

# Matter-to-Life Program

## Letter of Inquiry Guidelines

*Last updated: 11/9/2021*

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's Matter-to-Life program will begin accepting Letters of Inquiry (LOI) as of January 10, 2022. Letters of Inquiry (LOI) should contain the information specified below along with the (lead) PI's CV and be emailed to Program Director Ernie Glover at [mattertolife@sloan.org](mailto:mattertolife@sloan.org).

Letters of Inquiry should not exceed two pages, should be either a PDF or Microsoft Word document, and should provide the following information:

### FOR ALL LETTERS OF INQUIRY

- Lead PI name along with institution and department
- Co-PI name(s) along with institution(s) and department(s)

### FOR LETTERS OF INQUIRY REQUESTING SUPPORT FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT

- Describe the project goal(s), output(s), and your plan to achieve said goal(s).
- Succinctly describe the current state of relevant research.
- Indicate why the project is scientifically important, in part by indicating how achieving the project goal will advance a scientific understanding of the physical principles or mechanisms that distinguish living from nonliving systems, or of how those principles or mechanisms guide the complexification of matter towards living systems.
- Specify the project duration.
- Provide a brief budget obtained by stating the total project cost (over the full project duration) and breaking that cost down into three expense categories: *People*, *Equipment & Materials*, and *Other*, with one or two brief sentences describing the major component(s) of the *Other* expense category.

### FOR LETTERS OF INQUIRY REQUESTING SUPPORT FOR A MEETING

- Describe the scientific area(s) or topic(s) that will be featured at the meeting.
- Describe the goal(s) of the meeting, such as idea/information exchange, opportunities to form collaborations, and/or self-organizing efforts that culminate in a *Research-Case Document* (see below).
- Estimate the number of participants and the duration of the meeting.

- Indicate the year, month if known, and location of the meeting.
- Estimate the total cost of the meeting, specify the anticipated amount to be requested from the Sloan Foundation, and indicate whether support has or will be requested from other funding sources.

#### **FOR LETTERS OF INQUIRY FOR MEETINGS THAT LEAD TO A *RESEARCH-CASE DOCUMENT***

The Matter-to-Life program contemplates it will support a certain number of meetings that aim to produce research case documents relevant to matter-to-life science. We define a *Research-Case Document* as one which makes a case for an area of research by

1. Stating the scientific goal(s) of an area of research;
2. Explaining why those goals are important to matter-to-life science; and
3. Specifying a research agenda to achieve the stated goal(s). A *research agenda* communicates a set of reasonably specific research outcomes, goals, or questions along with a compact summary of the methods or approaches to achieving each outcome/goal/question.

Requestors seeking support for self-organizing efforts to create a research case document may request support for up to two meetings, thereby providing an opportunity for a follow-on meeting that may be needed to realize the document. If support is being sought for two meetings, the LOI should so specify and should provide, for each meeting, the information listed in the “For Letters of Inquiry Requesting Support For A Meeting” section, above.