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:

Non-research Projects

Example non-research projects include, but are not limited to, campus-based DEI initiatives, training and education programs, conference support, software development, public outreach projects, and science-themed media production.

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 DEI initiative that includes evaluative research) should use the guidelines for research projects.

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.

Contents

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. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion 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 packet 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
Diversity, Equity & Inclusion 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
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 main issue, problem, or subject and why is it important?** The proposal should start with a discussion of the main issues, problems, or subjects that the proposer expects to address and why these are important.

2. **What is the major related work in this area?** The proposal should contain a summary of similar institutions, events, products, projects or other work addressing the same or related subjects, issues, or problems. The narrative should go on to describe how the proposed project differs from, contributes to, complements, or competes with these alternative efforts.

3. **What is the project? What are its goals and approach?** In this section, the proposal should provide a description of the project, including a clear statement of the work to be undertaken, the goals of the project, and how those goals relate to other work in the same issue area as laid out in Section 2, above. Essentially, the narrative should describe what proposers want to do, why they want 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. (For software and hardware development projects, a brief discussion of the relevant technical issues should be included.) *This is the most important part of the proposal, and typically this section will make of the most substantial portion of the proposal narrative.* If necessary, additional information, written at the "expert" level, may be included as an appendix.

4. **Who are the key members of the project team?** In a few sentences, the narrative should introduce the key members of the project team, the roles each will play in the project, and key accomplishments, training, or experience relevant to their ability to perform their roles. More detailed information about

the project team (education, honors, employment and 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 project?** The proposal narrative should include a general discussion of anticipated products such as publications, software, artistic work, programs, websites, conferences, briefings, training of students, etc., that the project is expected to yield. As appropriate, the proposal narrative should include metrics for these outputs describing what would constitute success (for example, anticipated viewership, number of software downloads, number of conference registrants, *etc*.). A more thorough discussion of the expected outputs should be 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 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 support has the proposer applied for or have in hand to support the project?** If funds are being provided or requested from other sources, the proposal narrative should list those sources, amounts, and the current status of funding from each. This information may 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 prior 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 an explicit discussion of the state of output or outcome metrics from current and/or previous grants.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Plan

The Foundation's investments in research, education, and public understanding of science, technology, and economics are guided by two core principles. First, that these areas are crucial drivers of the nation's health and prosperity. Second, that such prosperity relies on full and equitable participation in

these fields by those who have been and continue to be excluded. Research and experience tell us that more diverse teams produce better scholarship and that inclusivity is essential to the health of scholarly communities. In view of the long history of sexism and racial and ethnic bias in the United States and related exclusion in science, the Foundation places a specific emphasis on the participation of women and of Black, Indigenous, and Latina/o/e scholars and communities.

To this end, proposals must include a section describing current and planned efforts to ensure diversity *and* inclusion of women and Black, Indigenous, and Latina/o/e individuals and communities in the proposed project. In this section, Foundation staff will be looking for *concrete* plans to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially through project team participation and ensuring an inclusive 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.*

Proposers should discuss:

- The demographic makeup of the project team (*i.e.,* co/PIs, trainees, *etc*.) and strategies that will be used to further develop a diverse collaboration. When sharing the team makeup, proposers should disaggregate by gender and race/ethnicity;
- The project team's experience and past record on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion relevant to the proposed work;
- Current or planned strategies to ensure an equitable and inclusive work environment within the project team itself, and if appropriate, in the broader institutional (*e.g.,* departmental) context;
- Resources the project team will draw on to support these strategies.

Depending on the nature of the project, proposers may also wish to discuss, among other things:

- How the project will ensure that outreach and dissemination activities are inclusive;
- How the project will contribute to reducing gender and racial/ethnic inequity in the relevant field(s), specifically for Black, Indigenous, and Latina/o/e communities;
- How the content of the project addresses issues of gender and racial/ethnic inequity;
- Complementary projects or initiatives that the project will tap into;
- The proposers' mentoring philosophy and their experience working with diverse trainees;
- How the project will collaborate meaningfully with institutions that serve large numbers of underrepresented students or with organizations that focus on gender or racial/ethnic equity;
- How the project and its work may advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in other forms for the benefit of underrepresented communities.

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.

Finally, 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 issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion. 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.

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.

Type of Staff	Max Support	Notes
Faculty (on a 9-month academic salary)	**For senior[1] faculty:** No more than one month summer salary per year of full-time equivalent salary. **For junior[1] faculty:** No more than two months summer salary per year of full-time equivalent salary.	- All faculty supported through a Sloan grant must receive a standard benefits package customary for their institution. - 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. - 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. - For faculty on unpaid leave, the Foundation may consider modest academic-year salary support.

---

[1] 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
Project Staff	As needed, up to 100 percent of full-time salary	▪ All project/research staff employed by the grantee institution must receive a standard benefits package customary for the institution. ▪ 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.
Postdoctoral Researchers	As needed, up to 100 percent of full-time salary.	▪ Salary must be customary for the department and institution employing the researcher. ▪ 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. ▪ All Sloan-supported postdoctoral researchers must receive a standard benefits package customary for their institution.
Graduate Students	As needed, up to 100 percent of full-time salary	▪ Salary must be customary for the department and institution employing the student. ▪ 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. ▪ **Tuition.** 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.

- 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 non-research projects must contain (at least) four appendices:

- List of Citations
- Curricula Vitae
- Conflicts of Interest / Sources of Bias
- 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 project lead 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 publications, and important honors.
- 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 project;
- **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 project;
- **Paid Consulting:** Any compensation or honoraria received (within the last three years) from an entity involved with the subject matter of the proposed project 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 project.

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.

Information Products

Progress of all kinds 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 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 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 on the support of key figures or institutions other than the project lead or project team, the proposal must include an appendix with a letter from each 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 Key Project Personnel

The Sloan Foundation is committed to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion 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, Project Leads and other key personnel of the grant will be emailed a form asking them to provide information on their gender identity, country of origin, and race/ethnicity. Information shared through this form will be held strictly confidential by the Foundation and will be

used for the sole 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 racial and gender equity and how it informs the pursuit of our mission, please read our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion statement.

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 revealing their status in the application process until the Foundation has completed its evaluation and made a funding decision.