

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Request for Proposals: FY24 Wildlife First Award

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The mission of Morris Animal Foundation is to bridge science and resources to advance the health of animals. To achieve this mission, we fund hypothesis-driven, humane research projects with high scientific merit and the potential for significant impact. We are a non-profit 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 and communities. First Award grants are designed to provide funding for research to assist early-career investigators in establishing a successful, mentored research program.

Proposals should advance the health and overall welfare of wildlife. All proposals will undergo a two-stage review process. The initial review will check for adherence to the proposal guidelines and screen the study proposal, animal health impact statement, and resubmission summary (if applicable) for scientific merit and potential impact. Those proposals that pass the initial screening will undergo full proposal review by the Scientific Advisory Board and be scored according to the provided [rubric](#).

APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS

First Award: First Award grants are designed to assist early career researchers in establishing a successful research program. The applicant must have completed a PhD and have a permanent position in a university, accredited zoo or conservation organization, or other non-academic equivalent. Individuals currently in a residency program are not eligible. Postdoctoral researchers should be completing their program and proposing research intended to be conducted in a permanent position. Applicants must not have received previous funding of more than \$25,000 for any single extramural award as a principal investigator. Please state this in your candidate letter of intent. Previous funding as a co-investigator is acceptable. This application requires supporting statements from one or more appropriately experienced mentors.

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 in response to this RFP is permitted.

AWARD DURATION AND BUDGET LIMITS

The maximum duration of a First Award is 24 months, and the total budget cannot exceed \$120,000.

For awards that allow projects of more than one year, the applicant can allocate costs as appropriate. Costs do not have to be evenly spread across the lifetime of the project. Applicants are not required to use the maximum award duration.

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.

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 a two-stage review process. The initial review will check for adherence to the proposal guidelines and screen the study proposal, animal health impact statement, and resubmission summary (if applicable) for scientific merit and potential impact. Those proposals that pass the initial screening will undergo full proposal review by the Scientific Advisory Board. Each proposal is assigned to two scientific reviewers. During the second stage, Scientific Advisory Board members will score full proposals 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. Deviations from these guidelines may result in the rejection 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 for 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 signer 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 4:59 PM Eastern Time on the designated due date.**
- You will receive an email confirming your 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

Technical and Lay Summary Information:

- Both summaries have a 2,000-character limit but are aimed at different potential audiences.
 - The technical summary is for review by the Scientific Advisory Board and Foundation staff.
 - We may use your lay audience summary in communications with the public or with potential funders.

- The lay summary should **not** duplicate the technical summary. Lay language should be used, and we require a Flesch Reading Ease Score of 50-70. Paste your lay language summary into this [free readability checker](#) 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 13 parts (sections A-M) and must be converted to a PDF for submission.

- Study Proposal
- Animal Health Impact
- Resubmission Summary*
- Sample Size Calculation
- Animal Involvement Justification
- Recombinant DNA/Biohazards/Biosecurity Measures
- Facilities and Equipment
- Cited References
- Instructions for Budget. **The budget details are entered into a separate spreadsheet for upload.**
- Budget Justification and Timeline
- Current and Pending Support
- Biographical Data
- Supporting Documents: candidate letter of intent, mentor letter(s), department head support letter, other letters of support.
 - 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.**

*Resubmissions are by invitation only

A. Study Proposal. (5-page limit including figures, tables and sub-sections i. - iv. below).
Organize your Study 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/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: Applicants should 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.

- 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.
- B. 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 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?

C. 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.

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

E. Animal Involvement Justification (AIJ) Form (no page limit): Fill this section in the [proposal template](#), regardless of live animal involvement. **This form is required.**

- **Client Consent Form:** If your study involves client owned animals, attach your Client Consent Form following the Animal Involvement Justification form.

F. 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.

G. 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.

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

I. Instructions for Budget: This document is uploaded separately from the main proposal. Use the provided [Excel budget template](#). Do not exceed the budget limits and timescales described for each grant type on page 2 and 3 "Award Duration and Budget Limits." The Foundation will allow a maximum of 8% indirect costs (if charged by your institution). Note that the budget total is the total of direct and indirect costs.

Budget Limitations:

- **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.
- **Tuition:** Morris Animal Foundation does not pay for tuition.
- **Equipment:** Requests for equipment purchases may not exceed \$5,000 for the lifetime of the project.
- **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.
- **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. 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 or clinical consumables; reagents; non-equipment study supplies; service fees for specimen analysis.

- ✓ Once completed, upload Excel budget spreadsheet into the AIBS portal. This will be a separate upload from the rest of the [proposal template](#).

J. 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.

K. 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 the project objectives and results to date.
- iv) **Overlap:** Summarize any potential overlap with the proposed project regarding the science, budget or committed effort.

L. Biographical Data (2-page limit per individual): Include a bio-sketch for each PI and co-investigator. 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)

M. Letters of Support:

- **Candidate Letter of Intent:** (2-page limit)
 - **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.
 - **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.
 - **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.
- ✓ 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.

V. APPROVAL

An authorized institutional signer 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 authorized institutional signer declines approval.

Once you click “FINALIZE,” your authorized institutional signer 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 authorized institutional signer 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 for technical assistance.

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 budget template is provided in the proposal guidelines and proposal template)
- ☐ Candidate letter of intent
- ☐ Letters of support requested
- ☐ 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)
- ☐ Register in [Fluxx](#)

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