Research Grants on Reducing Inequality: An Overview of the Program and How to Apply

Webinar February 2023
@wtgrantfdn
Today’s Webinar

- Brief Overview: The Foundation’s Funding Interests
- Why Reducing Inequality?
- Overview of the Program: What We Fund
  - Is Your Study a Fit?
  - Examples of Funded Studies
- Application and Review Process
- Resources
- Questions?
Our History

• Founded in 1936
• Committed to understanding human behavior through research
• Focus on the most pressing challenges confronting young people
• Support high-quality research relevant to youth ages 5 to 25 in the U.S.
Focus Areas

REducing inequality in youth outcomes

- Major Research Grants (and Officers’ Research Awards)
- William T. Grant Scholars Awards
- Institutional Challenge Grant

Improving the use of research evidence in ways that benefit youth
Inequality by economic, racial, ethnic, and immigrant origins is pervasive.

Evidence often exists on the nature and sources of inequality.

Ways to reduce inequality are less well understood.

Studies on programs, policies, & practices that reduce inequality in youth outcomes.
We seek research to reduce inequality on the basis of economic standing, race, ethnicity, and immigrant origin status.

We seek research to build, test, or improve policies, programs, and practices to reduce inequality in academic, behavioral, economic, or social outcomes.
Types of Studies

- Descriptive studies that clarify the mechanisms for reducing inequality or examine associations between programs, practices, policies and outcomes

- Intervention studies that examine attempts to reduce inequality using methods that support claims about cause and effect

- Measurement studies of inequality that will enhance the work of researchers, practitioners, or policymakers
Making the Case

- Clarify and conceptualize the dimension(s) of inequality (*be specific*)
- Identify and contextualize unequal outcomes
- Systems and settings: education, child welfare, justice, labor market, neighborhoods, schools, families
- Identify a lever of change – program, policy, or practice
Reducing Inequality: special interest

- 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.

- We encourage applications that addresses ways to combat systemic racism and the structural foundations of inequality.

- Such research shifts the focal point of change from individuals to social institutions and asks: How can institutions be altered, transformed, or changed to reduce inequality among youth?
Is It a Fit?

- Can you complete this sentence?

This project examines whether/how [a program, policy, or practice] reduces inequalities in [specific youth outcome(s)] for [dimension of inequality] youth.

- For example:

This project tests whether a prosecutorial intervention reduces inequalities in incarceration rates for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous youth compared to White youth.

This project explores the mechanisms by which civic engagement reduces inequalities in mental health outcomes for LGBTQ youth.
Is It a Fit?

• Do I have to directly measure youth outcomes?

No, particularly if there is a strong empirical or theoretical argument to be made for why a given lever would lead to improved youth outcomes in the intermediate or long term. Most studies do, though.

• For example:

This project will test whether an anti-racist professional development intervention for teachers mitigates their practices of exclusionary discipline toward Black elementary school-age children. As research shows, experiences of exclusionary discipline have been shown to negatively impact Black children’s academic performance and engagement.
Is It a Fit?

• True or False?
  
  • This project focuses on vulnerable (at-risk, at-promise, disadvantaged, etc.) youth
    
    • NOT a fit—these all-encompassing terms are too broad and vague. Successful proposals provide a compelling argument for why a proposed lever could mitigate a specific (or intersectional) dimension of inequality.

  • This project is about documenting the extent or impact of inequality
    
    • NOT a fit—the project must focus on reducing inequality.
Examples of funded studies

• **Descriptive.** Examination of the process through which post-secondary institutions implement organizational change to better support Black and Latinx students

• **Descriptive.** Examination of whether laws and policies that enhance tribal sovereignty reduce family separation through the child welfare system

• **Program Intervention.** Examination of whether an intervention to develop teachers’ critical race consciousness and empathy for Black students reduces the racial discipline gap

• **Policy Intervention.** Examination of the effectiveness prosecutorial reform initiatives across jurisdictions to reduce inequalities in justice system and labor market outcomes
Application Process

- Submit a five-page Letter of Inquiry (LOI – a five page mini-proposal)
  - Deadlines in January, May, and August (next deadline is May 3!)
  - Major grant applications do not require budget materials; OR applications do
  - Plan time to get signatures from your institution!
  - Budget should support *research activities*
  - See application guidance!

- Awards
  - Officers’ Research Grants ($50k) – January and August
  - Major Research Grants ($100k-$600k)
Review Process

- Letter of Inquiry
  - Internal review for fit with current interests and funding criteria
  - 6-8 week response time (invite full proposal or decline)

- Full Proposal
  - External Review by expert reviews: content + methods
  - Internal Review by senior staff

- Applicant Response to Reviews
  - Internal Review
  - Board of Trustees meetings in March, June, and October

- Awards
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Application Tips

- **READ THE APPLICATION GUIDANCE CAREFULLY!**
  All of it is important, but note: *application review criteria!*

- Tackle a few research questions or hypotheses well.

- Show the project’s relevance for policy or practice. *Can reviewers see how a program, policy, or practice might be implemented in a youth-serving system?*

- Avoid jargon.
Application Tips

• Map research design, methods, and analyses tightly to the research questions or hypotheses.

• Provide sufficient information for reviewers to evaluate rigor and appropriateness of methods.

• Demonstrate your understanding of the strengths and limitations of the design, methods, and analyses.

• ACTION LETTER: Respond to reviews seriously, graciously, and in depth.
RESOURCES

On Our Website

wtgrantfoundation.org/grants/research-grants-reducing-inequality

✓ Research Grants Application Guide and submission instructions
✓ Relevant papers and essays
✓ FAQs
✓ Webinar recording and slides
Noteworthy

- We encourage proposals from teams with Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and Asian American members in leadership roles
- We welcome multi-disciplinary and mixed method studies.
- Resubmissions welcome!
Questions?