

Respondent: Adam Gamoran, William T. Grant Foundation

What is your role at your institution?

I am the president of the William T. Grant Foundation.

What types of projects does your organization fund? (Including broad topic areas, though I know specific priorities might change over time. Academic research, books, conferences, policy engagement?)

We support research to improve the lives of young people (ages 5-25 in the United States). Within that mission, we have two focus areas: research on programs, policies, and practices to reduce inequality in youth outcomes, and research to identify ways to improve the use of research evidence in policy and practice decisions that affect young people. Most of our funds go to original empirical studies (major research grants), fellowships (the William T. Grant Scholars award), and partnerships (Institutional Challenge Grant).

Does your organization offer smaller grants for early-stage projects?

We make a small number of grants of less than \$50,000, about 10-12 per year.

How do you find/identify projects of interest? (Calls for proposals? Invitation?)

The vast majority of our funding goes through our various competitions which have application guides (requests for proposals).

If some/all proposals are by invitation, how do you learn about projects and scholars you might want to fund?

A small number of awards are by invitation (about 12% of awards). Generally these are awards that advance the goals of the foundation, e.g. a non-profit that organizes a convening of grantees, or a non-profit that organizes a Capitol Hill briefing to engage with policy audiences about research we supported. These fall under the category of "Communication and Capacity-building" grants. We have a small staff-directed program call the Rapid Response Research grants that is staff directed; in this program we identify non-profits or government agencies who have a need for a synthesis of research on a pressing topic in their work, and identify a researcher to partner with them.

Do you send proposals out for review? If so, how do you choose reviewers?

Yes. We maintain a large data base of reviewers, generated by staff, who are PhD social scientists.

Who decides whether to fund a particular proposal?

Proposals above \$50,000 must be approved by our Board of Trustees, after being recommended by our Senior Program Team. An exception is that the president is authorized to award a President's Special Initiative grant each year, up to a higher limit that is approved in advance.

If someone does not receive funding based on an initial proposal, what feedback do they receive, if any? Can they submit a revised proposal?

Major research grants: Letters of inquiry that are declined generally receive minimal feedback due to their high volume. Full proposals are externally reviewed and receive written feedback. William T. Grant Scholars, Institutional Challenge Grants: About half the proposals do not make it to selection committee review, and these receive a small amount of feedback, generally one page. Proposals discussed by the selection committee receive written feedback. Scholars finalists receive written feedback from selection committee members and external reviewers.

Can scholars reach out to you to discuss ideas before submitting a proposal? Is this something you recommend/encourage?

Yes. We do not pre-review proposals or letters of inquiry but we are happy to discuss ideas. We visit universities and attend numerous conferences (in non-pandemic times). We are also available by email.

What are the most common mistakes you see scholars making in their proposals?

Not reading the application guide, or not taking seriously our discussion of the focus areas of our grantmaking.

If you could give potential applicants one piece of advice that might not be obvious on your website, what would it be?

We have extensive resources for applicants on our website. I can't think of anything that's not there; if I could, it would be there!

In economics, organization like CSWEP have been working to reduce harassment and discrimination in the profession. Does your organization have any safeguards in place to avoid funding individuals who engage in misconduct? How do you handle such cases? (e.g. Do you require applicants to disclose ongoing or past investigations by their employer or a professional organization like the AEA? What happens if a victim reports harassment by a grantee?)

We do not require applicants to disclose investigations.

Please note that we make grants to non-profit organizations, such as universities and research firms, not to individuals.