



ALFRED P. SLOAN FOUNDATION

GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

This document lays out the content and formatting requirements when writing a grant proposal for the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for the following types of projects:

Research projects where the total funds requested from the Sloan Foundation do not exceed \$125,000

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A *research project* is any project the output of which could be appropriately published in an academic journal. A *non-research project* is any project that is not a research project.

If your project is not a research project or the funds requested from the Sloan Foundation exceed \$125,000, this is not the correct set of guidelines for your grant proposal. Please visit our [Grant Proposals Guidelines](#) page to download the correct guidelines.

If you are requesting \$125,000 or less *and* your project contains *both* a research component and a non-research component (for instance, a project that plans to both conduct research and build a website to disseminate that research to the public) you should use these guidelines.

Please read our [Tips for Writing a Successful Grant Proposal](#) for useful advice on writing a

successful grant proposal for the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation.



Elements of a Grant Proposal

All grant proposals to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation must contain the following elements. Unless indicated otherwise in these guidelines, proposals that fail to contain any of these elements are not complete and will not be considered for funding until such time as all elements have been submitted.

1. Proposal Cover Sheet
2. Proposal
3. Budget
4. Appendices
5. Proposal Administration Form

The first four elements should appear in a single document in the order indicated above. (Proposal cover sheet first, then proposal, then the budget, etc.) This electronic document should not exceed 2 megabytes. The Proposal Administration Form should be submitted as a separate document. Specific content and formatting requirements for each element are detailed below.



Proposal Cover Sheet

All grant proposals must be accompanied by a completed Proposal Cover Sheet Form. [Visit the Forms section](#) of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation website to download a Proposal Cover Sheet Form.



Proposal

Format

The proposal must:

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Be double spaced | Have 1” margins | Not exceed 10 pages |
| Be in 12 pt. font | Have page numbers | Not exceed 2 megabytes |

Content

The grant proposal must be divided into sections that answer the following questions.

- 1. What is the research question and why is it important?** The proposal should start with a discussion of the research question(s) that the proposer expects to address. It should go on to discuss why these questions are important (e.g., fill gaps in the literature/knowledge/data, etc.) and how they are related to the particular Foundation program that would provide the grant support.
- 2. What is the state of the research on this question?** The proposal should contain a summary of the existing literature on the research question(s) being addressed. This summary should include citations and references to the most important papers in the literature. Gaps in the literature should be identified. This literature review should refer to key papers written both by the proposer(s) and by other scholars in the field. An associated list of references should be included as an appendix.
- 3. Why is the proposer qualified to address the research question for which funds are being sought?** The proposer's education, teaching, previous research accomplishments, etc., related to the proposed research should be discussed briefly.
- 4. What is the research methodology?** The proposal should contain a discussion (understandable to a non-expert) of the theoretical framework, data sources, sampling methods, and empirical analysis methodologies that will be used to answer the research questions (as appropriate for the nature of the research). To the extent statistical analysis is part of the research project, the proposal should specify the empirical models that will be deployed, the statistical methods that will be used (e.g., ordinary least squares, instrument variables, probit, multinomial logit, factor analysis, etc.), and why these methods are appropriate for estimating the relevant parameters of interest. Issues of sample selection, endogeneity, treatment of dichotomous variables, error structure assumptions, etc., should be included in this discussion. Additional technical detail (at the "expert" level) must be attached as an appendix in accordance with the *Appendix for Empirical Research Methods* found below.
- 5. What will be the output from the research project?** The proposal should include a discussion of anticipated papers, conferences, briefings, training of Ph.D. students and post-docs, etc., that the research is expected to yield. When applicable, a more thorough discussion of the expected outputs should be attached in accordance with the *Appendix for the Generation of Information Products* found below.

6. **What is the justification for the amount of money requested?** The proposer should justify the budget request and why it is consistent with the research and associated output that the funds will support. This should be a general discussion, with additional detail provided in the proposal budget (See “Budget,” page 4.)
7. **What other sources of research support does the proposer have in hand or has he/she applied for to support the research team?** If funds are being provided or requested from other sources, the proposal should list those sources, amounts, and the current status of funding from each. This narrative information can be integrated into the previous question, with detail provided in the budget.

When an existing or previous grantee seeks funds for a project in the same or related area to that currently or previously supported by a Foundation grant, an additional section should be included in the proposal answering the following question:

8. **What is the status and output of current and/or previous Sloan grants?** The proposal should include a discussion of the work that has been produced (or is in process) in connection with previous Foundation grants. This discussion should include a list of publications (working papers, articles published in journals, books, Ph.D. dissertations, etc.) and other products (e.g., conferences, presentations, films, training, etc.) designated as output or outcome metrics from current and/or previous grants.



Budget

Format

- The budget should be presented in tabular form, but the Foundation does not require a particular format.
- Universities, which comprise the majority of Alfred P. Sloan Foundation grantees, may have formats that they require their researchers to use. Such formats will generally meet the needs and requirements of the Foundation.
- Individuals and organizations without required budget formats, or those less experienced than universities in preparing budgets, may want to use or adapt the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation’s sample budget format. [Visit the Forms section](#) of the Foundation’s website to download the sample budget.

Content

- ❑ **For grant requests of \$50,000 or less, no overhead costs are permitted.**
- ❑ **For grant requests larger than \$50,000, overhead costs may not exceed 15% of direct project costs.**
- ❑ If there is a “pass-through” or subcontract there must not be double overhead. (I.e., the institution should not charge 15% on funds subcontracted to another institution that then also includes overhead costs.) A recommended division of overhead where a subcontract is involved is 3% for the contracting institution and 12% for the institution that makes the final expenditure.
- ❑ If the total cost of the project is larger than the amount requested from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, an overall financial plan for the whole effort must be included, including the identification of matching financial contributions (either secured or anticipated). When possible, letters of support from other funders should be included indicating their willingness to provide funds and the amount of support to be provided.
- ❑ Detail needed to supplement the narrative budget justification in the body of the proposal should also be included in this section.
- ❑ The Foundation discourages budget requests to cover summer salary for senior faculty. Proposals may request (and must justify) up to one month summer salary support for senior faculty members in the amount of either 1/9 full academic salary or \$35,000 *whichever is lower*. This policy applies to all faculty more than ten years beyond attainment of their Ph.D. The Foundation may make exceptions to this policy in extraordinary circumstances, but a strong case for such an exception must be made in the proposal.



Appendices

Supplementary material to the grant proposal should be included in one or more appendices, as applicable.

- ❑ Curriculum Vita(e) *
- ❑ Conflicts of Interest / Sources of Bias *
- ❑ Attention to Diversity *
- ❑ Bibliography of papers, articles, books, texts, or other sources cited in the proposal.
- ❑ End notes

- Letters of Support if the success of the project depends on the support of key figures other than the principal investigator and project team.
- Empirical Research Methods Appendix *
- Information Products Appendix *
- Appendix for Projects that Support Workshops, Conferences, or other Large Meetings *
- Other supplementary material the proposer feels appropriate.

** See below for additional guidelines*



Curriculum Vita(e)

- Proposers must provide CVs or bios of key project staff that will implement and supervise activities.
 - CVs should include education, employment history, a list of the proposer's most important previous publications, the journals in which they appeared, book reviews, and important honors (NAS, AAAS, best paper awards, etc.) and other awards.
 - Full CVs are not requested; 1 page per person is generally sufficient.
-



Conflicts of Interest / Sources of Bias

The proposal must include as an appendix a disclosure of potential conflicts of interest or sources of bias on the part of the primary investigator, all key project staff, and the grantee institution. Potential conflicts that should be reported in this section include:

- **Financial interests:** Any significant financial interests (equity holdings, stock options, etc.) in any corporate entity involved with the subject matter of the proposed research;
- **Management/Advisory affiliations:** Any status as an officer, trustee, or member of an advisory committee in any entity involved with the subject matter of the proposed research;
- **Paid Consulting:** Any compensation or honoraria received (within the last three years) from an entity involved with the subject matter of the proposed research in exchange for consulting services, speaking engagements, or expert testimony;
- **Patents:** Any planned, pending, or awarded patents the value of which may depend on the outcome of the proposed research.

If no such conflicts exist, the appendix should include a statement to that effect.



Attention to Diversity

In keeping with the Foundation's long-standing support for the professional advancement of underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and economics, the Foundation urges proposers to be mindful that African-Americans/blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, Native Americans, and women are often underrepresented in the scientific enterprise. Proposers should strive for diversity when drafting their proposals, constructing research teams, creating advisory panels, and assigning leadership and management responsibilities on a project. Proposers should provide a brief appendix discussing current and planned efforts to ensure racial and gender diversity in the project. **Note that mere provision of the diversity or equal opportunity policy of one's institution is insufficient.** Rather, what we are looking for are concrete plans to ensure that *the particular project under consideration* will be structured in such a way as to encourage racial and gender diversity.



Empirical Research Methods Appendix

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's mission is to support high-quality research using appropriate modern and sound methodologies. In acknowledgment of these core principles, grant proposals to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation that request support for statistical work of any kind must include a detailed methodological discussion in the form of an appendix.

Proposers should expect the review of their empirical methods to be similar to the scrutiny given such matters by NSF scientific panels or by top research journals. In fact, the Sloan Foundation often calls on the same kinds of methodological experts to help evaluate proposals. Proposers who plan on collecting data, running experiments, or conducting evaluations, and who do not already have a statistician or econometrician to consult with, should consider enlisting one before submitting a proposal.

The Sloan Foundation expects empirical research proposals to describe both explicit hypotheses and sound methods for testing them. While collecting data about a phenomenon is better than not doing so, it is just a start. The key question is rarely what happened, but rather what happened compared to what would have happened anyway or under other circumstances. Working with counterfactuals can be challenging, of course. Causal inferences, though always desirable, should not be claimed without careful justification.

The methodological portion of a proposal or this appendix need not follow a prescribed format or organization. Examples of the kinds of questions that should normally be addressed are listed below. Not all of these questions apply in every situation. Thinking about them, though, should help proposers be more explicit about assumptions, plans, and methods. As long as carefully justified, alternatives to the classical techniques and approaches of frequentist statistics are welcome as well.

Model and Research Design:

- What conceptual frameworks or institutional analyses support your model?
- What are the equations and parameters you will investigate?
- What distributional and error structure assumptions do you make and why?
- Which variables are exogenous and which are endogenous?
- Are there omitted, confounding, or unmeasurable factors to consider?
- What statistical hypotheses will you test and why?
- What randomized, controlled, quasi, or natural experiments could help?

Sampling and Data:

- What is your population? Control group? Unit of observation? Of analysis?
- If you are not collecting population data, what is your sampling strategy?
- If you are not randomly sampling, what are potential sampling biases?
- What power calculations show that your sample size is sufficient? Please note that the answer to data insufficiency is not simply to declare your project a pilot.
- Can you commit in advance to a given strategy, say by registering your trial?
- How will your data and code be shared, annotated, cited, and archived?
- What else will you do to make your findings reproducible by other researchers?

Identification, Estimation, and Robustness:

- Why are the datasets you will study capable of answering the questions you pose?
- Will observed distributions uniquely determine structural parameter estimates?
- What techniques will you employ to estimate parameter values and why?
- To what extent could endogeneity be a problem? Might instrumental variables or other methods help?
- Can you use, e.g., regression discontinuity design or differences-in-differences?
- What kinds of sensitivity analysis or robustness tests do you plan?
- What other threats to validity can you anticipate? What can you do about them?



Information Products Appendix

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation funds the generation and dissemination of knowledge according to a set of core principles:

- We aim to support exceptional projects that can attract substantial attention when disseminated through high-impact channels;
- We believe that making project outputs freely and openly accessible can increase the reach and value of what we fund;
- We recognize that there are costs to the dissemination of knowledge, and that sustainable models are necessary for the institutions that do so; and
- We want our policies to align well with those of other major funding agencies and institutions, especially ones that also value open access to knowledge.

Many Sloan-funded projects produce “information products,” which may include: scholarly publications and pre-publications (such as working papers), project assets (e.g., data, software code, raw footage), and other products such as presentation materials, popular media, websites, curricula, etc. Proposers who will generate “information products” (i.e., more than a simple, traditional journal article) are required to submit a brief one to two page appendix explaining how they plan to manage and disseminate such materials in accordance with the principles above. This “IP Plan” should address the following topics (with key questions to consider listed below each):

Description:

- What information products will be created in the course of this project?
- What format(s) will those information products take? Please list as appropriate.
- Does the project involve organization or analysis of pre-existing materials, and if so, what are the relevant licensing or sharing arrangements?
- Is the work subject to any superseding policies (such as a university open access mandate or other organization-wide policies)?

Management:

- What tools, platforms, and processes will be used to manage project assets as they are created and used through the grant period?
- Who will be responsible for managing project assets during the grant period?

Dissemination:

- What channels will be used to disseminate grant products to target audiences?
- Under what license(s), in what timeframe, and (if applicable) at what cost will grant products be available?
- If the project relies on project assets that are proprietary or otherwise not available for wide dissemination, how will the final grant products be reproducible (in the case of research findings) or otherwise accessible for future use?

Archiving & Stewardship:

- How will you ensure the long-term durability of grant products after the funding period ends?
- How long beyond the grant term will grant products be maintained and by whom?

Please note that individual Alfred P. Sloan Foundation programs may have more specific guidelines or policies, which are available from the relevant Program Director.



Appendix for Projects that Support Workshops, Conferences, or Other Large Meetings

The following documents must be included in an appendix to any grant proposal requesting support for a workshop, conference, or other large meeting.

- Draft conference agenda
- Draft list of conference invitees listing the name, title, and institutional affiliation of each
- Draft letter of invitation
- Draft list of invited speakers, presenters, and/or panel participants listing the name, title, and institutional affiliation of each
- Draft call for papers (if applicable)

Attention to Diversity

In keeping with the Foundation's long-standing support for the professional advancement of underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and economics, the Foundation urges conference organizers to be mindful that African-Americans/blacks, Hispanics/Latinos, Native Americans, and women are often underrepresented at conferences, especially as panel chairs, speakers, and panel participants. Conference organizers should strive for diversity when drafting conference agendas, invitation lists, lists of speakers, and outreach plans.

Evaluation and Participant Survey

All proposals should contain an evaluation plan that includes a survey of conference participants at the conclusion of the conference. The details of participant surveys will vary depending on the nature and aims of the conference, but the survey should be designed so that conference organizers can use the collected survey data to evaluate which panels, plenaries, lectures, workshops, breakout groups, networking dinners, or other events were attended, the perceived quality of those events, what participants thought most valuable about the conference, where there is room for improvement, how the conference compares to similar conferences the participant has attended, and whether the conference achieved its overarching goals.

Should the grant proposal be successful, a discussion and analysis of participant survey data must be included as part of the grantee's final report to the Foundation.



Proposal Administration Form

(Separate Document)

In order to process a successful grant proposal, the Foundation needs to collect certain administrative information about your institution. [Visit the Forms page](#) in the Apply for Grants section of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation website to download the Proposal Administration Form.

To ensure prompt payment upon a successful grant application, a completed Proposal Administration Form must be submitted with or soon after the grant proposal as a separate document.



How to Submit a Completed Grant Proposal

Grant proposals invited by a program director of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation should be submitted as an email attachment, preferably as a single file, directly to him or her. If a program director has not invited you to submit a proposal, *please do not submit a proposal*. Instead, compose and submit a Letter of Inquiry to the relevant program director via email. For guidelines on Letters of Inquiry, [please see the Foundation's website](#).



Confidentiality

The Foundation requests that prospective grantees treat grant proposals as confidential during the application process and refrain from publicly distributing their proposals (in whole or part) or disclosing their status in the application process until the Foundation has completed its evaluation and made a funding decision.