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# Research Grants on Reducing Inequality

## Application Guidelines

Updated November 2020

**2021 LOI Deadlines:**

January 13, 2021, 3PM EST

May 5, 2021, 3PM EST\*

August 4, 2021, 3PM EST

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\*Letters of inquiry for Officers' research grants are not accepted in May.

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## 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 reducing inequality in youth outcomes.

Our focus on reducing inequality grew out of our view that research can do more than help us understand the problem of inequality—it can generate effective responses. We believe that it is time to build stronger bodies of knowledge on how to reduce inequality in the United States and to move beyond the mounting research evidence about the scope, causes, and consequences of inequality.

Toward this end, we seek 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. We prioritize studies about reducing inequality on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic standing, language minority status, or immigrant origins.

Proposals for studies are evaluated based on their fit with our interests in reducing inequality; the strength and feasibility of their designs, methods, and analyses; their potential to inform change; 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 empirical evidence on those questions. We support studies from a range of disciplines, fields, and methodologies, and we encourage investigations into various systems, including justice, housing, child welfare, mental health, and education. The most competitive proposals often 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.

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# Proposing a Study

Studies on reducing inequality aim to build, test, or increase understanding of programs, policies, or practices to reduce inequality in youth outcomes. We welcome descriptive studies that clarify mechanisms for reducing inequality or elucidate how or why a specific program, policy, or practice operates to reduce inequality. We also welcome intervention studies that examine attempts to reduce inequality. In addition, we seek studies that improve the measurement of inequality in ways that can enhance the work of researchers, practitioners, or policymakers. The common thread across all of these approaches, however, is a distinct and explicit focus on reducing inequality. While we value research on the causes and consequences of inequality, we are interested in supporting research that will inform a policy, program, or practice response that can be implemented through an organization, institution, or system.

## Applications for research grants on reducing inequality must:

- 1. Identify a specific inequality in youth outcomes, and show that the outcomes are currently unequal by engaging with the extant literature on the causes and consequences of inequality.**

We are especially interested in supporting research to reduce inequality in academic, social, behavioral, or economic outcomes.

- 2. Make a compelling case for the basis of inequality the study will address.**

We are especially interested in research to reduce inequality on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic standing, language minority status, or immigrant origin status. Proposals for research on reducing inequality on a basis not listed here, or on ways in which a basis of inequality intersects with another, must make a compelling case that this research will improve youth outcomes. For example, we encourage research on reducing inequality for LGBTQ youth, particularly in intersection with at least one of these prioritized dimensions. We also ask for specificity in naming the groups to be examined. Rather than use vague terms (e.g., “at-risk youth”), applicants are encouraged to be very clear about the groups on which the study will focus. Applicants are also discouraged from treating bases of inequality (e.g., race, poverty) as variables without providing conceptual and/or theoretical insight into why and how these inequalities exist.

**3. Articulate how findings from your research will help build, test, or increase understanding of a specific program, policy, or practice to reduce the specific inequality that you have identified.**

We encourage applicants to draw on extant theoretical and empirical literature to provide a rationale for why the programs, policies, or practices under study will equalize outcomes between groups or improve outcomes of the disadvantaged group. Likewise, applicants must identify how the study will investigate this rationale to determine whether it holds up to empirical scrutiny.

Recognizing that findings about programs and practices that reduce inequality will have limited societal impact until the structures that create inequality in the first place have been transformed, the Foundation is particularly interested in research to combat [systemic racism](#) and the [structural foundations of inequality](#) that limit the life chances of young people. Such research shifts the focal point of change from individuals to social institutions and examines how institutions might be altered to dislodge the deep roots of inequality and develop a way forward toward greater equity. Studies might examine how structural responses improve outcomes for youth or focus on the mechanisms through which such change occurs. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Research on dramatic changes to the U.S. federal tax system, such as those examined in the Foundation-supported National Academies Study on [A Roadmap to Reducing Child Poverty](#)
- Research on shifts in power structures, such as changes in governance systems, or on the process through which the mindsets and behaviors of those who hold power are changed.
- Research on the role of social movements to reduce inequality in youth outcomes, as laid out by Jenny Irons and Vivian Tseng in a recent piece on the Foundation’s website, “[Social Movement Research to Reduce Inequality for Young People](#)”
- Research on the potential impact on youth outcomes of reparations to American descendants of enslaved people, as proposed by William J. Darity, Jr. in an essay for the Foundation titled, “[A New Agenda for Eliminating Racial Inequality in the United States: The Research We Need,](#)” and in his recent book with A. Kirsten Mullen, *From Here to Equality*
- Research on the consequences for reducing educational inequality of significant school finance reforms, as discussed by William T. Grant Distinguished Fellow Robert Kim in “[How School Finance Research Can Sharpen the Debate, Strengthen Policy, and Improve Student Outcomes](#)”

- Research on implementing new approaches to prosecution aimed at eliminating racial and ethnic disparities, such as explored in [recent Foundation grants](#)
- Research on whether equitable bank lending policies can reduce housing segregation, improve neighborhood quality, and enhance youth development
- Research on the consequences for youth outcomes of a reallocation of municipal resources away from punitive action and towards social services, sometimes known by the slogan of “defund the police”

This list is intended to illustrate what we mean by systemic racism and the structural foundations of inequality and is not an exhaustive set of possible grant topics. Please note that to be eligible for funding, the research still needs to focus on outcomes for young people ages 5-25 in the United States.

For an explanation of why we continue to fund research on programs and practices to reduce inequality in youth outcomes even as the larger structures of racism and inequality persist, please see “[Research on reducing inequality: Why programs and practices matter, even in an unequal society](#),” by William T. Grant Scholar David Yeager.

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### Must studies of reducing inequality focus on disparities?

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The short answer is no. Though many studies we fund examine strategies to improve outcomes for disadvantaged groups or to reduce disparities between groups, applicants may propose different approaches to understanding how programs, policies, or practices might address inequality. For example, a study may examine how to dismantle racism in a system or organization to improve youth outcomes, shifting the focus from individuals to structure. A study might offer a rich conceptualization of inequality and how it is experienced by moving past typical measures of outcomes (e.g., test scores) to look more holistically at measures of well-being. Finally, a study might also upend the notion of disadvantaged and advantaged groups that is often taken-for-granted in our society. In fact, we encourage researchers to scrutinize how they conceptualize inequality to avoid a deficit approach.

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### Is your interest in reducing inequality in economic outcomes limited to studies of poverty?

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Our interest in economic inequality is not exclusively about poverty. Although we have special concern for the outcomes of youth in the most difficult circumstances, we are interested in reducing inequality across the entire spectrum—not just for the least fortunate. Some studies may focus on middle-class families who are increasingly challenged to provide resources to support their children’s development, such as high-quality youth programs or college tuition. Moreover, our interest is in promoting better outcomes for youth who have been underserved, not in diminishing outcomes for youth who have been successful in the past.

### Definitions

**Programs** are coordinated sets of activities designed to achieve specific aims in youth development.

**Policies** are broader initiatives intended to promote success through the allocation of resources or regulation of activities. Policies may be located at the federal, state, local, or organizational level.

**Practices** consist of the materials and activities through which youth development is enabled (e.g., coaching, mentoring, parenting, peer interactions, teaching). Practices involve direct interaction with youth (though not necessarily in person, as technology affords direct interaction from anywhere).

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# Recent Grants on Reducing Inequality

## Immigration Status and Higher Education: Evidence from a Large Urban University

*Principal Investigators: Amy Hsin and Holly Reed, Queens College, City University of New York; Sofya Aptekar, University of Massachusetts Boston; and Thomas DiPrete, Columbia University*

**A**my Hsin and her team are examining whether recent national, state, and university policies improve the educational outcomes of undocumented students.

Due to financial constraints, the threat of deportation, and familial obligations, undocumented youth are less likely than immigrant students with legal status to graduate from college. Yet, our understanding of the sources of educational inequality for undocumented students—and the potential levers of change to reduce them—is limited. In addition, existing studies often lack access to high-quality quantitative data, often focus on selective four-year institutions rather than the community colleges that many undocumented students attend, and rarely look beyond college attendance as the main outcome.

With this mixed-methods study, Hsin and colleagues will advance

the field by investigating how legal status and immigration reforms affect the educational outcomes and behaviors of a large and ethnically diverse population of undocumented students who attended two-year and four-year colleges within a large, public university system between 1999–2015. Further, whereas earlier research either inferred legal status or studied non-representative samples, Hsin and colleagues will draw on unique administrative data that will enable them to accurately identify legal status and study the population of undocumented students attending college in a large metropolitan area.

The team is examining the effects of two policies intended to increase the college persistence of undocumented youth: President Obama's 2012 executive order known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which allows youth who arrived before their 16th birthday to work legally on a temporary basis and provides temporary relief from deportation; and state professional licensing laws that allow eligible DACA recipients to obtain occupational licenses if they meet all other requirements for licensure except for documentation status. They will also identify institutional policies and practices that create a supportive environment for undocumented students and analyze how they affect outcomes.

By matching undocumented students to similar peers with legal status, the team will identify the causal effect of DACA on college performance, transfer, graduation, and attendance, as well as the impact of professional licensing reforms on these indicators and choice of major. In addition, interviews will be conducted with past and present students, family members, staff and faculty, and campus and community leaders.

## Talking Justice: Identifying Interactional Practices to Improve the Quality of Police–Civilian Encounters

*Principal Investigators: Nikki Jones, University of California, Berkeley, and Geoffrey Raymond, University of California, Santa Barbara*

**N**ikki Jones and Geoffrey Raymond will identify practices that can build trust and encourage civilian cooperation to reduce the use of force by police officers.

The challenges confronting police reform stem in part from the frequency of encounters between police and people of color, especially young Black men; the quality of these interactions; and the challenge of accountability when these encounters go poorly. To address these issues, Jones and Raymond will identify the kinds of interactions that officers can use when they encounter youth to increase trust, reduce the likelihood of violence, and strengthen perceptions of police legitimacy.

Research shows that police legitimacy is lower among minority groups and that frequent encounters with the police can negatively impact the mental health of young men of color. While extant studies have documented encounters between the police and civilians, they tend to treat officer and civilian interactions as static variables rather than a dynamic interplay in which one party influences the behavior of the other.

In prior work, the team used video recordings collected with law enforcement agencies to examine how officers respond when civilians ask questions or make complaints challenging the officer's agenda. In this study, Jones and Raymond will use a combination of video analysis, conversation analysis, ethnographic methods, and statistical analysis to measure the emergence and

management of trust/mistrust for the police officer and the youth and adult civilians. They anticipate that improved police and civilian encounters will reduce the likelihood that youth of color will be arrested for minor crimes such as loitering. They also expect that youth in high surveillance areas may have better mental health, as they will witness fewer aggressive police encounters, which have been found to traumatize bystander witnesses.

Jones and Raymond will examine three collections of video recorded encounters: two collected in collaboration with law enforcement agencies, and another collected by a civilian videographer. The team will code these recorded encounters for indicators of civilian mistrust and officer responses to these indicators, as well as how police suspicions inform how they initiate and manage civilian encounters. Policing patterns will be tabulated, and observed associations will be tested, controlling for civilian characteristics, officer gender, and time of day. The team will analyze the ethnographic interviews for how officers evaluate the trustworthiness of civilians and will use the civilian video data to focus on civilian complaints and how police officers respond.

### **An Investigation of a Cultural Humility, Social Justice Training, and Support Intervention for Mentors of Youth of Color**

*Principal Investigators: Bernadette Sanchez and David L. DuBois, University of Illinois, and Carla Herrera, Herrera Consulting Group*

In collaboration with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBS), Bernadette Sanchez and her team are evaluating a training program to improve mentoring relationships and outcomes for low-income Black and Latinx youth.

A large body of research shows that out-of-school time mentoring can serve as an effective lever for improving outcomes for youth. Yet mentors and program staff are often White and middle-class, and mentees are largely from low-income racial-ethnic minority families. The very relationships that mentors aim to foster may be undermined without sensitivity to these differences.

Sanchez and colleagues' early research suggests that adults who work with youth in the context of social difference can create more effective mentoring relationships by developing cultural humility and a social justice orientation. Building on this work, Sanchez and colleagues are examining an intervention that will train volunteer mentors to demonstrate cultural humility and an informed commitment to social justice in their interactions with low-income youth of color. By developing more effective mentoring relationships across race and class differences, mentors can bolster youths' racial/ethnic identity, openness to adult support, efficacy coping with discrimination, critical

consciousness, and academic beliefs—personal resources that can, in turn, lead to improved educational and mental health outcomes.

Five hundred mentoring matches participating in three BBBS programs will be recruited to participate in the study. These matches include the mentor, the youth matched with that mentor, the youth's caregiver, and the supporting case manager. Mentees will be youth of color, ages 10-16, most of whom are Black and Latinx, and about 80% of matches will involve mentors of different racial/ethnic backgrounds. Three months into a new 12-month mentoring commitment, half of the mentors will be randomly assigned to receive the intervention, in addition to the standard training and case management. The intervention includes a 3.5 hour training to enhance mentors' social justice interest and awareness of cultural differences and to lessen pro-white bias and color-blind attitudes, as well as nine months of enhanced supervision and booster communications from program staff.

Sanchez and her team will use surveys at multiple time points with the mentors, mentees, caregivers, and case managers to measure the intervention's effectiveness. They will also conduct interviews with a subset of the treatment and control groups to understand how, why, and under what conditions the intervention works; how mentors experience the intervention; and relationship development over time. Findings will inform approaches to working with low-income youth of color in a variety of settings, as well as the design of interventions for reducing inequality in educational and mental health outcomes.

The challenge of shifting one's lens from understanding inequality to reducing inequality requires high quality, rigorous research and creative thinking. To learn more, we encourage you to browse recent grants, blog posts, papers, and other [resources on our website](#).

### **Letters of Inquiry to Propose Research on Reducing Inequality: Identifying the Lever for Change**

In this post, program officer Jenny Irons provides guidance on preparing a strong letter of inquiry, focusing on the importance of articulating a leverage point for reducing inequality that is clearly linked to the basis of inequality that a study proposes to address. She writes, "LOIs for research on reducing inequality should make a compelling case that the inequality exists, explain why the inequality exists, and show why the study's findings will be crucial to building, testing, or increasing understanding a policy, program, or practice to reduce it. As you prepare your LOI, ask yourself: what strategy might reduce unequal outcomes among youth ages 5-25 in the United States? Simply put, what can be changed to make things better?"

### **Shifting the Lens: Why Conceptualization Matters in Research on Reducing Inequality**

Offering guidance for researchers looking to propose rich studies that develop, test, or inform strategies to reduce inequality, Irons states, "Given the abundant literature on the causes and consequences of inequality, studies of reducing inequality should offer a theoretically- and empirically-driven conceptualization of the dimension to be examined, a related conceptual argument about why and how a strategy is expected to reduce inequality, and a corresponding operationalization of inequality."

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# Awards

## Major Research Grants

Major research grants on reducing inequality typically range between \$100,000 and \$600,000 and cover two to three years of support. Projects involving secondary data analysis are at the lower end of the budget range, whereas projects involving new data collection and sample recruitment can be at the higher end. Proposals to launch experiments in which settings (e.g., classrooms, schools, youth programs) are randomly assigned to conditions sometimes have higher awards.

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 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 reducing inequality 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.

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# 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.

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

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1. Clearly describe the theory or conceptual frame guiding the study to help reviewers understand why you are approaching the project in a particular way and how your study will inform extant literature. Relatedly, describe how findings from the project may challenge or change key assumptions about reducing inequality.
2. 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.
3. Propose research methods that are tightly aligned with the project's research questions or hypotheses. Offer a convincing rationale for why your methods are well-suited to answering the research questions.
4. Make a strong case for how the study will help build, test, or increase understanding of a program, policy, or practice for reducing inequality in youth outcomes, and how it will advance work on those issues. In intervention studies, the potential of the research to build, test, or increase understanding usually goes beyond the specific program, policy, or practice being studied.

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### What do you look for in measurement studies?

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We encourage development of practical, cost-effective measures. 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 that will be the focus of the work, 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.

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### What do you look for in evaluation studies?

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Proposals must specify a theoretical basis for the program, policy, or practice interventions under study. We are interested in investigations of the mechanisms through which intervention effects occur, as well as variation in intervention effects. Thus, studies should shed light not solely on "what works," but on what works for whom, under what conditions, and why. 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.

Many studies will provide direct evidence of impact on youth outcomes, but we will consider studies that examine intermediate outcomes shown in other work to reduce inequality in youth outcomes.

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

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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.

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**Do you fund international studies?**

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

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

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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.

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# Application Materials

The William T. Grant Foundation accepts applications only through our online application system, which is accessible through our website at [wtgrantfoundation.org](http://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:
  - briefly reviews literature on the basis of inequality to be addressed and the associated unequal outcomes;
  - indicates how the project complements and extends prior and concurrent research;
  
  - describes the theories that provide the foundation or organizing frame for the proposed strategy to reduce inequality and demonstrates how the project advances theory;
  - identifies the program, policy, or practice to be examined in the study and explains how it is expected to reduce inequality; and
  - identifies 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;
  - data collection plan, including key constructs, measures, and data sources; and
  - intervention (if applicable).
- Summarize the data analysis plan for addressing the hypotheses and/or research questions.
  - Identify the key measures.
  - Quantitative analyses of a causal nature should provide convincing evidence that the study will be adequately powered to detect effects.
  - 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.

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# 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 Reducing Inequality Focus Area

Proposals for research on reducing inequality must:

- Identify a specific inequality in youth outcomes and show that the outcomes are currently unequal by engaging with the extant literature on the causes and consequences of inequality.
- Make a compelling case for the basis of inequality the study will address.
- Articulate how findings from your research will help build, test, or increase understanding of a specific program, policy, or practice to reduce the specific inequality that you have identified.
- Develop a clear case for exactly how the study will inform responses to inequality. Please note that studies that primarily focus on documenting the causes and consequences of inequality are not a fit with our interests; it is not adequate to propose a study that will document inequality and conclude with a general statement that research will be relevant for policy and practice. Rather, the letter of inquiry should clearly demonstrate how findings will inform policies, practices, or programs that can or will be implemented through organizations, institutions, and/or systems.

## 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 on its own, 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 change the field by, for example, introducing new research paradigms or challenging existing ones.

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# 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.

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## **Other Funding Opportunities for Researchers**

### **Research Grants on Improving the Use of Research Evidence**

In this focus area, we support research to identify, build, and test strategies to ensure that research evidence is used 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.

### **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](http://wtgrantfoundation.org)



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

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