terms of the Grant Agreement with the EC or funding agency); Consorti...ners); Internal Coordination and Kick-off Support.

10 odpovědí



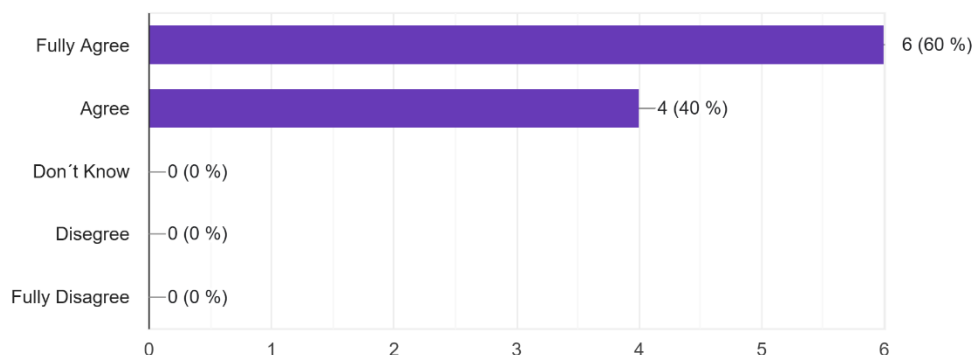
Post-Award Services: Project Reporting Support; Budget Monitoring; Audit Preparation; Amendments Management.

10 odpovědí



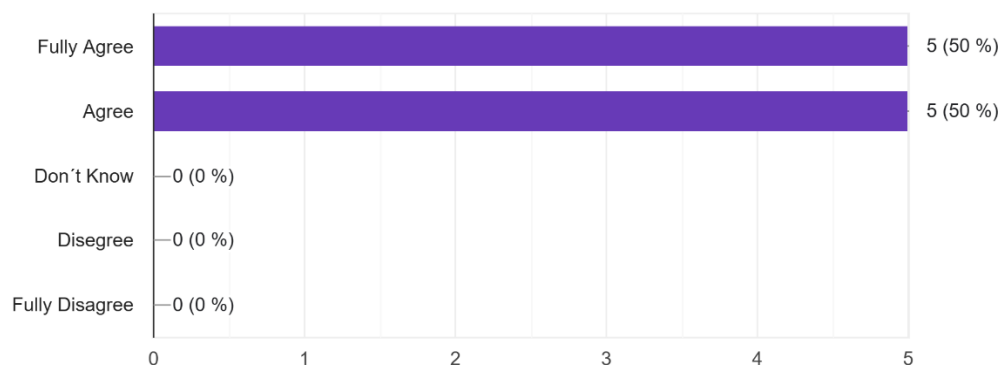
Researcher Training: Workshops on proposal writing, budgeting, ethics, and project management.

10 odpovědí



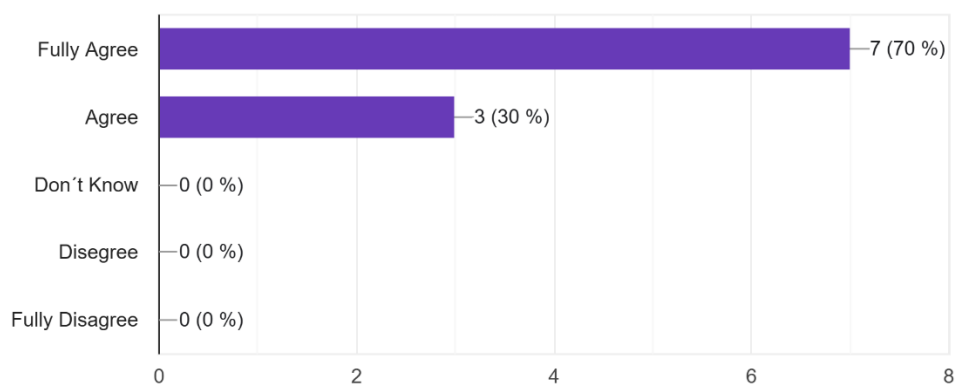
Admin Staff Training: Training for internal staff on EC financial rules, reporting, and compliance.

10 odpovědí



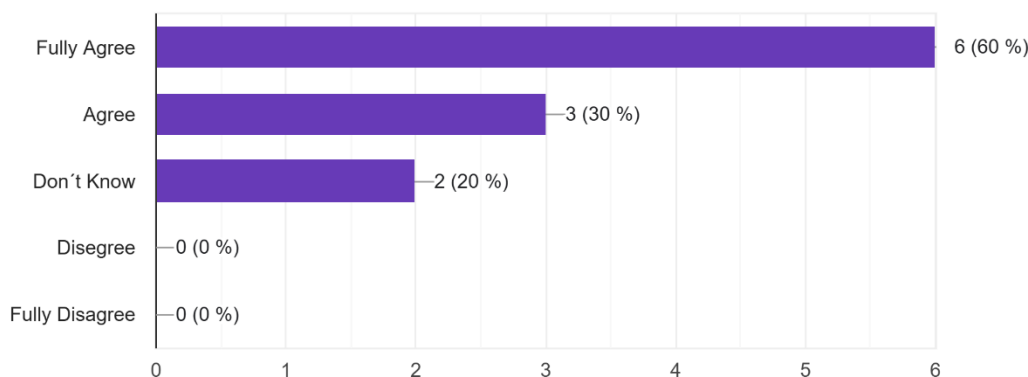
Knowledge Hub: Maintain internal knowledge base: templates, checklists, FAQs, guidelines.

10 odpovědí



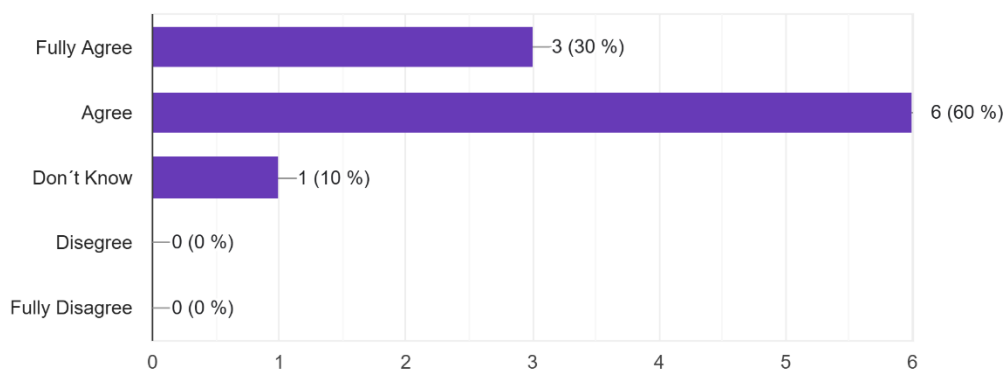
Grant Lab Think-Tank: Represent CLARA in EU-level networks (e.g., EARMA, NCPs, ADRA, Teaming Club) and participate in European Commission even...public consultations on draft work programmes.

10 odpovědí



Strategic Funding Advice: Help align CLARA Strategic research goals with institutional and EU research agendas and match with funding opportunities.

10 odpovědí



Comments:

Please share any additional suggestions or concerns regarding the CLARA Grant Lab Strategy:

On behalf of FNUSA-ICRC (Grant Department), we propose, rather than sharing grant department staff, mutual cooperation and participation in the preparation of grants with regard to the CLARA partners involved (e.g., if we are not members of the consortium of a project under preparation, we do not participate directly in the preparation and implementation of the grant, but we can act as "advisors"). In reality, we cannot imagine how, for example, the preparation of a budget for other institutions would work, given internal procedures and shared data. We consider the sharing of templates, know-how for the implementation and preparation of projects, sharing information about calls for proposals, and joint commenting on programs to be very beneficial.

Team of CLARA Grant Lab should be extended in more positions, not only project management team members Disseminate accumulate knowledge not only within but beyond the consortium (via Dissemination and Communication activities).