Guidance for Applicants Invited to Submit Full Proposals
Reducing Inequality
Updated June 2019

Below is guidance for applicants invited to submit full proposals pertaining to the William T. Grant Foundation's interest in reducing inequality, including: guidelines for the development of your full proposal, the required application materials, application procedures, and the review timeline.

Narrative Development

We want to remind applicants of the William T. Grant Foundation's particular interest in reducing inequality. We have mounting evidence about the scope of the issues and the challenges concerning the causes and consequences of inequality. Now we need to inform responses that will help *reduce* inequality: What would create meaningful change and what kinds of programs, policies, and practices can serve as levers to address inequality for youth ages 5 to 25 in the United States?

Below is guidance for applicants invited to submit full proposals pertaining to the William T. Grant Foundation's interest in reducing inequality. We understand that applicants will be refining their plans and offer these recommendations based on our application reviews and understanding of existing theory and empirical work. Additional information is available on our website at www.wtgrantfoundation.org, including a resources section: http://wtgrantfoundation.org/focus-areas/reducing-inequality/resources-for-applicants.

- **Theoretical and Empirical Rationale**. We encourage applicants to employ clear theoretical frameworks to guide their research questions, sampling/case selection, data collection, and analysis plans. These frameworks should inform the mechanisms, or levers, proposed to reduce inequality.
  - Applicants need to clearly define inequality in the proposed study.
    - The Foundation is primarily interested in inequality on the basis of race, ethnicity, economic standing, and/or immigrant origin status.
    - Applicants should specify the dimension of inequality being studied, discuss its importance, and document relevant theories and empirical work. Too frequently, we see dimensions of inequality referenced in passing, used as moderators, and not thoughtfully conceptualized.
    - Relatedly, applicants should clearly define the outcomes of interest and show how outcomes are currently unequal.
  - Applicants need to clearly describe the proposed lever of change for reducing inequality in youth outcomes. Remember: we are interested in research that identifies ways to reduce inequality through programs, policies, or practices.
    - Provide a clear logic for what would create meaningful change in a dimension of inequality. Doing this successfully requires demonstrating a clear linkage between the dimension of inequality, the outcomes to be

studied, and the ways in which the proposed lever will reduce inequality in those outcomes.
    - Provide strong theorizing for the proposed levers for reducing inequality. In some cases, this can mean clearly describing the theoretical foundation(s) for a proposed program, practice, or policy to reduce inequality. In other cases, this can mean clearly specifying how levers theorized and examined in a descriptive qualitative study might inform policies, practices, or programs.
    - Please consult our website for an essay, *Identifying Responses to Inequality: The Potential of Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Research*, that is designed to be useful to all applicants with theorizing potential levers to reduce inequality in youth outcomes, regardless of the methods used.
  - We seek studies that will advance theory about reducing inequality. Clearly describe how the empirical work will test, refine, or elaborate specific theoretical notions. We encourage all applicants to make those arguments explicit.
  - We expect that successful applicants will be those that focus on a small number of specific research questions emergent from the theoretical and empirical context and related to specific mechanisms for reducing inequality in youth outcomes. Reviewers are usually more persuaded by proposals that explore research questions in depth. The link between the framework and the research questions or hypotheses should be well-developed, clearly stated, and readily apparent to reviewers.
  - Applicants should also be explicit about how results might be used to directly or indirectly inform a response to inequality.

- **Methods and Analyses**. Reviewers will seek sufficient information on your design, sample, data collection procedures, protocols, measures, and analysis plans in order to evaluate their rigor and appropriateness for addressing your research questions or hypotheses. The methods section needs to define the key concepts, why they matter in this research, and how they will be examined in the research design. Other guidelines for methods and analyses include:

  Sample
  - Provide a description of and rationale for the sampling framework.
  - Applicants should offer a strong rationale for their sampling of sites or cases and describe how the chosen dimensions of variation in sites or cases will advance understanding of programs, policies, and practices to reduce inequality.
  - Some sampling plans appear to be based solely on convenience; successful applicants will need to provide a strong rationale for making that choice.
  - Some sampling plans appear to be based on the demographic characteristics of the sites (i.e., proportion of youth in poverty, race/ethnicity) but lack clear rationale for why that sampling frame would provide meaningful variation for advancing relevant theory. If there is variation, provide a rich description of what it looks like and why it is relevant.

  Methods
  - Applicants should provide convincing rationales for the strength of their methods to address their research questions or hypotheses. If applicable, we need to see how the data collected will provide information about the hypothesized mechanisms through which youth outcomes will be improved.

    - Applicants should clearly describe the indicators that need to be observed to signal that the proposed change may reduce inequality.
    - Proposals should discuss the strengths and limitations of the proposed analytic plan.
    - Applicants should provide a rich description of the degree of variation expected for key constructs.
    - Where appropriate, we encourage using mixed methods. Strong mixed methods applications articulate how data will be sequenced or integrated across methods or study phases and why this integration or sequence is advantageous. Applicants should include adequate detail about how data from interviews, videos, field notes, recordings, etc. will be compared, contrasted, and integrated.
    - Proposals for studies that include coding of qualitative data should provide some detail about the coding processes and an assessment of the reliability of coding, as well as explain how coding addresses the research questions.
    - We are skeptical about exclusive reliance on self-report without a compelling rationale for this choice. Rather, we encourage applicants to propose innovative methods to obtain strong data and to triangulate data sources to validate data and findings.
    - When appropriate, be sure to address potential impacts of and possible safeguards for selection effects.
    - When studies involve collecting longitudinal or sensitive data, please provide assurances as to how you will successfully collect that data, including prior experience with and methods for accessing respondents, maximizing response rates, or ensuring confidentiality.
    - Proposals for studies to develop or improve measures should provide a detailed plan explaining how you will demonstrate that the measures are reliable, valid, and feasible.

  Analysis

    - The data analysis plan should include a detailed description of how the data will be analyzed to address each of the study's main research questions or hypotheses. If appropriate, also describe how the data will be integrated across methods. The inclusion of an illustrative example is often useful for reviewers.
    - The analysis plan for quantitative and/or qualitative data should communicate sufficient sophistication for understanding the strengths and limits of various analytic techniques.
    - Where applicable, applicants should attend to statistical power to detect meaningful effects (be sure to provide a power analysis).
    - Where relevant, applicants should discuss the generalizability of findings.

- **Products and Communication Plan**
    - We expect our grantees to advance theory and empirical evidence about reducing inequality in their respective fields. To that end, all applicants should outline how their proposed research will result in publications that undergo a rigorous peer-review process.
    - In some cases, applicants may develop communications plans that extend beyond academic audiences. We welcome statements that specify how research will result in products and activities designed to promote use of the research by a specific group of policymakers or practitioners. Across our grant programs, successful applicants who choose to share their work in this way detail plans for proactive,

coordinated engagement with target audiences, perhaps including plans to co-craft content and format. Should applicants find this avenue of interest, we encourage careful consideration of how some level of collaboration will be developed with policy or practice partners, as well as how products and activities might foster their use of research findings. For guidance on how to reach and develop relationships with policymakers and practitioners outside of academia, we encourage applicants to consult resources on our Research-Practice Partnership microsite. Although applicants for major grants are not expected to develop this type of long-term partnership, information on the site can help applicants think about strategies for building effective, albeit shorter term, collaborations.

  - "Communicating Research and Engaging Stakeholders" (http://rpp.wtgrantfoundation.org/communicating-and-using-research-findings)
  - "Using Research" (http://rpp.wtgrantfoundation.org/using-research)

- **Affiliated Staff**
  - Please propose work that can be successfully completed given the resources and time frame. The staffing plan must reflect adequate expertise to successfully carry out the project, as demonstrated by prior training, work, and publications.
  - Specific details on the staffing plan should be included in the budget justification form.
  - We value interdisciplinary teams that can draw upon theories, methods, and content expertise from various disciplines. Applicants should consider working with project teams that draw from different disciplines to bring together multiple lenses for understanding the inquiry and making sense of the findings.
  - Please limit the use and number of advisory committees and/or consultants to those individuals who will play a significant role in the project.
  - If it becomes necessary to change the Principal Investigator on your proposal, please email Kim DuMont, the Foundation's Senior Program Officer, to arrange a time to discuss and obtain approval for the proposed change.

- **Other**
  - We may seek reviewers from different disciplines. Please limit jargon and write for an audience that is not discipline-specific. In addition, consider that reviewers may not understand or agree with what is "known" in your field or discipline; they will likely seek explanations of key claims and acknowledgments regarding the strength of the research evidence for those claims.

FULL PROPOSAL DOCUMENTS

Prepare the following documents that will be uploaded as part of the full proposal.

Narrative sections should be formatted as follows: 12 pt. font, single-spaced paragraphs with a space between paragraphs, and 1-inch margins on the top, bottom, and left- and right-hand sides. Please add page numbers to your narrative. The proposal narrative should not exceed the maximum of **25** pages, excluding the bibliography, tables, figures, charts, and any other exhibits.

1. **Proposal Narrative.** Please refer to the guidance and formatting requirements above as you develop the proposal narrative. In addition to the requirements described above, applicants should include a full reference list/bibliography and may elect to include such appendices as:
   - **Exhibits such as charts, figures, and tables**. Be judicious in the selection of exhibits. Exhibits should be items critical to the understanding of the proposed project. Materials such as prior articles, intervention materials, or other potentially relevant documents should be noted, listed, or briefly summarized. Do not include them in the proposal.
   - **Letters of support.** Though not required, letters of support are welcome.

   The narrative, reference list, and all appendices should be uploaded as one single PDF file.

2. **Curriculum vitae** for each Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigator, and other key staff. There are no page limits, but each file cannot exceed 16 MB. Each vita should include the following:
   - Name;
   - Position/Title;
   - Educational history (baccalaureate, graduate/professional, and post-doctoral), including institution, degree, year conferred, and field of study;
   - Research and professional experience, including employer, title, and date of employment;
   - Honors and awards;
   - Grants;
   - Publications.

   We do not have specific formatting guidelines for curriculum vitae.

3. **Budget and Budget Justification (and applicable Subcontractor Budgets and Budget Justifications)**. All applicants submitting a full proposal are required to complete the online budget grid in the Budget section of the application. In cases where the project involves a subcontract award exceeding $50,000, the subcontractor must complete the Budget form in Excel, and submit its own completed Budget Justification Form.

   The proposed project's start date can take place as early as the first of the month following the Board meeting during which it is expected to be approved. For example, applicants submitting a full proposal for consideration at our March Board meeting should set a project start date no earlier than April 1st. The Foundation also prefers to make awards in the year that they are approved. Otherwise, applicants may set the project start date as they see appropriate for their project.

Go to the Uploads section of the online full proposal task to download, the 1) budget and budget justification guidelines, 2) budget justification form, and 3) budget form for applicable subcontracts.

NOTE: While Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is not required at this time, no grant money will be issued for projects needing IRB review until approval is submitted to the Foundation.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

You can begin your online application and then save and return to it as many times as you would like.

1. **Log in.** Go to our website at www.wtgrantfoundation.org and click Log In at the top of any page.

2. On your home page, click on the incomplete "Full Proposal - Research Grants" task.

3. The following information will be automatically copied from your letter of inquiry. *Please make sure the information you provided during the letter of inquiry stage is still correct and provide updates where appropriate (e.g., new co-PIs or updated requested amount).*

   - **Contact and Demographic Information** for the Principal Investigator only.
   - **Project Contacts.** Add contact information for each additional Co-Principal Investigator.
   - **Organization.** Select the organization that would receive the grant and mark it primary.
   - **Project Information**, including:
     - **Project title** (120 characters maximum)
     - **Start and end dates** of the project
     - **Project description** of the project (1,500 characters maximum)
       The brief description should be written in language appropriate for an educated lay audience, not for other researchers. Begin by stating the major questions guiding the work. Then, briefly summarize the project's rationale and background, research methods, and data analysis plan.
     - **Requested amount** (direct and indirect costs combined)
   - **Project Coding.** Enter additional information about the project.

4. **Budget.** Complete the project budget by grant year, for all direct and indirect costs. Indirect costs may not exceed 15 percent of total direct costs for each grant year. This ceiling includes any indirect costs contained in expenses for subcontracts. Please follow the instructions from the "Budget and Budget Justification Guidelines."

5. **Signatures.** Both the primary principal investigator and an authorized institution official must endorse the proposed project and certify that the costs entered in the budget form are necessary to execute the proposed project and that they are estimated in the manner described in the budget justification. As the full proposal can only be associated with the principal investigator's user account, be sure to provide the institution official with the login details required to access the proposal.

6. **Uploads.** Upload the following files separately.

   - **Budget Justification (and applicable Subcontractor Budgets and Budget Justifications)**
   - **Proposal Narrative**
   - **Curriculum vitae** for each Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigator, and other key staff.
   - **IRS Tax Determination Letter.** 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.

7. **Review and Submit.**

   - Click “View PDF” to preview the application. Make sure that your internet browser’s pop-up blocker either allows pop-ups from the EasyGrants website or is turned off so that the PDF can generate.
   - After all required elements of the application are entered, the submit button will appear at the top of the page. Select “Submit” (please note: once you have selected “Submit,” you will be unable to modify the application). The system will send an email confirmation of your submission. If you do not receive an email confirmation, select “Submit” again or email the Foundation via the link at the bottom of any page of the online system.

REVIEW PROCEDURES

Full proposals undergo a rigorous peer review process. Each proposal will be reviewed by two to three external reviewers. External reviewers will receive the full proposal and related documents on our research interests. Applicants with proposals that appear promising after internal and external review will be asked to submit a written response to reviewer concerns. Proposals, reviews, and applicant responses to reviews will then be evaluated by the Foundation’s Senior Program Team. The Board of Trustees makes award decisions three times per year, and funding is available immediately thereafter.

An approximate timeline is shared below:

Full proposal due	*Reviews sent to PI*	*Responses due*	*Board Meeting*	*Earliest start date*
April	mid/late July	mid-August	October	November 1st
September	mid/late December	mid-January	March	April 1st
November	mid/late February	late-March	June	July 1st