



# GUIDELINES FOR FELLOWSHIP TRAINING PROPOSALS

## PROGRAM SUMMARY

The mission of Morris Animal Foundation is to bridge science and resources to advance the health of animals. To achieve this aim, we fund hypothesis-driven, humane research projects with high scientific merit and the potential for significant impact. We are a nonprofit organization that is funded by public support from individuals, corporations, clubs and foundations, and by earnings from our endowed funds. Our donors are interested in funding research that results in impactful animal health achievements and benefits both scientific and non-scientific stakeholders including veterinarians, pet owners, communities and the environment. Fellowship Training Grants are designed to assist new investigators in launching a successful research career by providing salary support in a quality mentoring environment.

This year we have additional funding for applicants from historically marginalized groups, in canine and wildlife health respectively, through our Donor-Inspired Study program. Those Fellowships are being funded by Sally R. McIntosh, who has supported Morris Animal Foundation for nearly 14 years, making her first gift to support greyhound health research in 2009. As she has grown closer to the Foundation over the years, Sally's support has expanded into different areas including wildlife health. Her real passion for our work lies within the comprehensive, scientific process that Morris Animal Foundation has established to fund only the best and most critical areas of research. By creating these Fellowship positions, Sally hopes to make a tiny dent in diversifying the animal health research community.

The maximum project duration of a Fellowship Training Grant is 24 months, and the total budget cannot exceed \$125,000 USD.

---

## MORRIS ANIMAL FOUNDATION POLICIES

**Health Study Policy:** Projects must adhere to the [Foundation's Health Study Policy for Animals](#) Involved in research. Our preference is not to fund projects that include euthanasia of animals for research purposes, or that derive data and/or samples from such projects. Justification for such activities needs to be significant in terms of rejecting alternative approaches. Note that proposals recommended for funding by scientific reviewers are reviewed separately by animal welfare and ethics experts prior to funding.

**Parachute Science:** Projects that include international collaborations should address international scientific engagement and benefits and include a named mentor in the country where the research will occur. The Foundation endeavors to achieve impact through ethical pathways and with the clear intention of inclusivity, diversity, and the elimination of the practice of parachute/colonial science.

**COVID-19 Considerations:** Research plans must include mitigation strategies for operational risks posed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Alternative strategies for travel restrictions, pandemic-related mandates, supply shortages, etc., should be included in the proposal.

**Environmental Policy:** Consideration should be given to reducing detrimental effects of research projects on the environment. Travel requests should be limited and well justified with respect to the project objectives. We encourage means of transportation with the lowest possible carbon emissions.



For questions about Morris Animal Foundation policies, please [contact us](#).

---

## APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS

Applicants must hold a veterinary degree (such as DVM) or a PhD at the time of grant award. Awardees must devote at least 75% time to the research project; clinical residents and those with clinical service requirements greater than 25% time are not eligible. Mentorship must be provided to the Fellow by one or more qualified mentors in the field of study.

Applicants applying for consideration for funds specifically available to historically marginalized groups, on canine or wildlife health topics, should indicate and explain this in their letter of intent (see below). It is also useful for this to be addressed in the mentor's letter, if appropriate. Such groups include but are not limited to black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), Latinx, LGBTQ+ and intersectionalities.

All applicants must convince the scientific and animal welfare reviewers that they clearly understand the health problem, have sufficient expertise to conduct the study, are using a scientifically sound approach, and have given appropriate consideration to the overall environmental impact of their research. A maximum of one application as PI/Co-Investigator in response to this RFP is permitted.

---

## PROPOSAL CRITERIA

Proposal resubmissions are not permitted without explicit written permission from the Foundation. An investigator who resubmits a proposal without permission may be barred from applying to future RFPs.

---

## REVIEW PROCESS

All proposals will undergo administrative and scientific review. Each proposal is assigned to two scientific reviewers and is ultimately scored by the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) according to [this rubric](#). Projects recommended for funding are then screened by our Animal Welfare Advisory Board for adherence to our [Health Study Policy for Animals Involved in Research](#).

## PROPOSAL FORMAT, GUIDELINES AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Carefully review and adhere to these proposal guidelines. Guideline deviations may result in disqualification of your proposal.

### **American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) submission instructions:**

Applications must be submitted through [the AIBS portal](#). All applicants must register to use the portal; your username will be your email. The portal home page will list open grant calls and you can begin your submission.

### **Important Submission Points:**

- The user submitting the proposal should be the Applicant/PI.
- Ensure that you do not lose any information - save your work often (click "SAVE ALL ANSWERS") and as many times as needed before submission



- Mistakes happen! If you discover a mistake after submitting your proposal, you can correct your work. You must “un-submit” then revalidate to finalize and resubmit.
- Give yourself time - you may need technical assistance to complete your submission.
- Click “FINALIZE” when ready to submit. At this point your application still needs institutional approval. Do not leave this until the last moment as your administrator needs to sign off electronically before the deadline.
- NOTE: If you “un-submit” your proposal after your authorized institutional approver has signed, the proposal will require re-authorization from the institution. Once the deadline passes, no further changes are possible.
- **Your application must be received by 5:00 p.m. ET on the designated due date.**
- You will receive an email confirming approval. You also can check the status of your submission by logging onto the submission portal.

### **Submission Components:**

The application comprises six sections: Title, Questions, People, Attachments, Approval and Finalize. Each section must be completed. The main project proposal is completed in the attachments section - other sections are completed directly in the portal.

**I. Title** (max 200 characters).

### **II. Questions**

This section collects basic information about your application. Note that the budget total is the total of direct and indirect costs. Both summaries have a 2,000-character limit but are aimed towards different potential audiences; the lay summary should not duplicate the technical summary. We may use your lay audience summary in communications with the public or with potential funders. Lay language should be used, and we require a Flesch Reading Ease Score of 50-70. Please click [here](#) and paste in your lay language summary to verify the reading level. Click “SAVE ALL ANSWERS” at the bottom of this section to progress to part III.

### **III. People**

A “Person Record” is created for the PI, any other investigators, and your authorized institutional signer who is needed to submit your application. **Person records for your mentor(s) and your Head of Department are also required.**

### **IV. Attachments**

For the attachments section make sure that you use the provided template to help you organize your submission. Do not remove any headers or sections. Indicate “not applicable” if a section or question does not apply. The order of the research proposal must follow the order in the template. Proposals should be single-spaced or greater, using no smaller than Times New Roman 11-point font with a minimum of ¾ inch margins. Technical terminology should be defined on first usage; acronyms and abbreviations may be used subsequently.

The [proposal template](#) is sub-divided into 15 parts (sections A-O) and must be converted to a PDF for submission.

- A. Study Proposal
- B. Resubmission Summary\*



- C. Sample Size Calculation
- D. Animal Involvement Justification
- E. Recombinant DNA/Biohazards/ Biosecurity Measures
- F. Facilities and Equipment
- G. Cited References
- H. Budget. **The budget details are entered into a [separate spreadsheet](#) for upload.**
- I. Budget Justification and Timeline ([Budget Justification Example](#))
- J. Current and Pending Support
- K. Biographical Data
- L. Supporting Documents: candidate letter of intent, mentor letter(s), department head support letter, other letters of support.
  - a. The Mentor(s) Letter(s) and Department Head support letter will be requested by the applicant via the AIBS SCORES portal. The Mentor(s) and Department Head will upload their letter(s) directly into the AIBS SCORES portal.
- M. Training Plan
- N. Salary Verification
- O. Unofficial Education Transcripts

*\*Resubmissions are by invitation only*

#### **A. Study Proposal.**

The proposal has a five-page limit, including figures and tables and the one-page animal health impact section.

Organize your proposal with the following sections:

- (i) **Hypothesis and Objectives:** Be precise and enumerate specific, testable hypotheses with realistic objectives to be achieved within the timeline and budget of the proposal.
- (ii) **Problem Description and Significance:** Include a brief literature summary and preliminary data (if applicable) that describes the current state of the problem and justifies the need for the proposed study. If the PI is conducting research outside of their country of institutional affiliation, they must clearly stipulate how the information gained from their study will be used by stakeholder groups locally.
- (iii) **Study Design and Methods:** Include the experimental design and methods for each objective. Data analysis methods must also be described.
- (iv) **Possible Risks and Mitigation Plans:** Identify and address any potential shortcomings of the design and methods, or potential operational challenges.
- (v) **Animal Health Impact** [[link to example](#)] (minimum 1 page): Impact is vitally important to our donor-supported organization. We may decline proposals where impact is incompletely addressed, particularly those lacking in impact beyond the scientific community. Scientifically robust studies in which non-academic and broader impact are integral to the study design will have the highest chance of success. Remember that the scoring rubric allocates a third of the points available to impact and engagement. **Please note your proposal may be declined if all**



**questions are not addressed.**

*Scientific impact, including impact beyond this research field. Key questions include:*

- Why is this work integral to the health and/or welfare of the species?
- Is this project likely to make a contribution to solving a problem or addressing a key knowledge deficit that is obstructing progress?
- How likely is it that the findings will have an impact beyond the period of this award?
- Is there potential for wider impact e.g., for other scientific fields, animal populations, species, or geographic regions?

*Non-academic impact, including stakeholders and beneficiaries. Key questions include:*

- Who might be interested and who might benefit from this project?
- What are the needs of these stakeholders and how were they identified?
- Will stakeholders be involved in project design, execution, preparation of training, and/or dissemination of results? Have any been included as applicants?
- If applicable, describe the extended impact this work (or subsequent work) may have on the environment, policy, human behavior, industry, economics, or public awareness.

*If applicable, have connections with policy makers been established? Outline your engagement activities and outputs plan (i.e., knowledge exchange activities). Engagement beyond academic/scientific communities will substantially strengthen your proposal. Key questions include:*

- What time and effort will be committed to these activities? Please include in the budget and timeline below if appropriate (section I)
- Who do you propose to engage with and how? Include letters of support if applicable.
- How will the success of engagement activities be evaluated?
- What experience do the applicants have with non-academic engagement, and/or what training or other resources are available?



**B. Resubmission Summary** (3-page limit, excluding the original SAB review). Include a copy of the original SAB review of your proposal and your responses to reviewer comments. Answer questions thoroughly as your resubmission might be evaluated by different SAB reviewers to those who reviewed your original submission.

**C. Sample Size Calculation** (no page limit): use the Sample Size Form from the proposal template as applicable.

**D. Animal Involvement Justification Form** (no page limit): fill this section from the proposal template, regardless of live animal involvement. This form is required.

**E. Recombinant DNA/Biohazards/ Biosecurity Measures** (no page limit): Applicants using recombinant DNA techniques must confirm that they have complied with National Institutes of Health guidelines and have approval from their institution's Biological Safety Committee to conduct the proposed research. Indicate any other potential biosafety concerns, including the use of radiation. Describe biosecurity measures that will be put in place to protect animals and people from transmissible disease and other biological agents.

**F. Facilities and Equipment** (1-page limit): describe facilities and equipment available to conduct the proposed research. Include resources available at the PI's institution and sub-contracted or fee-for-service resources needed to complete the research.

**G. Cited References** (2-page limit): Include complete citations referenced numerically in the body of the proposal.

**H. Instructions for Budget** (1-page limit) This document is uploaded separately from the main proposal. Use the provided [budget Excel spreadsheet template](#). Do not exceed the budget limits and timescales described page 1 "Award duration and budget limits". The Foundation will allow a maximum of 8% indirect costs (if charged by your institution).

**Budget Limitations:**

- **Salary:** Budget is limited to two years of fellowship salary at \$50,000 maximum per year. Up to \$25,000 in associated project costs can be included, inclusive of indirect costs.
- **Equipment:** Requests for equipment purchases may not exceed \$5,000 for the project.
- **Tuition:** Morris Animal Foundation does not pay for tuition.
- **Travel:** Requests for travel to scientific meetings must be well-justified in terms of environmental and scientific impact and should not exceed \$2,000. Travel needed to complete research objectives should be budgeted separately. Travel must be essential; resources or activities that provide alternatives are preferred. Possible ongoing disruptions to travel due to COVID-19 should also be considered. For international project teams, activities should be conducted wherever possible by teams and/or collaborators already in-country.
- **Indirect Costs:** Up to 8% of the budget can be applied to indirect costs if your institution charges for these costs. The addition of indirect costs should not result in the total exceeding the maximum allowable budget. If a subaward to another organization is proposed, the total indirect costs may not exceed 8% for the subaward. We encourage provision of indirect costs



as in-kind from your institution whenever possible.

- **Other Project Expenses:** briefly categorize other project expenses e.g., laboratory consumables; clinical care; reagents; non-equipment study supplies; service fees for specimen analysis.

**Once completed, upload the provided Excel budget spreadsheet into the AIBS portal. This will be a separate upload from the rest of the proposal.**

**I. Budget Justification and Timeline Summary** (2-page limit): [Budget Justification Example](#). Use the budget justification form in the proposal template and the project timeline to demonstrate how the research objectives will be completed in the timeframe requested. Include data analysis time and manuscript preparation time.

**J. Current and Pending Support** (No page limit): The Foundation wishes to support discrete research proposals that have not already received funding elsewhere. Fellowship Training Awards must be independent research projects. Please identify all active or pending support for the PI and Mentors. Where overlap, whether scientific or budgetary, may be perceived, please explain. Submissions to other funding sources should not duplicate this project unless we have already officially declined to fund it. Provide the following information for all current and pending support.

- Project ID, funding source, funding start and end dates.
- Project title.
- Summary: summarize the project objectives and results to date.
- Overlap: Summarize any potential overlap with the proposed project regarding the science, budget or committed effort.

**K. Biographical Data** (2-page limit per individual): include a biosketch for the PI and mentors. This might take the form of a resume/CV.

**L. Letters of Support:**

- **Candidate Letter of Intent:** (2-page limit): address your educational background, training and research experience. Provide insight into your commitment and motivation for a career in animal health research. Describe your career vision and how this training award will assist in your progress toward becoming an independent investigator.
- **Mentor Letter(s)** (2-page limit per mentor): This will be requested by the applicant through the AIBS SCORES portal. The mentor will submit the letter directly into AIBS SCORES. The mentor's letter will address the candidate's accomplishments, strengths and motivation. Describe formal and informal opportunities for research mentorship, and the mentor's history of guiding other researchers. Include list of mentees and their current positions. Describe the role of the mentor and the candidate in preparing and writing this application.
- **Department Head Letter:** (1-page limit): This will be requested by the applicant through the AIBS SCORES portal. The department head will submit the letter directly into AIBS SCORES. The department head's letter will confirm that the applicant is a full-time postdoctoral researcher or graduate student, and that the applicant will be allowed adequate time to conduct the proposed research.





- **Other Letters of Support:** (2-page limit per letter): may include letters of support from collaborators or key suppliers of materials required for the project.
- M. Training Plan** (1-page limit): Provide a detailed plan for mentoring, including career development and training objectives. Describe the institutional environment and how this environment will enable the Fellow to achieve independence as a research investigator.
- N. Salary Verification** (1-page limit) Formal documentation from your institution's administration office showing approval of the requested annual salary and benefits based on the institution's salary scales. The salary request should include annual salary, fringe benefits and indirect costs.
- O. Unofficial Educational Transcripts:** Submit all transcripts beginning with Year 1 of veterinary or graduate training.

**Once completed, convert Word files to a PDF and combine all documents into a single PDF for upload.**

#### **V. APPROVAL**

An authorized administrative official from your institution/place of work must approve your application. This should be done after all required sections are complete and attachments uploaded.

To initiate the institutional approval and submission process, click "select your approval invitee" and identify the individual responsible for signing off on your proposal from your designated person records that you created earlier.

#### **VI. FINALIZE YOUR SUBMISSION**

Before you click "FINALIZE" you can review your entire submission by clicking on "Click here to preview your current submission content prior to finalizing it." If you are missing any attachments, a message will prompt you to add the missing item. If all components are present/uploaded, the submission can be finalized. At this point content cannot be changed unless the institutional official declines approval.

Once you click "FINALIZE," your nominated approval official will be notified by email and asked to review, validate, and officially submit your application. **THIS MUST BE DONE BEFORE THE DEADLINE.** It is the applicant's responsibility to make sure that their Institutional Official has sufficient time to approve the application before the deadline. Your application is not considered to be fully submitted until approval is received – you will receive an email confirming approval. You also can check the status of your submission by logging onto the system, navigating to the proposal mechanism and clicking on your submission link.

#### **QUESTIONS REGARDING THE SUBMISSION PROCESS**

Please contact [morrisanimalfoundation@aibs.org](mailto:morrisanimalfoundation@aibs.org) for technical assistance.