

PROPOSAL TIPS

Tips for Writing a Robust Open Society Fellowship Proposal

- Please answer all questions posed in the online application system.
- Be concise but also as informative and illustrative as you can within the word limit. Project budgets are not considered part of the word limit.
- We look for fellows who are dynamic, creative and thoughtful. Your proposal should demonstrate those qualities and show us that the plan you propose is well thought-through. If you are not a native speaker of English and feel that you are unable to express yourself effectively in English, please feel free to write the proposal in your native language and have it translated. (We can only accept proposals in English.)
- This is not a traditional grant or an academic proposal. Make your words leap off the page. We don't need extensive citations, graphs or flowcharts. Rather, make your case in powerful and assertive language.
- Please make your proposal specific to the Open Society Fellowship and tailor your answers to our application guidelines and questions. Simply submitting a book proposal or research outline, without answering our questions, will generally not suffice.
- As noted in our guidelines, we do not fund dissertation research, courses of study or other research while the applicant is still in school.
- Lastly, please run a spelling and grammar check on your proposal, and turn off "track changes" if you have used it.

Description of Project, Arguments

- Describe the project and outputs as clearly and concisely as you can.
- Don't forget to strongly tie your project back to the stated proposition (which can be found on the [grants page](#)). Reflect and explain why your project is relevant to the proposition. Is your stance clear? Are you presenting a clear and concise approach that differs from more conventional ones? Projects that do not adequately address the proposition will not be considered.

- If you are stating arguments that are unconventional or counterintuitive, provide evidence rather than simply blanket statements. If you are using case studies, include your arguments for why you selected those case studies.
- We look for a balance between questions and answers – that is, we want to know the questions that are driving your argument, but we also want to understand the “hunches” that are leading you in a certain direction. Strong proposals are inquisitive, but also clearly describe the contours of the applicant’s thinking and approach.
- It is important to describe obstacles you may face in detail. By “obstacles” we mean not only logistical challenges, but the fundamental issues you will wrestle with during your fellowship and how you plan to overcome them.

Existing Terrain and Newness of Concept

- We don’t require extensive literature reviews but we do look for a familiarity with existing work and an explanation of how your argument or angle is different and new.

Impact

- Projects often seek to influence many sets of diverse audiences simultaneously. Please clarify which audiences are most crucial for your project and ensure that the activities you propose will be aimed at those audiences. What do you want them to do differently based on your arguments and products?
- Please avoid using charts or tables to outline goals, objectives, impact and outcomes if they reiterate the points you have already made in writing.

Communications and Outreach Strategy

- Beyond a description of your products, we also look for how you plan to use the products to get traction among your audiences. Why are your chosen products the most effective and creative means of doing so?
- Simply having a website does not mean audiences will come. If you are proposing a website, please clarify why a website is the best means of dissemination.

Qualifications for the Project

- While we don’t have academic requirements, we do look for a significant body of expertise in your field as well as demonstrated ability to question conventional thinking.

Engagement with OSF

- If you are planning a project that is closely related to the work of an organization where you currently work, please indicate how your proposed fellowship would be

conceptually different, and how it is an independent project. Why couldn't this work be just as easily carried out with an organizational grant?

- We don't expect all applicants to know the Open Society Foundations and its work in great depth. However, please spend some time on the website reading up about different initiatives, and consider how your project can dovetail with or challenge different programs' work.
- The Open Society Fellowship is different from many traditional individual fellowships and grants. We look for applicants who see the Open Society Foundations as an intellectual resource for their work, and whose ideas can in turn deepen or challenge the Foundations' thinking. Why is the Open Society Foundations the right home for your project? And why, in particular, is the Open Society Fellowship – with its unique aspect of engagement with our network – the right vehicle?
- Strong proposals will demonstrate how the applicant could benefit from working in a cohort. The cohort aspect of this fellowship can bring opportunities for cross-collaboration, cooperative thinking, and peer learning.