OVERVIEW

Fund for Research on the Foundations of Human Behavior

Harvard University is establishing a new funding mechanism to support transformative research in the social and behavioral sciences. These research funds provide seed grants. Successful proposals will be those that promise to advance understanding of the social, institutional and biological mechanisms shaping human beliefs and behavior. The funds will be used to support interdisciplinary social science research projects based on innovative experimental or observational designs that make use of sophisticated quantitative methods.

The Fund is especially interested in reviewing and supporting research on the foundations of human behavior of the following kinds:

- Interdisciplinary projects
- Innovative projects
- Exploratory projects
- Projects with the potential to have an enormous impact on social science, policy, or human well-being
- Research conducted with the collaboration of new investigators (although investigators at all career stages are encouraged to apply)
- Research requiring seed funding, possibly to explore the viability of ideas for larger-scale, externally funded efforts

The Fund also supports seminars, conferences, and other research-related activities.

All funds are to be spent within 2 years of the funding decision. Grant recipients may request extensions for up to one-year, but no subsequent extensions will be allowed. Requests for extension must be received within 30 days of the end-of-project date with no exceptions. Requests for extension need to explain why the project has been delayed and how the remaining funds will be deployed.

Unused funds must be returned at the end-of-project date.

Eligible grant recipients are Harvard University affiliates in the following categories: full time doctoral students, post-doctoral fellows, and ladder faculty. Applications from doctoral students must provide certification that they have successfully completed their coursework and any required oral or written exams. Applications from doctoral students, and post-docs must be sponsored by a member of the ladder faculty and accompanied by a detailed letter from the faculty member evaluating the project and explaining the scientific merits of the project. The faculty sponsor will also be called by the Fund to confirm their active mentorship of the project.

Awards are capped: $40,000 for ladder faculty, and $5,000 for doctoral students and post-docs.
INSTRUCTIONS

Proposals:

Proposals are capped at 3000 words, including all exhibits, but excluding bio-sketches, references, and appendices. (Research instruments should be included as appendices.)

Research proposals should have five sections:

- Abstract (written to be comprehensible by non-experts – 300 word limit)
- Specific Aims (statement of research goals and/or hypotheses -- no more than one page)
- Significance and Innovation (no more than one page)
- Research Proposal (detailed description of methods)
- References (not counted towards word limit)
- Appendix to include research instruments (optional; not counted towards word limit)
- NIH-style bio-sketch for each co-investigator (not counted towards word limit)
- Budget

Other proposals (e.g., for conferences, seminars, etc…) should have five sections:

- Abstract (written to be comprehensible by non-experts – 300 word limit)
- Specific Aims (statement of research goals and/or hypotheses -- no more than one page)
- Significance and Innovation (no more than one page)
- Research Activity (detailed description of proposed activity)
- References (not counted towards word limit)
- NIH-style bio-sketch for each co-investigator (not counted towards word limit)
- Budget

Permissible expenditures include subject payments, data acquisition costs, research assistant wages and fringe benefits (as appropriate), post-doctoral fellow wages (faculty-proposed projects only) and fringe benefits (as appropriate), and other costs directly related to the research project (e.g., travel to a field experiment site, travel to work with collaborators, travel to present funded research). The Fund does not pay for equipment (e.g., computers), space, or academic/summer salary support for PIs.

Expenses for conference/seminar/workshop proposals must be consistent with Harvard’s reimbursement rules, including class of travel restrictions, and meal/hotel caps.

Proposals are due by midnight on the last day of February, May, August, and November. Proposals should be emailed to Emily Sall (FHB@fas.harvard.edu). Confirmations will be sent within one week of the receipt of a proposal. Proposals will be reviewed within two months of each submission deadline.
REVIEW PROCESS

The Fund expects to review proposals:

- quickly, with constructive (anonymous) feedback in the review process
- critically, with only the best proposals supported

Reviewers are chosen by the Fund Director from a Review Committee of tenured faculty from across the Social and Natural Sciences who possess clear and demonstrated interest in furthering the understanding of human behavior. In the event that no member of the Review Committee is available and/or qualified to assess a given proposal, some outside reviewers may be recruited. The members of the Review Committee will be appointed by the University Provost and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) in consultation with the deans of the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS), Harvard Business School (HBS), and Harvard Law School (HLS). The members of this Review Committee will normally serve for one-year terms, with the possibility of reappointment. If a member of the Review Committee fails to review proposals in a timely way, their term of appointment may be shortened to less than a year.

During their term of service, members of the Review Committee are not eligible to submit proposals in which they are the principal investigator.

Reviewers will not be allowed to review the proposals of their recent students or coauthors (within the last five years).

Reviewers not only rate a proposal, but provide critiques including methodological advice and constructive criticism. Reviewers will be anonymous to applicants.

Proposals receive one of three ratings: Decline, Resubmit, or Support.[1] We anticipate that only the best proposals will be supported.

Proposals for $5,000 or less will have one reviewer.

Proposals between $5,000 and $40,000 will have two reviewers. In the event that they disagree, a resubmission will be requested.

One and only one cycle of revisions may be requested. (If no revision is requested, no resubmission is allowed.) Resubmissions may only be rated Decline or Support. Resubmitted proposals are reassigned to the reviewers from the first round. In the event of non-agreement between the second-round reviews, a third reviewer will be assigned.

There is no opportunity for appeal of declined proposals in the event that applicants are not satisfied with their reviews. Projects that are not funded may not reapply.

[1] Resubmissions can only be rated Decline or Support.
REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Acknowledgment and reporting requirements for funded proposals:

- Research and publications based on funded proposals will acknowledge financial support from the specific fund that provided the funds. This information will be provided in the funding letter.

- As a condition of receiving a grant award, award recipients will provide an annual summary of their funded research and the results of that research, which will be made available to the external institution/donor that provided the research funds. These annual reports will be due within 30 days of the anniversary of the funding date. Within 30 days of the two-year anniversary of the funding date (or at the three-year anniversary in the case of an extension), the investigator should also submit a final financial report. The final financial report should account for all funds that were spent as well as funds remaining, which should be promptly returned to the Foundations of Human Behavior Research Fund.