

GRANT PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

International Higher Education and Strategic Projects

Grantees should use the information below in assembling an invited proposal to the Foundation. The Foundation reviews the proposal to make informed judgments about the merits of the program or project¹, its likelihood of achieving its stated goals, and the organization's capacity to carry out the project activities effectively. Policies underlying these guidelines can be found on the Foundation's [website](#). Please be prepared to work closely with program staff in revising and refining the proposal, often through multiple drafts, before it is finalized.

Submission Format

Draft proposals should be submitted to the Foundation through email in no more than four files: the information sheet; an MS Word file that includes the proposal narrative and budget narrative; an Excel budget spreadsheet using the Foundation's budget template; and a PDF file containing any additional supporting materials. When a proposal is accepted by program staff for recommendation to the Board of Trustees, staff will request: (1) a single unbound hard copy of the final version, with all relevant signatures; (2) a single searchable PDF of the signed hardcopy; and (3) an electronic version of the final project budget using the Foundation's budget template (in Excel). This final proposal should not be submitted until requested by program staff.

A final grant proposal to the Foundation should contain the following four parts:

COVERING MATERIALS

Proposal Information Sheet

A summary "[Proposal Information Sheet](#)."

Cover Letter

A cover letter on organizational letterhead, signed by the principal investigator(s), should accompany the final proposal and match the date of the Proposal Information Sheet. It should be addressed to the relevant program officer and include the title and a brief summary of the project, the amount of funding sought, and the names and contact information of any collaborating institutions and individuals. The cover letter should also include reference to the Foundation's [Grantmaking Policies](#) and state that the organization understands and will comply with these policies.

Endorsement Letter

A signed endorsement letter from the vice-chancellor/rector/president or chief executive officer of the organization is needed when the vice-chancellor/rector/president or chief executive officer is not the principal investigator on the proposed project. The endorsement letter, on organizational letterhead and dated the same as, or later than, the cover letter, should be submitted with the final proposal. It should refer to the proposed grant and project title, budget and timeframe, and the date and substance of the principal investigator's cover letter. In addition, the endorsement letter should explain how the proposed project is related to the university's vision and strategic plans, and how it would be institutionalized and sustained beyond the Foundation's grant support.

¹ It is important to be clear about whether a program or project is being proposed. A project has a very specific objective that can be achieved in a limited period. A program has a wider scope, has diverse goals and related objectives, may include a number of projects and a wide range of activities, and may be ongoing with no specific end date. For the sake of brevity, the term 'project' will be used in the remainder of the document to cover both projects and programs.

NARRATIVE MATERIALS

Proposal Narrative

While the substance and form of narratives will vary based on the proposed project, all narratives should provide the following information (please note, the Foundation values concision and the use of few, if any, superlatives in proposal narratives):

- a. a clear and concise summary description of the project, including the rationale for the request, the key goals to be pursued, the amount requested, and the length of time needed to complete project activities;
- b. a detailed description of the project, including
 - i. the reason for the project, including an explanation of why it is important to the organization, its constituencies, and the field in which it operates, and the extent to which such activities are being addressed by other organizations in the field;
 - ii. the key goals and specific objectives that the project seeks to pursue and to achieve, the main questions and issues that the project would focus on in relation to its goals and objectives, and the main approaches or strategies that would be used to achieve project goals and objectives;
 - iii. if applicable, a description of institutional collaborations, and legal and operational relationships with other organizations, subcontractors, consultants, administering agents, or collaborators on the project (see also the Foundation's "[Guidelines for Grants Involving Consultants and/or Subcontractors](#)");
 - iv. how, if applicable, the project would address questions of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The Foundation is committed to diversity and inclusion in all grant-making programs. Please describe how your organization defines and approaches diversity and inclusion, referring to its mission and operations, and please provide one or more examples of challenges and successes the organization has experienced.
 - v. a description of expected outcomes and benefits of the project, and what criteria would be used to measure success;
 - vi. an account, where appropriate, of how the organization will institutionalize activities or ensure the longer-term sustainability of project results and/or institutional changes supported by Foundation funding;
 - vii. an account of other sources of financial support for the project;
 - viii. a schedule describing the major activities to be carried out and the division of responsibilities for the different components of the project;
- c. for renewals of Foundation support, a brief description of previous Foundation grants awarded to the organization for the same purpose and their results;
- d. a brief statement detailing the organization's investment strategy, describing how grant funds will be invested and the methods the organization will use to calculate interest or income earned and apply it to the purpose of the grant. If the organization cannot legally invest grant funds in interest- or income-generating instruments, please provide an explanation;
- e. a description of any financial difficulties or deficits the grantee has experienced in the last two years, if applicable;
- f. if the proposed project has any aspects pertaining to the digitization of works, or the creation of digital technology, software, and/or digital databases, the proposal should provide a separate description of this work in a section entitled "[Intellectual Property](#)." The description should give a detailed account of the intellectual property to be created, any rights and/or permissions that the grantee will need to secure, the means by which the technologies and/or content would be distributed, including the type of license that the

institution would issue to users, and how the organization will ensure the long-term sustainability of the digital and/or software products; and

- g. a statement indicating that the organization will provide the Foundation with interim and final reports according to the schedule specified in the Foundation's award letter, identifying the person(s) who will have responsibility for reporting, and describing the criteria to be used in assessing the progress and success of the project.

Budget Narrative

The budget narrative should describe and justify the cost assumptions for each budget category and line item in the project. This may take the form of a narrative account, a subordinate spreadsheet detailing cost assumptions and breakdowns, or a combination of both. While budget categories may vary according to the particular project, examples common to Foundation-funded projects include Personnel, Benefits (budgeted separately from Personnel), Travel and Meetings, Equipment and Supplies, Contractors and Consultants, and Subgrants. Major categories should be accompanied by detailed subcategories of anticipated component costs. For instance, the major category for personnel should include subcategory listings of participating staff. Any project which includes student support should provide details about levels and length of support. Grantees should use their judgment about the appropriate level of detail when completing the budget spreadsheet and may consult with Foundation staff for guidance.

There should be a strong congruence between the budget and the activities proposed by the project. The budget narrative should not introduce new features of the project beyond what is presented in the project description.

If the proposal requests only partial funding for the grant activities, the budget narrative should include a listing of all other funding sources, the corresponding amounts and percentage of the total budget, and whether the funding is committed or potential. This section should also describe contingency plans if full project funding does not become available.

BUDGET SPREADSHEET

The Foundation requires that budget spreadsheets be submitted using the Foundation's "[Budget and Financial Report](#)" template, available with instructions. Please note the following regarding the spreadsheet:

- a. Expenses should be separated by clearly defined major categories—for example, personnel, fringe benefits, travel, meetings, equipment, supplies, contractors and consultants, subgrants, and other major categories appropriate to the project;
- b. If the proposed project timeframe is for more than one year, the budget for each reporting period should be listed in a separate dated column, with the period covered by the report clearly shown. There should be no gaps between budget periods;
- c. Proposals for collaborative projects should include a consolidated budget, showing separate entries for each participating institution; and
- d. Final proposal budgets should indicate review by an individual with institutional responsibility for financial reporting.

If the proposal is accepted, annual reporting must follow the same expense categories set forth in the proposal for easy line-to-line comparisons. Grantees should retain their original proposal budget spreadsheets and use these to complete and submit financial reports.

APPENDIX

Provide an appendix to the proposal that includes:

- a. a list of members of the organization's Board of Trustees or Directors, submitted as an MS Word document;

- b. for grantees classified as supporting organizations under section 509(a)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, an affidavit of supporting organization status, available from the Foundation; and
- c. other supplementary materials as requested by program staff or as needed to explicate the proposed work.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

Grants to Non-US Institutions

Unless otherwise agreed to by program staff, foreign grantees should budget all amounts in local currency on the budget spreadsheet and show the total requested sum in US dollars on the Proposal Information Sheet. Where indicated, the exchange rate used, the corresponding date, and the source should be cited. The exchange rate should be from a public source and correlate with rates published within a week of the date of the final proposal. Foreign grantees may refer to rates available at www.oanda.com. Importantly, foreign grantees should provide Foundation staff with a confirmation of the amount received in local currency within 30 days of payment of the award.

Endowment Grants

For organizations with endowments of less than \$100 million, proposals for endowment funds should include the following items:

1. A copy of the Investment Policy Statement (“IPS”), which must include the: (a) Asset Allocation Policy; (b) Spending Policy; (c) Rebalancing Policy; (d) Conflict of Interest Policy; and (e) Roles and Responsibilities of the Board, the Investment Committee, Staff, and Consultants/Advisors;
2. A description of the decisionmaking process for making changes to the IPS, and, if applicable, how and by whom managers are sourced and evaluated;
3. The current roster of investment managers
4. The current members of the Investment Committee and the name of any Investment Consultant or Advisor;
5. A summary of the actions taken and a list of attendees at the last four meetings of the Investment Committee, or the minutes of those meetings;
6. The current Asset Allocation;
7. Investment Performance for the past one, three, five, and ten years;
8. Copies of the two most recent audited financial statements; and
9. Should a grant be awarded, a commitment to provide, at the conclusion of each of the subsequent three fiscal years, the following:
 - a. a summary of the actions taken by the Investment Committee during the fiscal year and a list of the members who attended each meeting; and
 - b. a report on Investment Performance for the past one, three, five, and ten years.

Matching Grants

To evaluate a proposal for a matching grant, the Foundation requires a description of the organization’s strategies for meeting the conditions of the match, details of the prospective donor base, and the intended uses of matching revenue. The narrative should also state that the organization will observe the criteria for satisfactory evidence of matching contributions set forth in the Foundation’s [Grantmaking Policies](#).