**William T. Grant**
**F O U N D A T I O N**

# Research Grants on Improving the Use of Research Evidence
## Application Guidelines

**Updated November 2020**

**2021 LOI Deadlines:**
January 13, 2021, 3PM EST
May 5, 2021, 3PM EST*
August 4, 2021, 3PM EST

# Contents

# Program Overview

The Foundation's mission is to support research to improve the lives of young people ages 5-25 in the United States. One way that we pursue this mission is by investing in high-quality field-initiated studies on improving the use of research evidence in ways that benefit youth.

Over the past decade, a growing body of research has illuminated the conditions that facilitate the use of research evidence in policy and practice. For example, studies find that when research is relevant to decision makers, deliberated over thoughtfully, and embedded in policymaking processes, routines, and tools, the findings are more likely to be used. Still, there remain many unanswered questions that are critical to understanding how to improve the production and use of research evidence. What's more, there is a scarcity of evidence supporting the notion that research use in policy and practice will necessarily improve youth outcomes. Serious scientific inquiry is needed. We need to know the conditions under which using research evidence improves decision making, policy implementation, service delivery, and, ultimately, youth outcomes. In short, we need research on the use of research.

Toward this end, we seek studies that identify, build, and test strategies to enhance the use of research evidence in ways that benefit youth. We are particularly interested in research on improving the use of research evidence by state and local decision makers, mid-level managers, and intermediaries. Some investigators will focus on the strategies, relationships, and other supports needed for policy and practice organizations to use research more routinely and constructively. Others may investigate structures and incentives within the research community to encourage deep engagement with decision makers. Still other researchers may examine activities that help findings inform policy ideas, shape practice responses, and improve systems.

Studying ways to improve the use of research evidence will require new and innovative ideas, and we welcome creative studies that have potential to advance the field. Proposals for studies are evaluated on the basis of their fit with our interests; the strength and feasibility of their designs, methods, and analyses; their potential to inform improvements to research use; and their contribution to theory and empirical evidence.

The Foundation does not have a preference for a particular research design or method. We begin application reviews by looking at the research questions or hypotheses. Then we evaluate whether the proposed research designs and methods will provide strong empirical evidence on those questions. We support studies from a range of disciplines, fields, and methods, and we encourage investigations into various systems, including justice, housing, child welfare, mental health, and education. The strongest proposals incorporate data from multiple sources and often involve multi-disciplinary teams.

Across all of our programs, we strive to support a diverse group of researchers in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, and seniority, and we encourage research projects led by African American, Latinx, Native American, and Asian Pacific American researchers.

# Proposing a Study

Studies on improving the use of research evidence should identify, build, and test strategies to ensure that research evidence is used in ways that benefit youth. We welcome ideas from social scientists across a range of disciplines, fields, and methodologies. Research teams have drawn on conceptual and empirical work from political science, communication science, knowledge mobilization, implementation science, organizational psychology and other areas related to the use of research. Critical perspectives that inform studies' research questions, methods, and interpretation of findings are also welcome. Broadening the theoretical perspectives used to study ways to improving the usefulness, use, and impact of research evidence may create a new frontier of important research.

We welcome investigations about research use in various systems, including justice, child welfare, mental health, and education.

In addition to theory-building and theory-testing projects, we are interested in measurement studies to develop the tools to capture changes in the nature and degree of research use.

**Proposals for studies on improving the use of research evidence must pursue one of the following lines of inquiry:**

1.  **Build, identify, or test strategies to improve the use of existing research.**

    Proposals may investigate strategies, mechanisms, or conditions for improving research use. We also encourage studies that measure the effects of deliberate efforts to improve routine and beneficial uses of research in deliberations and decisions that affect young people. For example, prior work suggests that decision makers often lack the institutional resources and requisite skills to seek out and apply research, and certain organizational norms and routines can help overcome those barriers (Honig, Venkateswaran, & Twitchell, 2014; Mosley & Courtney, 2012; Nicholson, 2014). Future projects might study efforts to alter the decision making environment. For example, studies might compare the effectiveness of different ways (e.g., technical assistance, research-practice partnerships, cross-agency teams, etc.) to connect existing research with decision makers or exploit natural variation across decision making environments to identify the conditions that improve research use.

2. **Identify or test strategies for producing more useful research evidence.**

   Proposals may investigate ways to create incentives, structures, and relationships that facilitate research production that responds to decision makers' needs. Applicants might seek to identify strategies for altering the incentive structures or organizational cultures of research institutions so that researchers conduct more practice- or policy-relevant studies and are rewarded for research products that are considered useful by decision makers. Other applicants might seek to identify the relationships and organizational structures that lead to the prioritization of decision makers' needs in developing research agendas. Studies may also examine ways to optimize organized collaborations among researchers, decision makers, intermediaries, and other stakeholders to benefit youth. For example, one might investigate the effectiveness of funders' efforts to incentivize joint work between researchers and decision makers. Other projects might test curriculum and training experiences that develop researchers' capacity to conduct collaborative work with practitioners.

3. **Test the assumption that using high-quality research evidence improves decision making and youth outcomes.**

   Studies may examine the impact of research use on youth outcomes and the conditions under which using research evidence improves outcomes. The notion that using research will improve youth outcomes is a long-standing assumption, but there is little evidence to validate it.

   We suspect that the impact of research on outcomes may depend on a number of conditions, including the quality of the research and the quality of research use.  As illustrated in Figure 1, one hypothesis is that the quality of the research and the quality of research use will work synergistically to yield strong outcomes for youth. For the purpose of this example, high-quality research is defined as rigorous, relevant, and designed for use. High-quality research use is represented as critical consideration and appropriate application of research.

   Applicants are encouraged to identify and test other conditions under which using research evidence improves youth outcomes. For example, recent federal policies have instituted mandates and incentives to increase the adoption of programs with evidence of effectiveness from randomized controlled trials, with the expectation that the use of these programs will lead to better outcomes. Do these policies actually increase the use of those programs and improve child outcomes?
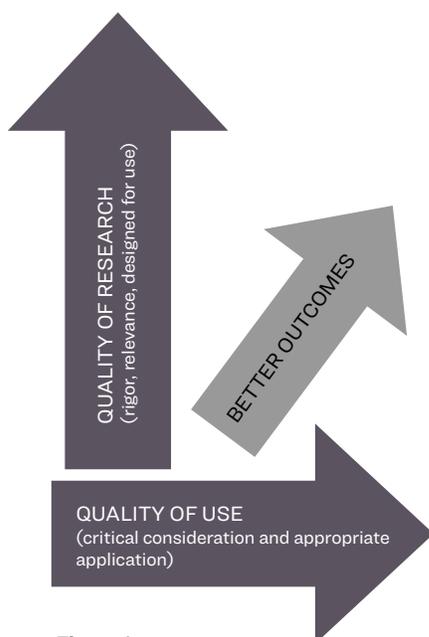


QUALITY OF RESEARCH
(rigor, relevance, designed for use)

BETTER OUTCOMES

QUALITY OF USE
(critical consideration and appropriate application)

**Figure 1**

T he lines of inquiry described above call for a range of methods, from experimental to observational designs, from comparative case approaches to systematic reviews. In hypothesis-testing studies, the research design should provide credible evidence to support or refute hypotheses about the strategies that improve use of research. For example, a randomized controlled trial might test whether a technical assistance intervention that provides schools with coaching on the use of research evidence increases adoption of evidence-based programs. Alternatively, observational studies might leverage state variation to examine whether states that use research in policy making improve youth outcomes.

Where appropriate, applicants should consider using existing methods, measures, and analytic tools so that findings can be compared and aggregated across studies (please see Gitomer & Crouse, 2019). We strongly encourage applicants to utilize a new methods and measures repository, which will be fully launched in spring 2021 (https://www.uremethods. org/). That said, existing measures may not be well-suited for some inquiries, and thus we applicants may propose to adapt existing measures or develop new ones that can be employed in future studies. Finally, we continue to promote the use of mixed methods wherein multiple types of data are collected and integrated.

We encourage applicants proposing projects on the use of research evidence to review the resources provided on our website, including writing by staff, grantees, and other experts in the field.

**Is the Foundation's interest in improving the use of research evidence focused on any specific groups of users?**

State and local departments of education, child welfare, public health and juvenile justice are of interest because they influence the frontline practices that affect youth outcomes. Increased attention to evidence-based policy also creates unprecedented demands to use research in decision making in state and local agencies.

Mid-level managers are particularly important, given their roles deciding which programs, practices, and tools to adopt; deliberating ways to improve existing services; shaping the conditions for implementation; and making resource allocation decisions.

Intermediaries that shape the production of research or facilitate its uptake by policymakers or practitioners are also important. These organizations and individuals include think tanks, advocacy groups, consultants, professional associations, and others.

**Which journals publish studies about the use of research evidence?**

A variety of peer-review journals publish investigations about the use of research evidence. Some journals are dedicated to this topic, such as *Evidence and Policy*. Other outlets serve a broader ranges of interests but have published articles related to research use. These journals include *American Journal of Evaluation*, *Evaluation and Program Planning*, *Implementation Science*, *Educational Policy*, *Educational Researcher*, *American Journal of Education*, *Sociological Methodology*, *Management Science*, *Organization Science*, *Research on Social Work Practice*, *Child Welfare Journal*, *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy*, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *Criminology and Public Policy*, *Communication Theory*, and others.

**Definitions**

**Research evidence** is a type of evidence derived from applying systematic methods and analyses to address a predefined question or hypothesis. This includes descriptive studies, intervention or evaluation studies, meta-analyses, and cost-effectiveness studies conducted within or outside research organizations.

**Use of research evidence** can happen in many ways and may involve the direct application of research evidence to decision making, conceptual influences on how decision makers think about problems and potential solutions, strategic uses of research to justify existing stances or positions, or imposed uses that require use of research.

**Strategies** are systematic and replicable methods, activities, or policies intended to improve the use of research evidence or to maximize its benefits on decision making and youth outcomes.

# Recent Grants on the Use of Research Evidence

## Coordinated Knowledge Systems: Connecting Evidence to Action to Engage Students in School-Based Mental Health

*Principal Investigators: Bruce F. Chorpita, University of California, Los Angeles, and Kimberly D. Becker, University of South Carolina*

Bruce Chorpita and Kimberly Becker are testing whether a Coordinated Knowledge System (CKS)—a suite of tools that embeds research evidence into a coordinated sequence of actions for school-based mental health professionals—will produce greater use of research relative to traditional practice guidelines.

Schools are the primary entry point and service delivery setting for young people who receive mental health services. Yet participation in services is low and attrition is high, with as many as half of students dropping out of those services. Although there is a robust evidence base on effective strategies for engaging youth and their families, mental health professionals in schools rarely use that research because it is not consolidated for easy use nor embedded into their daily work.

The study includes 30 clinical supervisors, 120 of their therapist-supervisees, and 360 students enrolled in school-based services and at risk of prematurely dropping out of services. To test whether the CKS impacts the use of research evidence, Chorpita and Becker will randomly assign the clinical supervisors to either a CKS condition or a comparison condition in which they are provided with practice guidelines.

Digital recordings will be made of three supervision and two therapy sessions. The team will code these recordings to determine whether and how the CKS affected collaborative reflection and planning between supervisors and therapists. Specifically, data analysis will determine whether clinicians and their supervisors are more likely to draw on research to identify students' clinical problems and to use the full range of available evidence to address those problems. Supervisors and therapists will also complete surveys about their attitudes toward and experiences with research evidence, so that the research team can understand how the CKS performs across different contexts and professionals with varying beliefs and backgrounds.

## Intermediary Organizations and Education Policy: A Mixed-Methods Study of the Political Contexts of Research Utilization

*Principal Investigator: Janelle Scott, University of California, Berkeley; Elizabeth DeBray, University of Georgia; and Christopher Lubienski, Indiana University*

Janelle Scott and colleagues are examining whether and how the use of research evidence by local decision makers is shaped by changes in the supply of research, such as an increasing presence of non-partisan and independent research organizations, as well as how the promotion of research by such intermediaries differs depending on a city's governance structure, policy processes, and political actors.

The rise of large strategic philanthropies has shifted the political dynamics surrounding the production and use of research in education. Philanthropies fund think tanks, advocacy organizations, and centers to conduct research that will support their reform priorities around charter schools, school vouchers, teacher merit pay, and parent trigger laws. These intermediaries also have been

particularly successful in using that research to persuade others to adopt their reform agendas in cities across the country.

The research team will conduct a cross-case analysis of the political ecology and use of research evidence in Los Angeles and New York City. They will conduct semi-structured interviews with policymakers, journalists, intermediary organization representatives, and university-based researchers. They will also observe governance and school board meetings. All sources will be coded for the adoption and enactment of policy and for references to research, dismissals of research, and the use of research in idea and argument development. In addition, the team will conduct bibliometric analysis to map the frequency and clustering of references to research and reform policies in education blogs and Twitter feeds. Study findings will offer insights about the context of policymaking and inform strategies for improving the use of research evidence.

## Impact of the Research-to-Policy Collaboration Model: Testing an Approach to Improve the Use of Evidence

*Principal Investigator: Daniel Crowley, Pennsylvania State University; Taylor Bishop Scott, Pennsylvania State University; Kathryn Oliver, University of Oxford; and Lauren Supplee, Child Trends*

Daniel Crowley and colleagues are testing whether a structured approach to facilitating dialogue and interaction between policymakers and researchers improves legislators' use of research in policy activities related to child maltreatment.

A growing body of literature emphasizes barriers to the use of research in decision making, most notably a lack of interaction between researchers and policymakers, and limited relevance or timeliness of research. These factors impede the ability of legislative staff to access, distill, and use research. Crowley and colleagues posit that building researchers' policy competencies (e.g., understanding legislative processes and norms) may reduce professional cultural clashes in ways that help build enduring, trusting relationships on policy. The team hypothesizes that such interactions will increase the extent to which researchers' work adapts to the needs of policymakers and is ultimately used in public policy.

The research team is evaluating the Research-to Policy Collaboration (RPC), a manualized intervention implemented by an intermediary organization or research institution that works with legislative staff to identify policy engagement opportunities and develop a research network to rapidly provide relevant research. Researchers are also trained to engage effectively with legislative staff. In collaboration, RPC staff, legislative staff, and researchers then pursue policy responses.

Crowley and colleagues previously conducted a pilot study of RPC. The pilot study demonstrated the intervention's feasibility, indicated improvements in researchers' capacity to engage in the policymaking process, and increased connections of legislative office staff with researchers.

The team is now evaluating the intervention's ability to affect policymakers' use of evidence, researchers' policy engagement, and collaborations between researchers and congressional staff. Specifically, the team is using a double random assignment design—randomizing both federal legislators and researchers to either RPC intervention or comparison groups—and collecting qualitative and quantitative assessments of researcher-policy interactions and research use. The team will survey congressional staff to assess their attitudes and reported use of research evidence, their evidence sources, and the nature of their interactions with researchers. Surveys of researchers will assess their policy skills and engagement, as well as how their research activities adapt or respond to policymakers' needs. The team is further quantifying observable instances of policymakers' research use in legislative language and public statements. The team will also interview and observe participants to analyze collaboration and research use via interactive discourse.

## Studying the Use of Research Evidence: A Review of Methods

In *Studying the Use of Research Evidence: A Review of Methods*, Drew Gitomer and Kevin Crouse highlight measures and methods that have been employed to assess the use of research evidence in education, child welfare, and public health. The report outlines core methods issues, reviews recent studies that illustrate data collection and study designs, and discusses the affordances and limitations of various methods.

For each method, Gitomer and Crouse discuss "threats to valid interpretation" that researchers should consider as they design studies of research use. The authors also identify the research questions that each method is best poised to answer. Importantly, Gitomer and Crouse give attention to measurement: how do we know research evidence is being used when we look for it? These methodological challenges pose a significant obstacle to progress in the field, and we hope that this report will help researchers consider the variety of approaches available and better understand their strengths and limitations.

## The Rewards of Studying the Use of Research Evidence

*Interview with Lorraine McDonnell, Department of Political Science, University of California Santa Barbara*

**What were your research interests prior to receiving a grant from the William T. Grant Foundation?**

My prior work focused almost exclusively on the politics of education policy, by which I mean who gets what—and why. What are the factors that explain why certain kinds of policies emerge? What are the politics involved in the preferences and incentives of the different actors? In the wake of the 1983 landmark report, A Nation at Risk, for example, which documented how schools in the United States were failing, states began to develop accountability systems. Testing was at the heart of those systems and I was looking at the implementation of testing policies in three states: California, Kentucky, and North Carolina. Politics at the time was so divisive that Pete Wilson, then Governor of California, vetoed the legislation reauthorizing state assessment. Kentucky experienced similar values-based protests while North Carolina did not. This provided me with fertile ground for investigating what factors explain why states had different experiences with these accountability systems. It was an example of looking at the politics to understand what happened, i.e., was it about interest groups, ideology, leadership? These are the factors in politics; research evidence didn't enter into it much, but other kinds of evidence did.

**How has studying the use of research evidence expanded your perspective?**

I still adhere to the theoretical perspective of political science and policy analysis, but now I take my lens and look specifically

at evidence as one part of the policy process. The model that we are using asks what explains the use of different types of evidence. In political science, shining a light on the kinds of evidence that gets used had been a secondary interest, not the main concern. In a classic study published in the early '80s and still read by students of political science today, John Kingdom looked at the factors that influence whether something gets on the policy agenda. Research evidence plays a very small part in his theory, and he devotes just part of a chapter to where research comes in. Stephen Weatherford (my co-primary investigator on the Foundation-funded grant) and I wanted to look at all the different types of evidence. We maintained that asking about research evidence use is important, but we needed to expand the lens. It's really about evidence and where research fits into it, and where evidence fits into the policy process. That's something we are still learning.

**Did that perspective lead to any new lines of inquiry, tools, or ideas?**

Stephen Weatherford and I are writing [a book that grew directly out of our URE study](#). We are looking at the use of evidence in policymaking: the what, the who, and the how. The what is the kinds of evidence, the who are the different policy actors—not just the decision makers—and the producers of evidence. The how is the stages of the policy process. We are saying that the kinds of evidence that gets used in the policy process depends on the incentives of the users and the suppliers and the stages of the policy process. For example, research-based evidence is typically used more in the early stages of the process when a policy problem is being defined while other types of evi-

dence, such as ideological arguments and personal experience, often become more salient during the enactment stage.

**What would be your advice to political scientists looking to move into the space?**

Many people who look at URE look at it apolitically; it's about rationality. But there are big political incentives that are going to shape whether and how that research gets used. Theory and studies on URE would benefit from consideration and examination of politics. This means thinking beyond the framing and material presented in the Foundation's call for proposals. It means applicants need to resist the temptation to shoehorn what they are doing into the Foundation's specific call for proposals. When coming to a place like the Foundation, I recommend that investigators incorporate rather than shy away from their academic traditions and disciplines and represent these perspectives in their work, so that URE studies can also contribute to theoretical advances in the broader social science disciplines.

# Awards

## Major Research Grants

Major research grants on improving the use of research evidence range between $100,000 and $1,000,000 and cover two to four years of support. Projects involving secondary data analysis and descriptive research are at the lower end of the budget range ($300,000-$600,000), whereas projects involving new data collection and sample recruitment can be at the higher end. Proposals to launch experiments in which settings (e.g., schools, child welfare agencies) are randomly assigned to conditions sometimes have awards at the higher end.

In addition to financial support, the Foundation invests significant time and resources in capacity-building for research grantees. We provide opportunities for connections with other scholars, policymakers, and practitioners, and we organize learning communities for grantees in each focus area. Such meetings allow grantees to discuss challenges, seek advice from peers and colleagues, and collaborate across projects. To that end, applicants for major research grants should include funds for the PI to attend a biennial conference and travel to the conference (the next conferences will occur in 2022, 2024, 2026). To strengthen our grantees' capacities to conduct and implement strong qualitative and mixed-methods work, the Foundation provides access to a consultation service.

## Officers' Research Grants

Officers' research grants on improving the use of research evidence are a separate funding mechanism for smaller projects with budgets typically ranging from $25,000 to $50,000. Some are stand-alone projects; others build off larger projects. The budget should be appropriate for the activities proposed. Projects involving secondary data analysis are typically at the lower end of the budget range, whereas projects involving new data collection and sample recruitment can be at the higher end.

Submissions for the Officers' research grants will be accepted for the January and August deadlines. They will not be accepted for the May deadline, which is reserved for major research grants.

Similar to the major grants program, we encourage research projects led by African American, Latinx, Native American, and Asian Pacific American researchers. Early career scholars are also encouraged to apply for these grants as a way to build their research programs.

# Eligibility

## Eligible Organizations

Grants are made to organizations, not individuals. Grants are limited, without exception, to tax-exempt organizations. A copy of the Internal Revenue Service tax-exempt status determination letter is required from each applying organization. We do not support or make contributions to building funds, fundraising drives, endowment funds, general operating budgets, or scholarships.

## Eligible Principal Investigators

Please consult with your institution about their eligibility criteria regarding who can act as Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-Principal Investigator on a grant.

## What are the Foundation's top recommendations for applicants?

1. Prioritize the research activities. We are focused on efforts to study how research evidence is used to improve youth outcomes or how to improve the use of research evidence. Specify research questions about what it takes to get research used or what happens when research is used. Questions might concern the effectiveness of a strategy to improve the use of research evidence, the identification and testing of hypothesized mechanisms to improve research use, or an exploration of the conditions under which research use leads to improved decision making and youth outcomes.

2. Include a strong conceptualization and operational definition of research use. Make clear how the conceptualization relates to prior work and is situated within a larger theoretical framework. A strong operationalization provides a roadmap for how to empirically assess research use.

3. Make a compelling case that the study is focused on issues for which high-quality research is available for use in policy or practice that affects youth. Include a description of the body of available research, its relevance to the policy or practice issue under study, and the rationale for promoting its use by particular research users and in certain decision making contexts.

4. Focus on doing a few things well rather than trying to cover the waterfront. For example, pursue a few key research questions or hypotheses thoroughly and rigorously, rather than proposing an extensive list.

## The Foundation encourages interdisciplinary research teams. How should applicants indicate the composition of their team in their applications?

Within the narrative, investigators can describe how the research team is well-positioned to address the varied tasks demanded by the study's conceptualization and research design. This might include combining expertise across disciplines or methods. We encourage applicants to be specific about the value of each member's contributions to the team, and strongly discourage teams that comprise many senior investigators for very limited time and effort.

## What do you look for in measurement studies?

We anticipate that investigations to improve the use of research evidence will necessitate modifying existing measures and developing new ones. These measures will need to be able to assess differences in research use over time, across conditions, or as a result of intervention. Studies involving rigorous tests of research use strategies will likely demand measures that can be administered at a large scale and reasonable cost.

Proposals for studies to develop or improve measures should provide: 1) a strong theoretical and empirical rationale for the importance of the constructs or phenomena measured, 2) the utility of the measures, tools, or analysis strategies beyond their use in the proposed study, and 3) detailed plans for establishing reliability and validity.

## What do you look for in evaluation studies?

Proposals must specify a theoretical basis for the research use intervention. We are interested in investigations of the mechanisms through which intervention effects occur, as well as variation in intervention effects.

We are more likely to fund thoughtful, exploratory studies than work that is narrow, even if it involves random assignment. The project should produce findings that have broader relevance to the field, beyond the particular program, policy or practice being studied.

Some studies will provide direct evidence of impact on youth outcomes, but we will consider studies that examine intermediate outcomes shown in other work to improve the use of research evidence.

## Do you fund pilot studies, feasibility studies, or the planning stages of studies?

Rarely. We focus our support on empirical studies in which applicants have already performed a literature review, have identified specific research questions and/or hypotheses, and possess sufficiently detailed research methods and data analysis plans so that reviewers can evaluate their rigor. Intervention studies should be beyond the pilot phase.

## Do you fund international studies?

Rarely. Our mission focuses on supporting research to improve the lives of young people in the United States.

# Application Materials

The William T. Grant Foundation accepts applications only through our online application system, which is accessible through our website at wtgrantfoundation.org. For specific deadlines and submission instructions, please visit our website.

We encourage applicants to begin the LOI as early as possible to ensure the timely completion of the online application and to allow sufficient time to resolve any technical issues that may arise.

## For Major Research Grants Letters of Inquiry

The application process for all research grants begins with a letter of inquiry. Letters of inquiry for research grants are accepted three times per year (in the winter, spring, and summer). Letters of inquiry for Officers' research grants are accepted two times per year (in the winter and summer). All letters of inquiry must include the following:

1.  **Project Information**
    - Enter into the online application your project title (120 characters maximum, including spaces), brief description (see below), start and end dates, and total requested amount (including the combined direct and indirect costs for the full grant period).

2.  **Brief Description of the Project (1,500 characters maximum, including spaces)**
    - Start with the major research questions.
    - Briefly summarize the project's rationale and background.
    - Describe the intervention (if applicable), research methods, and data analysis plan.
    - Use language appropriate for an educated lay audience.

3. **Project Narrative (five pages total)**

   **Format your narrative as follows: 12-point Times New Roman font, single-spaced text with a line space between each paragraph, numbered pages, and 1-inch margins on all sides.**

   - State the major research questions or aims guiding the proposal.
   - Provide a strong rationale that includes:
     - a brief literature review indicating how the project complements and extends prior and concurrent research;
     - a clear description of the theories providing the foundation or organizing frame for the work;
     - how the project advances theory; and
     - the project's relevance for policy or practice.
   - Include specific hypotheses and/or research questions to be tested or addressed.
   - Describe the methods and data collection plan, including:
     - Sample/case definition and selection procedures;
     - research design;
     - key constructs, measures and data sources; and procedures for data collection; and
     - intervention (if applicable).
   - Summarize the data analysis plan for addressing the hypotheses and/or research questions.
     - Identify the key measures.
     - If you are using qualitative data, you should provide some detail about coding processes and the plan for establishing that the coding is reliable.
     - If you are proposing to develop or improve measures, you should discuss how you will show that the measures are valid and reliable.
   - If you have a reference list, include it in this upload. It will not be counted toward the five-page maximum.

4. **Curriculum Vitae, Biographical Sketch or Resume (one page maximum)**
   - Include a one-page curriculum vitae, biographical sketch, or resume for each Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator. Be sure to include education and training, peer-reviewed publications, and grants. Do not send full curricula vitae or resumes. There are no specific formatting requirements for curricula vitae, biographical sketches, or resumes.

# For Officers' Research Grants Letters of Inquiry

Letters of inquiry for Officers' research grants should include all of the materials required for major research grants.

**The following additional materials are required ONLY FOR OFFICERS' RESEARCH GRANTS and should not be submitted as part of the major research grants letters of inquiry:**

1. **Budget**
   - Please note that most of the research dollars should support research activities. The template for the Budget can be found within the Budget tab of your online application. Applicants may take an indirect cost allowance of up to 15 percent of total direct costs.

2. **Budget Justification Form**
   - The template of this form can be found within the Uploads tab of your online application.

3. **IRS Tax-Exempt Status Determination Letter**
   - You will be required to submit a copy of your institution's IRS tax-exempt status determination letter.

# Selection Criteria

All letters of inquiry will be reviewed internally. The letter of inquiry functions as a mini-proposal, and should meet the selection criteria detailed below:

### Fit with Improving the Use of Research Evidence Focus Area

Proposed research on improving the use of research evidence should pursue one of the following lines of inquiry:

- Identify or test strategies to improve the use of existing research.

- Identify or test strategies for producing more useful research evidence.

- Test the assumption that using high-quality research improves decision making and youth outcomes.

### Conceptualization and Relevance

- Proposals must reflect a mastery of relevant theory and empirical findings, and clearly state the theoretical and empirical contributions they will make to the existing research base.

- Projects may focus on either generating or testing theory, depending on the state of knowledge about a topic.

- Although we do not expect that any one project will or should impact policy or practice, all proposals should discuss how the findings will be relevant to policy or practice.

### Methods

- Projects should employ rigorous methods that are commensurate with the proposal's goals. The Foundation welcomes quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods projects.

- The study's design, methods, and analysis plan should fit the research questions. Further, the description of the research design should make clear how the empirical work will test, refine, or elaborate specific

theoretical notions. Quantitative analyses might emphasize hypotheses and plans for testing them, while qualitative analyses might elaborate on how the research will illuminate processes underlying programs, policies, or practices.

- Plans for case selection, sampling, and measurement should clearly state why they are well-suited to address the research questions or hypotheses. For example, samples should be appropriate in size and composition to answer the study's questions. Qualitative case selection–whether critical, comparative, or otherwise– should also be appropriate to answer the proposed questions.

- The quantitative and/or qualitative analysis plan should demonstrate awareness of the strengths and limits of the specific analytic techniques and how they will be applied in the current case.

- If proposing mixed methods, plans for integrating the methods and data should be clear and compelling.

- Where relevant, attention should be paid to the generalizability of findings.

- Quantitative studies should describe the statistical power to detect meaningful effects.

- The proposal must demonstrate adequate consideration of the gender, ethnic, and cultural appropriateness of concepts, methods, and measures.

## Feasibility

- The methods, time frame, staffing plan, and other resources must be realistic.

- Prior training and publications should demonstrate that the applicant has a track record of conducting strong research and communicating it successfully.

## Where appropriate, we value projects that:

- harness the learning potential of mixed methods and interdisciplinary work;

- involve practitioners or policymakers in meaningful ways to shape the research questions, interpret preliminary and final results, and communicate their implications for policy and practice;

- combine senior and junior staff in ways that facilitate mentoring of junior staff;

- are led by members of racial or ethnic groups underrepresented in academic fields;

- generate data useful to other researchers and make such data available for public use; and

- demonstrate significant creativity and the potential to advance the field by, for example, introducing new research paradigms or extending existing measures.

# Application Review Process

## Major Research Grants

Letters of inquiry are reviewed internally by staff with social science expertise. Given the breadth of work presented in LOIs, internal reviewers may lack deep knowledge of an applicant's specific area of work, so applications should be written with this in mind. On occasion, internal reviewers will request more information from applicants or solicit expert opinions in order to more adequately assess a project.

After internal review of a letter of inquiry, the Foundation will decide whether to decline the LOI or invite a full proposal for further consideration. The investigator will be notified of this decision within eight weeks of the LOI deadline. In recent years, about 15% of the letters received for major grants have been invited to submit a full proposal. Typically, applicants are offered two deadlines for full proposals, ranging from approximately six weeks to six months from the time of the invitation. We do not accept unsolicited full proposals.

The full proposal follows a format similar to that of the letter of inquiry, and includes a proposal narrative of about 25 pages, a budget and budget justification, and full curriculum vitae or resumes for key staff and investigators. (Institutional Review Board Approval is not required at the time of the proposal's submission but is required before issuing grant funds.) Full proposals are reviewed using a scientific peer review process involving two or more external reviewers. The Foundation chooses reviewers with content, methodological, and disciplinary expertise in the proposed work.

The Foundation's Senior Program Team then reviews promising proposals and offers additional feedback.

Applicants who receive positive reviews with critiques that can be addressed within a short time frame are asked to provide written responses to reviewers' comments. Full proposals, external reviews, and applicants' responses to external reviews are then further reviewed by the Senior Program Team. The Team makes funding recommendations to the Program Committee and Board of Trustees. Approved awards are made available shortly after Board meetings, which occur in late March, June, and October. In recent years about 20% have been recommended for funding.

The review process for a successful application, beginning with the submission of a letter of inquiry and ending with approval by our Board of Trustees, is 10 to 15 months.

## Officers' Research Grants

Applications for Officers' research grants are accepted two times per year and share the same January and August deadlines as the major research grants program. Officers' research grants are awarded on the merit of the letter of inquiry alone . Awards are made available after internal review. Recently about 8-10% of the letters of inquiry for an Officers' research grant have been approved for funding.

Investigators will receive an email notification of staff's decision within eight weeks of the LOI submission date.

# References

Gitomer, D. & Crouse, K. (2019). *Studying the use of research evidence: A review of methods.* New York: William T. Grant Foundation.

Honig, M. I., Venkateswaran, N., McNeil, P., Twitchell, J. M. (2014). Leaders' use of research for fundamental change in school district central offices: Processes and challenges. In Finnigan, K. S., Daly, A. J. (Eds.), *Using research evidence in education: From the schoolhouse door to Capitol Hill* (pp. 33–52). New York: Springer.

Mosley, J.E. & Courtney, M.E. (2012). Partnership and the politics of care: Advocates' role in passing and implementing California's law to extend foster care. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

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# Other Funding Opportunities for Researchers

### Research Grants on Reducing Inequality

Research grants on reducing inequality support studies that aim to build, test, or increase understanding of programs, policies, or practices to reduce inequality in the academic, social, behavioral, or economic outcomes of young people, especially on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic standing, language minority status, or immigrant origins.

### William T. Grant Scholars Program

The William T. Grant Scholars Program supports career development for promising early-career researchers. The program funds five-year research and mentoring plans that significantly expand researchers' expertise in new disciplines, methods, and content areas.

### Institutional Challenge Grant

The Institutional Challenge Grant encourages university-based research institutes, schools, and centers to build sustained research-practice partnerships with public agencies or nonprofit organizations in order to reduce inequality in research. They will also need to build the capacity of researchers to produce relevant work and the capacity of agency and nonprofit partners to use research.

Learn more at wtgrantfoundation.org

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*Having problems? For questions about application instructions and procedures, please email us: researchgrants@wtgrantfdn.org.*

*If you encounter technical difficulties, please use the contact form located at the bottom of each page on the application system*