MIT Election Data and Science Lab

New Initiatives Grants in Election Science

The MIT Election Data and Science Lab invites applications for grants to fund systematic research on the conduct of elections in the United States.

The Lab has allocated up to $160,000 in 2017 for grants, with individual grants capped at $20,000.

The application deadline is April 15, 2017.

Who is qualified?

The competition is open to PhD candidates who are initiating or are already conducting dissertation research and faculty members at American colleges and universities.

Although the study of elections and election reform have historically been the purview of political science and public administration, the Lab encourages research in elections that might be centered in other social sciences (e.g., psychology, anthropology), the natural sciences (e.g., mathematics), engineering (e.g., computer science), and professional fields (e.g., management science).

Priority in the selection of grantees will be given to PhD candidates and to junior faculty members. Research teams of two or more individuals are eligible.

What kinds of research projects are eligible for consideration?

The Lab's main interest is to encourage new approaches to the scientific study of elections and election reform.

Topics that might be proposed include, but are not limited to: factors that influence turnout and registration; campaign finance; redistricting and apportionment; voting technology; polling place practices; the maintenance of voter registration rolls; the funding of elections; design of ballots and election materials; election audits; and election forensics.

The Lab looks to fund projects that can be investigated and reported within a year or two. Therefore, the types of proposals that are most likely to be successful are those that seek, for instance, to expand analysis already planned in a dissertation; investigate a new, emerging issue that may later be expanded into a larger project; or contribute a new case or approach within an ongoing research project.

What could a research grant pay for?

A grant can cover almost any aspect of a qualified research project, such as costs associated with travel to conduct research away from the researcher's campus; costs associated with data-collection activities, including the conduct of surveys, questionnaires, and/or focus groups or the purchase of existing data; costs for payments to research subjects; and costs of clerical, secretarial, research, or transcription assistance.

Specifically excluded from funding are the purchase of equipment, textbooks, tuition support, salary support for the principal investigator(s), indirect costs or institutional overhead, travel to professional meetings, and publication subsidies.

Grants will be awarded to individuals on a competitive basis. Grants will normally extend for one year.

Grants will normally be paid directly to the recipient, with the recipient responsible for the payment of any taxes associated with the grant. If potential recipients prefer to have payments made to a university on their behalf, they must submit with their proposal a letter from the responsible official stipulating that no indirect or overhead costs will be charged against the grant.

How do I apply?

All applications will include the components listed below. These components should be combined into a single PDF file and e-mailed to Colleen Mathis at ccmathis@mit.edu. Please use the following as the subject line: "New Initiatives Application [insert your surname]."

1. Application grant form. Download the application form from the MEDSL website.
2. Project narrative. Provide a narrative that describes the project's goals, methods, and intended results, along with a discussion of how the project relates to the goals of the Lab. The narrative must conform to the following clerical constraints:
    a. Be written in 10 or 12 point Times New Roman font
    b. Be no more than 5 pages long (single-spaced is fine), including references/citations and any tables or figures. Proposals longer than five pages may be returned to the applicant for revision.
3. Project budget and justification. No more than 1 page.
4. Curriculum vitae. No more than 2 pages.
5. Letter certifying that funds dispersed to your home institution will not be subject to indirect charges or overhead. This is not needed for applicants who intend to receive the grant funds directly.

In addition, **PhD candidates** must provide a letter of recommendation to be sent directly to Colleen Mathis at ccmathis@mit.edu. The letter should be prepared on institutional letterhead and sent as a PDF file directly from the faculty member's e-mail address.

What is the timeline?

All application materials must be received on or before April 15, 2017. Grants will be announced in May.

How are recipients selected?

Proposals will be judged by the significance of the research project; the project's design, plan of work, and dissemination; the applicant's qualifications; the relationship of the project to the Lab's goal of encouraging research that is relevant to the improvement of elections; and the appropriateness of the budget request for the project's requirements.

Grant recipients agree to…

- Acknowledge the support given by the MIT Election Data and Science Lab and its funder, the Madison Initiative of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.
- Provide evidence of IRB approval before the disbursement of funds, for projects requiring such approval.
- Propose a paper or poster for presentation at the 2018 Election Science Summer Conference based on research supported by this grant. (If accepted, the Lab will reimburse related travel costs of up to $1,000 to attend the conference.)
- Provide the Lab a one-page summary of the work supported by the grant, which will be published on the Lab's Website and used to support the grant program's outreach.
  - Provide a brief progress report on an annual basis, if the grant period is greater than one year.
- Provide a financial report at the end of the grant period. (A reporting template will be provided.) All unused funds must be returned to MIT.
- Notify the Lab of any books, articles, papers, or other publications based on research supported by the grant.
- Make any dataset created by the grant available to open public dissemination through the Lab on a non-exclusive basis, within six months of the end of the grant period.

Questions? Contact:
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