PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Donor-Inspired Study: Canine Wobbler Syndrome

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. 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, and communities.

We are pleased to accept proposals for research studies that lead to the advancement of our understanding of causes and treatments for canine wobbler syndrome (cervical spondylomyelopathy). Of particular interest are proposals that investigate genetic biomarkers and the genetic basis of Wobbler Syndrome as well as new advancements in medical, nutritional, surgical, immunotherapy, and complementary medicine interventions that hold promise for improving quality of life of large breed dogs affected by these conditions.

This request for proposals is supported by funding donated to Morris Animal Foundation by Doberman Pinscher Club of America and the Weimaraner Clubs of America, Australia, New Zealand and Weimaraner Foundation Fund.

The maximum project duration is 24 months and the budget cannot exceed $100,000 USD. We will not accept off-topic proposals in this RFP.

APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS

All applicants for this award 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. **Competitive applicants for this award will have a record of expertise demonstrated through peer-reviewed publication.**

A maximum of one application as Principal Investigator (PI) is permitted.

MORRIS ANIMAL FOUNDATION POLICIES

Health Study Policy: Projects must adhere to the Foundation's [Health Study Policy for Animals Involved in Research](). For this RFP, the Foundation will not fund projects that include euthanasia of animals for research purposes, nor source data and/or samples from such projects. 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 Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator in the country where the research will occur. The Foundation endeavors to achieve our objectives through ethical pathways and with the clear intention of inclusivity, diversity, and the elimination of the practice of parachute/colonial science.

Grant Resubmission Policy: Proposal resubmissions are not permitted without explicit written permission from the Foundation.

For questions about Morris Animal Foundation Policies, contact [grantapplications@morrisanimalfoundation.org]().

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 (AWAB) 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. Deviations from these guidelines may result in the rejection of your proposal.

Fluxx Submission Instructions:
Submit applications in [Fluxx.]() The application process includes completion of the online form and proposal attachment. Both the PI and the individual submitting the application (if different from the PI) must create an account before applying for funding. Your account must be reviewed and validated by Morris Animal Foundation, **which may take up to two business days**, so please plan to create an account several days prior to the proposal deadline. For details on how to create an account and submit an application, view our [Fluxx Applicant User Guide.]()

Your application must be received by 4:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the designated due date.

Proposal Format:
Use this proposal template to complete your proposal. 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 complete proposal, including attachments, must be converted to a single PDF prior to submission.

Proposal Outline:
A. **Lay Summary** (2,000-character limit): This information may be used in communications with the public to showcase your project. Lay language should be used, and we require a Flesch Reading Ease Score of 50-70. Paste your lay language summary using this free readability checker to verify the reading level. This should not be a duplicate of the technical summary (below).

B. **Technical Summary** (2,000-character limit): For review by Foundation staff and the Scientific Advisory Board.

C. **Title Page** (1-page limit): Include the proposal title and name, institution and email address of the PI and all CIs.

D. **Study Proposal** (5-page limit including figures, tables and sub-sections i. - iv. below): Note that "not applicable" is not a sufficient response in this section.

   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/proof-of-concept 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.

   Preliminary Data: Succinctly describe any previous results by the investigator which supports the proposed research. If this project is a continuation of a previous Morris Animal Foundation study, include grant ID number, title, and a brief summary of the final results. Preliminary data is not required for Pilot Studies but should be included if available and relevant.

   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.

E. **Animal Health Impact** [Example Animal Health Impact Statement] (no page limit): 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. **Well written proposals will consider the following questions:**

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 rapid 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 L).
- 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?

F. **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. *Resubmissions are by invitation only.*

G. **Sample Size Calculation** (no page limit): Use the Sample Size Form in the [proposal template](#) as applicable.

H. **Animal Involvement Justification (AIJ) Form** (no page limit): Use the AIJ form in the [proposal template](#), regardless of live animal involvement. **This form is required.**
   i. **Client Consent Form:** If your study involves client owned animals, attach your Client Consent Form following the AIJ form.

I. **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 if. 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 biological agents.

J. **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.

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

L. **Instructions for Budget** (1-page limit): This is uploaded separately from the main proposal. Use the provided [Excel budget template](#). The maximum project duration is 24 months and the budget cannot exceed a total of $100,000 USD. The Foundation will allow a maximum of 8% indirect costs (if charged by your institution).

   i. **Salary:** Include salary for each person's time spent on the project as "% project appointment". Identify each person's project role. Also include the fringe benefit rate for each person, to calculate total personnel costs. If salary will not be charged to the project (in-kind contribution), list the % project appointment as "0%" on the budget form. If a contributor's salary is covered 100% by their employer, do not request salary support in the proposal.
- **Key Personnel:** Salary requests for time spent on the project must be clearly defined and include % appointment and other current salary support. As we are an international funder, we expect the nature of these positions to be clearly described to aid review.
- **Technicians, Residents, Fellows, and Students:** Salary requests are permitted but must be clearly defined and include % time commitment.

ii. **Tuition:** Morris Animal Foundation does not pay for tuition.
iii. **Equipment:** Requests for equipment purchase may not exceed $5,000 for the lifetime of the project.
iv. **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. For international project teams, activities should be conducted wherever possible by teams and/or collaborators already in-country.
v. **Indirect Costs:** Up to 8% of the budget's total direct costs 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.
vi. **Other Project Expenses:** Briefly categorize other project expenses e.g.,laboratory or clinical consumables; reagents; non-equipment study supplies; and service fees for specimen analysis.

✓ Once completed, upload Excel budget spreadsheet into the Document section in Fluxx. This will be a separate upload from the rest of the proposal template.

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

N. **Current and Pending Support** (no page limit): Identify all active or pending support for the PI and Co-Investigators. Where overlap, whether scientific or budgetary, may be perceived, please explain. Provide the following information for all current and pending support.
   i. **Project ID, Funding Source, Start and End Date of Award**
   ii. **Project Title**
   iii. **Summary:** Summarize project objectives and results to date
   iv. **Overlap**: If any scientific, budgetary or effort overlap might be perceived, explain why no overlap exists.

O. **Biographical Data** (2-page limit per person): Include a bio-sketch for each PI and Co-Investigator with the following information. This might take the form of a resume/CV.
   i. **Name, Role on this Project**
   ii. **Current Position** (title, institutional affiliation, institutional address)
   iii. **Education and Training** (degrees, institution, year completed, areas of emphasis)
   iv. **Previous Positions, Honors, Awards, Committee Assignments**
   v. **Selected Peer-reviewed Publications** (include titles, all authors and complete reference)

P. **Letters of Support**: Include a letter of support from any collaborator, funding agency, policymaker or commercial partner whose contributions are required to achieve the research objectives described in the proposal. Indicate the letters of support that you will be adding (i.e., one letter from my head of department, two from collaborators etc.), convert these to PDF format and combine with the template PDF for upload as a single file.

   ✓ Once completed, convert word files to a PDF and combine all documents into a single PDF for upload. *Excluding the Excel budget spreadsheet which will be uploaded separately.*

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Ready to submit? Please review this Applicant Checklist to double check your grant proposal and maximize your chance of success prior to clicking 'Submit'. This checklist should not be uploaded as part of your application.

- ❑ Lay Language summary has a Flesch Reading Ease Score of 50-70
- ❑ Study Proposal length conforms to proposal guidelines allowable length
- ❑ Animal Health Impact Section completed and adequately addresses questions within the proposal guidelines
- ❑ Fully completed Animal Involvement Justification Form
- ❑ Client Consent form provided *(if applicable)*
- ❑ Budget and budget category totals are within allowable request, and the budget template provided is used (link to the template is provided in guidelines and proposal template)
- ❑ Letters of support *(if applicable)*
- ❑ All proposal template sections are completed
- ❑ All documents provided in English
- ❑ Application submitted as 1 full proposal document in PDF format + 1 budget spreadsheet in Excel format (2 files total)

For applicant questions not answered by the proposal guidelines or in the Grants FAQ, please reach out to the Scientific Grants Program Team at grantapplications@morrisanimalfoundation.org