



**ALFRED P. SLOAN  
FOUNDATION**

# Grant Application Guidelines

This document lays out the content and formatting requirements when writing a grant proposal to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for the following types of projects:

## Research Projects

Projects that involve *both* a research component *and* a non-research component (for example, you plan both to conduct research and hold several workshops to shape and/or disseminate this research or you plan to launch a campus-based education intervention that includes evaluative research) are considered research projects for the purpose of which guidelines to use.

For non-research projects, [use these guidelines instead](#).

If you have not been invited to submit a proposal, you may instead submit a Letter of Inquiry. The Sloan Foundation website has [guidelines](#) for what information Letters of Inquiry should include and how to submit them.

The Foundation's proposal review and approval process has the same rigorous standards as the peer review processes at funding agencies or high-quality academic journals. In addition to an internal review by all senior staff, grant proposals may be subject to independent outside review by relevant experts. If so, proposers are given the opportunity to respond in writing to reviewer comments. It is not unusual for a proposer to be asked to make (sometimes significant) revisions or provide supplementary material as a result of the proposal review process. The Foundation recommends prospective proposers familiarize themselves with the Sloan grantmaking process as [laid out on the Sloan Foundation website](#).

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## Elements of a Complete Grant Proposal

All grant proposals to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation must contain the following elements. Proposals missing any of these elements are not complete and will not be considered for funding until all elements have been submitted.

1. [Proposal Cover Sheet](#)
2. [Proposal Narrative](#)
3. [Participation & Engagement Plan](#)
4. [Budget & Budget Justification](#)
5. [Required Appendices](#)
6. [Additional Appendices](#)
7. [Proposal Administration Form](#)

The first six elements should appear in a single document in the order indicated above. (Proposal cover sheet first, then proposal narrative, then diversity plan, etc.) The Proposal Administration Form (element 7) should be submitted as a separate document.

## Formatting Requirements

Proposals must:

- Be double-spaced
- Be in an 11-point font
- Have 1-inch margins
- Have page numbers

## Section Page Limits

The elements of a grant proposal may not exceed the following lengths.

Cover Sheet	1 page
Proposal Narrative	If amount requested ≤ \$250,000, 15 pages If amount requested > \$250,000, 20 pages
Participation & Engagement Plan	As needed, generally 2 pages
Budget & Budget Justification	As needed
Required Appendices	
List of Citations	As needed
Curriculum Vita(e)	3 pages per person
Conflicts of Interest	As needed, generally 1 page
Empirical Methods	As needed, generally 3-8 pages

Information Products	As needed, generally 2-4 pages
Additional Appendices	
Workshops & Conferences	As needed
Letters of Support	2 pages per letter
Proposal Administration Form	2 pages

## Proposal Cover Sheet

All grant proposals must be accompanied by a completed Proposal Cover Sheet Form. To download, [visit the Forms section](#) of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation website.

## Proposal Narrative

The grant proposal narrative must be divided into sections that address the following questions. Be mindful that proposal narratives are read by all senior staff inside the Foundation and should be written in a style accessible to an interested non-specialist.

- 1. What is the research question and why is it important?** The proposal narrative should start with a discussion of the research question(s) that the proposer expects to address and why these questions are important.
- 2. What is the state of the research on this question?** The proposal narrative should contain a concise summary of the existing literature on the research question(s) being addressed and how the proposed project fits into, supplements, or extends that literature. This summary should include references to the important papers in the literature, and gaps in the literature should be identified. This literature review should refer to key papers written both by the proposer(s) and by other scholars in the field.
- 3. What is the research project? What are its goals and its methodology?** In this section, the proposal should provide a description of the proposed research project, including a clear statement of the work to be undertaken, the goals of the project, how those goals relate to the present state of research as laid out in Section 2, above, and the research methods to be deployed. Essentially, the narrative should describe what proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits will accrue from success, all written at a level that is understandable to an educated and interested non-expert. *This is the most important part of the proposal, and typically this section will make up the most substantial portion of the proposal narrative.* Proposers should be explicit about all critical assumptions, plans, and methods. The discussion may include theoretical frameworks, data sources, experimental equipment, analysis methodologies, and other details, as appropriate to the nature of the research. Additional technical detail, at the “expert” level, should be attached as an [Empirical Research Methods Appendix](#).

**4. Who are the key members of the research team?** In a few sentences, the narrative should introduce the key members of the research team, the role they will play in the project, and key accomplishments, training, or experience relevant to their ability to perform that role. More detailed information about the project team (education, honors, publication history) should not be included here, but instead listed in the C.V. appendix.

**5. What is the work plan?** The proposal narrative should discuss the project timeline and how it will be implemented. This should include an account of who will do what and when, project oversight and management, and who will have what duties and responsibilities. Key project milestones should be identified, and success metrics delineated. If the project involves collaboration with other individuals or organizations, those collaborators and their expected contributions to the project should be listed. The proposal narrative should also describe, if applicable, the status of the work to date and plans for dissemination and/or sustainability.

**6. What will be the output from the research project?** The proposal narrative should include a general discussion of anticipated publications, datasets, conferences, briefings, trainings of undergraduate or graduate students and postdoctoral researchers, etc., that the research is expected to yield. As appropriate, the proposal narrative should include metrics for these outputs describing what would constitute success (for example, where papers will be published, number of software downloads, number of conference registrants, etc.). A more thorough discussion of the expected outputs should be attached as an [Information Products Appendix](#).

**7. What is the summary justification for the requested funding?** The proposer should justify the budget request and why it is consistent with the research and associated output that the funds will support. This should be a general discussion, with additional detail provided in the [detailed budget justification](#).

**8. What other sources of research support has the proposer applied for or have in hand to support the research team?** If funds are being provided or requested from other sources, the proposal narrative should list those sources, amounts, and the status of funding from each. This narrative information can be integrated into the previous question, with detail provided in the budget.

When a current or former Sloan grantee seeks funds for a new project in an area related to their Sloan grant, or if a grantee is seeking renewed or expanded funding for an ongoing project supported by Sloan, an additional section should be included in the proposal narrative answering the following question:

**9. What is the status and output of current and/or previous Sloan grants?** The proposal narrative should include a discussion of the work that has been produced (or is in process) in connection with previous Sloan Foundation grants. This discussion should include a list of publications (working papers, articles published in journals, books, Ph.D. dissertations, etc.) and other products (conferences, presentations, films, training, etc.) designated as output or outcome metrics from current and/or previous grants.

## Participation & Engagement Plan

Science — in theory, research, and practice — succeeds when all people have the opportunity to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from the generations-long practice of understanding our world and all that's in it.

Two core principles guide the Foundation's investments in research, education, and public understanding of science, technology, and economics. First is that these areas are crucial drivers of the nation's health and prosperity. Second is that such prosperity relies on the full participation of those from all walks of life. Research and experience tell us that diverse teams produce better scholarship and that the health of scholarly communities relies on its members feeling a sense of belonging. Given a history that has excluded parts of our society from fully contributing to and benefiting from scientific discovery, the Foundation is committed to the participation of underrepresented communities in its programs, with a specific emphasis on equality of opportunity for women and Black, Indigenous, and Latine scholars.

In this section, Foundation staff will be looking for concrete plans to advance inclusion and belonging, especially through project team participation and ensuring a welcoming environment for team members. Mere provision of the diversity or equal opportunity policy of one's institution is insufficient, as is a statement of commitment without a specific plan for implementation.

Depending on the nature of the project, this section may include, among other things:

- The demographic makeup of the project team, such as co/PIs, trainees, etc.
- The project team's experience and past record on advancing access and opportunity in the relevant fields
- Current or planned strategies to ensure a work environment within the project team that works for everyone, and if appropriate, in the broader institutional (e.g., departmental) context
- Outreach and dissemination activities that are inclusive or aim at reaching new or underrepresented populations
- Project contributions to reducing gender, racial/ethnic and other inequities in the relevant field(s)
- The proposers' mentoring philosophy and their experience working with trainees from a variety of backgrounds
- Collaborations with institutions that serve large numbers of underrepresented students or with organizations that serve diverse communities
- Work that may advance equity and inclusion in other forms for underrepresented communities' benefit
- Complementary projects or initiatives that the project will tap into
- Resources the project team will draw on to support these strategies

We recognize that some institutions are subject to legal and policy constraints that shape the specific approaches, strategies and terminology that they may use in addressing the above areas. The

Foundation is thus flexible about the language in which these plans are expressed and welcomes a discussion about the state or institutional context within which such work is being advanced.

Please note that this section will **not** count toward the 20-page proposal narrative limit. Proposers may include in an appendix additional information, such as samples of past work, that is relevant to these plans.

## Budget & Detailed Budget Justification

This section should include a tabular budget, broken down by year for multi-year projects. The Sloan Foundation strongly recommends that proposers use the Foundation’s [Project Budget Form](#) for this purpose. The tabular budget should be followed by a detailed written discussion that explains and justifies the amount requested and that lays out what line items cover and how they were derived.

Budgets should also meet the following requirements.

- **Salary Support:** Requests for salary should adhere to the following restrictions based on the type of staff seeking support. (See next page)

Type of Staff	Max Support	Notes
Faculty (on a 9-month academic salary)	<p><b>For senior<sup>1</sup> faculty:</b> No more than one month summer salary per year of full-time equivalent salary.</p> <p><b>For junior<sup>1</sup> faculty:</b> No more than two months summer salary per year of full-time equivalent salary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All faculty supported through a Sloan grant must receive a standard benefits package customary for their institution.</li> <li>▪ Budgets must include the number of faculty supported, the full-time equivalent salary of each, and the percentage of the faculty member’s time that will be devoted to work on the grant.</li> <li>▪ The Foundation discourages budget requests to pay summer salary for senior faculty. Proposals may request (and must justify) up to one month of summer salary support for senior faculty members in the amount of either 1/9 of academic-year salary or \$35,000, whichever is lower. The Foundation may make exceptions to this policy in unusual circumstances, but a strong case for such an exception must be made in the budget justification.</li> </ul>

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<sup>1</sup> We define “senior faculty” as faculty who are either tenured or who are more than 10 years beyond attainment of their Ph.D. We define “junior faculty” as non-senior faculty.

Type of Staff	Max Support	Notes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For faculty on unpaid leave, the Foundation may consider modest academic-year salary support.</li> </ul>
Project Staff	As needed, up to 100 percent of full-time salary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All project/research staff employed by the grantee institution must receive a standard benefits package customary for the institution.</li> <li>▪ Budgets should list the number of staff supported, the full-time salary of each, and the percentage of the staff member's time that will be devoted to work on the grant.</li> </ul>
Postdoctoral Researchers	As needed, up to 100 percent of full-time salary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Salary must be customary for the department and institution employing the researcher.</li> <li>▪ Budgets must include the number of positions supported, the full-time salary of each supported researcher, and the percentage of the researcher's time that will be devoted to work on the grant.</li> <li>▪ All Sloan-supported postdoctoral researchers must receive a standard benefits package customary for their institution.</li> </ul>
Graduate Students	As needed, up to 100 percent of full-time salary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Salary must be customary for the department and institution employing the student.</li> <li>▪ Budgets must include the number of graduate students supported, the full-time salary of each, and the percentage of each student's time that will be devoted to work on the grant.</li> <li>▪ <b>Tuition.</b> The Foundation strongly prefers that funds requested for graduate students be allocated toward salaries, stipends, and other forms of direct support. If tuition coverage must be requested, a clear rationale must be provided in the budget justification. In all circumstances, tuition reimbursement will be capped at the NSF Graduate Research Fellow cost-of-education allowance, as specified in the most recent NSF program solicitation, currently set at \$16,000 per student per year. The Foundation does not pay indirect costs on graduate student tuition.</li> </ul>



- For grant requests of \$50,000 or less, no indirect (overhead) costs are permitted.
- For grant requests in excess of \$50,000, indirect (overhead) costs may not exceed 20 percent of direct project costs.
- If there is a subcontract, proposers must split overhead costs with the subcontractor institution, with total overhead not to exceed 20 percent of direct project costs. The Foundation suggests that the grantee's institution take 4% of the overhead on the subcontract and assign the remaining 16% to the subcontractor (although this specific overhead split is not a strict requirement). Note also that tuition is excluded from overhead calculations, so if the subcontractor is spending money on grad student tuition, that money is not eligible for overhead. The Foundation's [Project Budget Form](#) has been designed to easily and automatically calculate overhead on subcontracts. We strongly recommend that proposers use this form to minimize work and ensure that overhead is calculated correctly.
- If the total cost of the project is larger than the amount requested from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the request should include a financial plan for the whole effort that identifies any other financial contributions (either secured or anticipated). When possible, letters of support from other funders should be included indicating their willingness to provide funds and the amount of support to be provided.

## Required Appendices

All grant proposals for research projects must contain (at least) five appendices:

- List of Citations
- Curricula Vitae
- Conflicts of Interest / Sources of Bias
- Empirical Research Methods
- Information Products

### List of Citations

This appendix should contain a list of all papers or other work cited in the proposal. Citations may be formatted in any widely used style (Chicago, APA, etc.)

### Curricula Vitae

This appendix should include abbreviated CVs or biographies of the principal investigator and any key project staff that will implement or supervise activities.

- CVs should include education, employment history, a list of the proposer's most important previous publications, and important honors (NAS, AAAS, best paper awards, etc.).
- Full CVs are not requested; one to three pages per person is sufficient.

## Conflicts of Interest / Sources of Bias

The proposal must disclose potential conflicts of interest or sources of bias on the part of the primary investigator, all key project staff, and the grantee institution. The following are examples of potential conflicts:

- **Financial interests:** Any significant financial interests (equity holdings, stock options, etc.) in any corporate entity involved with the subject matter of the proposed research;
- **Management/advisory affiliations:** Any status as an officer, trustee, or member of an advisory committee in any entity involved with the subject matter of the proposed research;
- **Paid consulting:** Any compensation or honoraria received (within the last three years) from an entity involved with the subject matter of the proposed research in exchange for consulting services, speaking engagements, or expert testimony;
- **Patents:** Any planned, pending, or awarded patents or intellectual property the value of which may depend on the outcome of the proposed research.

**Do not omit this appendix if there are no conflicts of interest or sources of bias to report.** Instead, if there are no conflicts to report, this appendix should consist of a statement to that effect.

## Empirical Research Methods

Grant proposals that request support for research must include a detailed methodological discussion in the form of an appendix. Proposers should expect the review of their empirical methods to be similar to the scrutiny given such matters by NSF scientific panels or top research journals, as the Sloan Foundation often calls on the same kinds of external methodological experts to evaluate proposals. Thus, in contrast to the research methodology section of the main proposal narrative, the Empirical Research Methods appendix should be written with such an expert audience in mind.

The Empirical Research Methods appendix should include detailed and technical information about research design, data or sample collection, instrumentation (if applicable), and approach to analysis and validation (including, if applicable, such details as power calculations and preregistration plans). The structure, operations, and usage criteria of models employed as part of the research process should be described in appropriate technical detail. Proposals for qualitative research should also describe research design, mode of data collection, and analytic approach. Interview, survey, and data collection protocols may be included in this appendix.

Some projects will produce data, models, or code that are intended to be used by others. In this case, the appendix should list specific individuals or groups who plan to use such a product and who are

willing to work with the investigators to make sure it meets their needs. In the case of data sets that are private, proprietary, or otherwise sensitive, the appendix should describe what will be done to protect the interests of others. Research that brings up these or other ethical concerns should be cleared by an Institutional Review Board or similar independent body concerned with the rights and welfare of human subjects. This section should indicate when such a review has or will be done.

Sloan programs seek to support research whose conclusions are sound, trustworthy, and generalizable. Of course, research practice varies with context; work may involve exploratory or confirmatory analysis, sampled or reference data, descriptive or predictive models, correlational or causal inference, etc. For further advice about what details to include, should such be needed, please consult the relevant program director.

## Information Products

Scientific progress depends on the sharing of information and on the replication of findings. Maximal and appropriate openness remains a core value of the Sloan Foundation. In the Information Products appendix, we ask proposers to delineate, in list form, all information products anticipated to be produced with Sloan funding, including but not limited to the following:

- For articles, books, websites, and other artistic works: who will hold the copyright; how they will be licensed, shared, and archived; and for academic works, whether they will be shared as preprints and/or in institutional repositories.
- For datasets: where and in what format project data will be stored or archived at the conclusion of the project; and whether there any legal issues that will complicate sharing and access to the archived data.
- For software, including but not limited to data processing and analysis pipelines, models, computational notebooks, instrument control systems, and applications: the computational environment in which code will be developed and executed; under what conditions, if any, it will be shared with other developers and users, and under what license; where project software will be developed and later archived; and whether it will be maintained after the conclusion of the project and if so, by whom.
- For instruments and other hardware, how will novel designs be documented and shared, and under what license or agreement; what if any plans exist for commercialization; and under what terms will access to the specific hardware built under this grant be offered to others.

## Additional Appendices

The following appendices do not necessarily apply to all research projects. If one or more applies to your project, you must provide it as part of a complete grant proposal.

- Appendix for Projects that Support Workshops, Conferences, or other Large Meetings
- Letters of Support

## Workshops, Conferences, or Other Large Meetings

The following documents should be included in an appendix to any grant proposal requesting support for a workshop, conference, or other large meeting:

- Draft conference agenda;
- Draft list of conference invitees listing the name, title, and institutional affiliation of each;
- Draft letter of invitation;
- Draft list of invited speakers, presenters, and/or panel participants listing the name, title, and institutional affiliation of each;
- Draft call for papers (if applicable);
- Draft anti-harassment policy;
- Participant survey or evaluation plan.

The Foundation urges conference organizers to be mindful that Black, Indigenous, Latina/o/x, and women scholars are often underrepresented at conferences, especially as panel chairs, speakers, and panel participants. Conference organizers should strive for diversity and inclusion when drafting conference agendas, invitation lists, lists of speakers, and outreach plans. The Foundation also strongly encourages the establishment of a formal anti-harassment policy for every conference.

All proposals should contain an evaluation plan that includes a survey of conference participants at the conclusion of the conference, designed so that conference organizers can use the collected survey data to evaluate what participants valued, where there is room for improvement, and whether the conference achieved its goals.

## Letters of Support

If the success of the project depends critically on the support of key figures or institutions other than the principle investigator or project team, the proposal must include an appendix with a letter from each such institution articulating the nature of their relationship to the project and their understanding of the role they expect to play in the project's success.

## Procedural Mechanics

### Proposal Administration Form

To process a successful grant proposal, the Foundation needs certain administrative information about your institution, in particular, its EIN number, tax status, and payment address. Universities should include on the form relevant contacts from within the Office of Sponsored Research or equivalent administrative unit. For institutions with 170(c)(1) status, please include the IRS letter documenting such. [Visit the Forms page](#) of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation website to download the [Proposal Administration Form](#).

To ensure prompt payment upon a successful grant application, a completed Proposal Administration Form must be submitted with (ideally) or soon after the grant proposal. The Proposal Administration Form should be submitted as a separate standalone document.

### How to Submit a Completed Grant Proposal

Grant proposals invited by a program director of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation should be submitted as an email attachment directly to the program director. If a program director has not invited you to submit a proposal, you may instead compose and submit a Letter of Inquiry to the relevant program director via email. For guidelines on Letters of Inquiry, [please see the Foundation's website](#).

### Collection of Demographic Data on Principal and Co-Principal Investigators

The Sloan Foundation is committed to advancing access to and opportunity in the disciplines we support. Essential to achieving this aim is the collection of demographic data on those who lead the projects we fund.

Subsequent to grant approval, the PI, Co-PIs (if applicable) and key project staff of the grant will be emailed a form asking them to provide information on their gender identity, country of origin, and race/ethnicity. Personal information shared through this form will be kept confidential by the Foundation and will be used for the purpose of helping the Foundation analyze our grantmaking and assess whether we are living up to our commitments.

To learn more about the Sloan Foundation's commitment to access and opportunity in science and how it informs the pursuit of our mission, please read our [Commitment to Opportunity for All in Science](#).

## Confidentiality

The Foundation requests that prospective grantees treat grant proposals as confidential during the application process and refrain from publicly distributing their proposals (in whole or part) or disclosing their status in the application process until the Foundation has completed its evaluation and made a funding decision.