

Research Grants on Improving the Use of Research Evidence

2019 APPLICATION GUIDE

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Application Deadlines:

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Overview

The research grants programs support high-quality field-initiated studies that are relevant to policies and practices that affect the lives of young people ages 5 to 25 in the United States.

Research proposals are evaluated on the basis of their fit with a given focus area; the strength and feasibility of their designs, methods, and analyses; their potential to inform change; and their contribution to theory and empirical evidence.

Focus Areas

The Foundation's mission is to support research to improve the lives of young people ages 5-25 in the United States. We pursue this mission by supporting research within two focus areas. Researchers interested in applying for a research grant must select one focus area:

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.

Reducing Inequality

In this focus area, we support research to build, test, and increase understanding of approaches to reducing inequality in youth outcomes, especially on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic standing, language minority status, or immigrant origins. We are interested in research on programs, policies, and practices to reduce inequality in academic, social, behavioral, and economic outcomes.

Considerations

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. 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 American researchers.

This application guide details our interests in improving the use of research evidence, and outlines eligibility requirements, application procedures, submission instructions, and selection criteria for research grants. It also provides suggestions for developing strong applications, answers to frequently asked questions, and brief profiles of recently funded grants. Descriptions of all grants funded in the past ten years are available on our website.

Background

You may have been drawn to a career in research by an aspiration for your work to make a difference—to discover ways to make people’s lives better. Across disciplines and methodologies, researchers strive to explore complex challenges, reveal new ideas, or build on existing knowledge that can make a positive impact in the real world. But these aspirations go unrealized far too often. Be it a single study or a body of compelling evidence, research is simply not used enough to contribute to the change we envision.

The literature suggests that for research to be used it needs to address issues that are relevant to decision makers; it needs to be deliberated; and it needs to be supported by the values, routines, and tools of users. Trusting relationships can help develop research that is relevant, facilitate deliberation, and help repurpose resources, redirect politics, and reshape routines to use research evidence.

Still, there remain unanswered questions that are critical to understanding how to improve the production and use of relevant research evidence. To answer these questions, we need social scientists to identify and test strategies to create the conditions for use. Some investigators will focus on the strategies, relationships, and other supports needed for the decision makers and their 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.

What’s more, there is a scarcity of evidence supporting the notion that research use in policy and practice will improve youth outcomes. Serious scientific inquiry is needed. We need to know how the use of research may improve decision making, policy implementation, service delivery, and, ultimately, youth outcomes.

In short, we need research on the use of research. The William T. Grant Foundation is recognized for its leadership and support of high-quality research in this area. We welcome ideas initiated by social scientists across a range of disciplines and diverse methodologies to advance researchers' own disciplinary work and scholarship and reveal insights about ways to improve the use of research evidence. Research teams have drawn on existing conceptual and empirical work about the use of research evidence, political science, knowledge mobilization, implementation science, and other relevant areas that can teach us about using research for improvement, impact, and changing research, policy, and practice institutions. Measures also are needed to capture changes in the nature and degree of research use. We also welcome investigations about research use in various systems, including justice, child welfare, mental health, and education.

Proposing Research on Improving the Use of Research Evidence

We seek studies about how to improve the use of research evidence in ways that benefit youth. We are particularly interested in investigations that identify and test strategies for improving the use of research among state and local decision makers, mid-level managers, and intermediaries.

Proposed research in this focus area must pursue one of the following lines of inquiry:

- **Identify or test strategies to improve the use of existing research.**
This work may investigate strategies, mechanisms, or conditions for improving research use. Alternatively, studies may 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 conditions in 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.
- **Identify or test strategies for producing more useful research evidence.**
This includes examining ways to create incentives, structures, and relationships that facilitate the production of research that responds to decision makers' needs. Applicants might 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 identify the relationships and organizational structures that lead to the prioritization of decision makers' research needs.

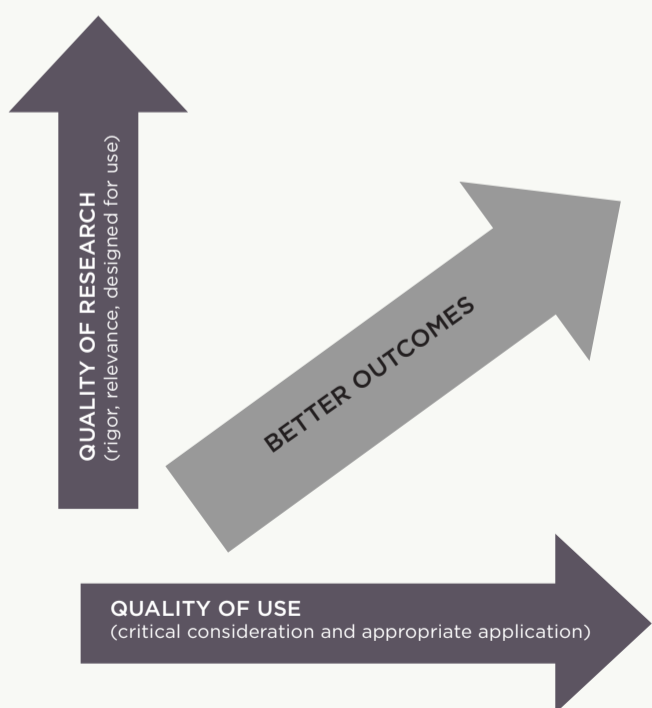
Studies may also examine ways to optimize researchers', decision makers', and intermediaries' joint work to benefit youth. For example, one might investigate the effectiveness of funders' efforts to incentivize joint work between researchers and decision makers. Other projects might develop and test effective curriculum and training experiences that develop researchers' capacity to conduct collaborative work with practitioners.

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

This is a long-standing implicit assumption, but the case for using research would be more compelling if there were a body of evidence showing that using research benefits youth. We want to know the conditions under which using research evidence improves decision making and youth outcomes.

We suspect that simply using research will not be sufficient to yield positive outcomes. The relationship between the use of research evidence and youth outcomes will be affected by a number of conditions. As illustrated in Figure 1, one hypothesis is that the quality of the research and the quality of the decision making will work synergistically to yield strong outcomes for youth.

FIGURE 1



For the purpose of this example, we represented high-quality research as rigorous, relevant, and designed for use. High-quality use is represented as critical consideration and appropriate application of research.

Applicants are encouraged to identify 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. Did these policies actually increase the use of those programs and improve child and youth outcomes?

The lines of inquiry described above require a range of methods, from experimental to observational designs, from comparative case approaches to systematic reviews. 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 an intervention that provides schools with technical assistance and coaching on the use of research evidence is more likely to lead to adoption of evidence-based programs. We also welcome observational studies that leverage state variation to examine whether states that use research when making decisions 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. That said, existing measures may not be well-suited for some inquiries, and thus we welcome studies that 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 others in the field.

We also recognize that studying ways to improve the use of research evidence will require new and innovative ideas, and welcome creative studies that have potential to advance the field.

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 decision makers to engage with 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.

ASK A PROGRAM OFFICER

Why is the Foundation focused on improving the use of research evidence by state and local decision makers and intermediary organizations?

- State and local departments of education, child welfare, and juvenile justice directly influence the frontline practices that affect youth outcomes. Increased attention to evidence-based policy also creates unprecedented demands to use research in decision making at those levels.
- 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.

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, it has limited use by mental health professionals in schools. In part, this is because the research is not consolidated for easy use by practitioners nor are there mechanisms that embed the research into practitioners' 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 whether they are using 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 better understand how the CKS performs across different contexts and across professionals with a variety of 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 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 his team 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 joint policy efforts. The team hypothesizes that such interactions may 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 that rapidly responds to opportunities by distilling relevant research. Researchers are also trained to engage effectively with legislative staff. In collaboration, RPC staff, legislative staff, and researchers will pursue potential 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 using 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. To assess perceptions and experiences of collaboration, the team will also interview and observe participants to analyze processes of collaboration and research use via interactive discourse.

ASK A PROGRAM OFFICER

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 monitor changes in the nature or degree of research use as a result of manipulations and will need to be sensitive to capture changes in research use over time and across conditions. Studies involving tests of strategies or of the impact of using research evidence will likely demand measures that are nimble enough to be administered at a large scale and at a 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 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.

What do you look for in evaluation studies?

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.

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 by decision makers.

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.

Awards

Major research grants

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 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 improving the use of research evidence are a separate funding mechanism for smaller projects with budgets ranging from \$5,000 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 on the January 9, 2019 and August 1, 2019 deadlines. Letters of inquiry for the Officer's research grants will not be accepted for the May 1, 2019 deadline.

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

ASK A PROGRAM OFFICER

What are the Foundation's top recommendations for applicants for research grants on improving the use of research evidence?

- Prioritize the research activities. We need systematic studies of efforts to leverage research evidence to improve youth outcomes. 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.
- 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. This also provides a roadmap for thinking about how to assess research use.
- Make a compelling case that the study is focused on issues for which high-quality research is available for use in decision making 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.
- 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.

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*. Others serve a broader range of interest but have published articles related to research use, such as *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.

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.

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.

Application Materials

For Major Research Grants Letters of Inquiry

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

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, which includes the combined direct and indirect costs for the full grant period.

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.
- Language should be appropriate for an educated lay audience.

Project Narrative (FIVE PAGES TOTAL)

Format your narrative as follows: 12-point font, single-spaced text with a line 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, including:
 - 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.
 - Describe the research methods, 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 page, include it in this upload. It will not be counted toward the five-page maximum.

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.

In addition to the all of the materials required for major research grants, letters of inquiry for Officers' research grants must include the following: budget, budget justification form, IRS tax exempt status determination letter, and a copy of your organization's most recent audited financial statement.

The following additional materials are only required for Officers' research grants and should not be submitted as part of the major research grants letters of inquiry:

Budget

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.

Budget Justification Form

The template of this form can be found within the Uploads tab of your online application.

IRS Tax-Exempt Status Determination Letter

You will be required to submit a copy of your institution's IRS tax-exempt status determination letter.

Submission Instructions

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, please visit the Grants page of 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.

Step 1: Log in (or register if you are a new user).

- Go to wtgrantfoundation.org and click “LOG IN” at the top right of any page. If you forgot your password, click the link to reset your password.
- If you are the principal investigator (PI), and do not have an account, register on our website to create one. If you are not the PI, obtain the account login information from that person or help the PI create an account.

Step 2: Select the research grants funding opportunity or the Officers’ research grants funding opportunity, and complete the eligibility quiz.

- Once you have completed the eligibility quiz, return to your Easygrants homepage and click on the ‘Letter of Inquiry’ link to enter the application.

Step 3: Enter PI contact information, PI demographic information, and contact information for each additional Co-Principal Investigator.

- Enter the PI’s contact information. Note that the PI must also be listed as the primary contact for all correspondence related to the LOI.
- Enter the PI’s demographic information.
- In the “Contacts – Project Personnel” section, add the contact information for any co-principal investigators and institutional contacts that would be involved with grant administration.

Step 4: Provide project information.

Step 5: Enter and upload all required information.

- Refer to the Application Materials sections for major research grants or Officers' research grants.

Step 6: Review and Submit.

- Review the application PDF to make sure that your materials are in order. Once the application is submitted, you will not be able to make any changes.

Selection Criteria

All letters of inquiry for research grants on reducing inequality—for both major grants and Officer’s grants—will be reviewed internally. The letter of inquiry functions as a mini-proposal, and should meet the selection criteria detailed below:

Focus Area

- Research questions should inform strategies to improve the use of research evidence in ways that benefit youth.

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 fifteen percent 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 given an opportunity 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.

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 deadlines in January and August as the larger research grants program. Officers' research grants are awarded on the merit of the letter of inquiry alone and the review process is usually eight weeks from the corresponding deadline. Awards are made available after internal review.

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

Having problems? For questions about application instructions and procedures, contact Cristina Fernandez, research assistant, at cfernandez@wtgrantfdn.org. If you encounter technical difficulties, please use the contact form that is located at the bottom of each page on the application website.



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