



Research Grant Application Instructions

Thank you for your interest in The Leakey Foundation's research grants. A formal application through our online application system is required. Please use this document to guide you through the application process. For any further questions, contact us at grants@leakeyfoundation.org.

When you are ready to apply, please visit our [website](#) to find the link that best describes your academic status and proposal.

Application Instruction Packet Contents

Essential application materials:

The downloaded application packet contains the following:

- Research grant application instructions (this document)
- Detailed Budget Template
- Sample Detailed Budget
- Sample Budget Justification
- Application checklist

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Before You Get Started

Confirm Your Eligibility

- Your research must be relevant to human origins and evolution.
- Applications are open to advanced doctoral students or post-PhD researchers.
- PhD students must be advanced to candidacy (all but dissertation).
- There are no citizenship requirements. Applications are welcomed from candidates regardless of citizenship or geographic location.
- Applicants must be affiliated with an institution such as a university or museum. We do not give funding directly to individuals.
- If you have received a Leakey Foundation grant in the past, you must complete all reporting requirements and be in compliance before receiving a new one. If you are uncertain about your eligibility, contact us at grants@leakeyfoundation.org before submitting your application.

Confirm Deadlines

In order for your application to be accepted for review, all of the required materials must be received on or before the following deadlines:

- Spring cycle deadline: January 10, 11:59 pm PT
- Fall cycle deadline: July 15, 11:59 pm PT

Confirm who will submit the application

- **Principal Investigator Policy:** Investigators may submit only one proposal as a principal investigator (PI) per granting cycle. This policy does not apply to co-investigators. For example, you may be the PI on one proposal as well as a co-investigator on another.
- **PhD Candidates:** If the primary work of the project will be performed by a graduate student, the project should be submitted under the graduate student's name and will be subject to funding limitations for PhD Candidates.
- **Former Leakey Foundation Grantees:** You must submit the required financial accounting statement and final report on your previous research

project prior to receiving a new award. This directive is in compliance with IRS regulations and the terms of your signed agreement.

Language Requirement: Application documents must be in English. For any letters of permission or other attachments written in another language, English translations must be provided.

Access the FAQ

- You can find a list of Research Grant FAQs [here](#).
- If you encounter any issues during the application process, use this FAQ as a starting point.

Online Application Instructions

Step 1) Access the research grant application

If this is your first application, you will need to create an account. Use the links on our website to find the appropriate application.

Completing your online application

You will need to enter all the information below.

Primary & Co-Investigator Contact

- Enter all contact details

Application Title and Abstract

- Proposal title and informal proposal title
- Research Type
 - Start typing 'Behavioral' or 'Paleoanthropological' and select the research type(s) that best fit your project.
- Provide an abstract (max 275 words) for an audience of peer reviewers, including:
 - Research objectives
 - Questions to be answered
 - Relevance of your research to the study of human origins
 - Basic methodology
 - Specific study population, materials, and/or area
- Relevance to The Leakey Foundation Mission Statement (max 150 words)
 - Please describe the relevance of your research to the study of human origins and the goals of the Foundation: To increase scientific research, education, and public understanding of human origins, evolution, behavior, and survival.

Countries of Research and Citizenship

- Country of Citizenship
- Country of Research
- Field Site, Lab, or Museum Name

Academic Advisor and Letter of Support

- Enter your academic advisor's contact information.
- **PhD candidate only:** Contact your academic advisor and request that they send a letter of support to grants@leakeyfoundation.org prior to the deadline.
- **NOTE:** The Letter of support should be sent directly from the advisor to grants@leakeyfoundation.org. Reference letters included with the application will not be accepted.

Co-Investigators

List any other major participants in your project. These fields may be left blank if there are no other participants. In the attachments section, please include a CV for each of the participants listed here.

Reviewer Suggestions

Applicants are invited to suggest names of individuals who are especially qualified to evaluate their proposal and its methodology. When submitting your application, please provide at least five reviewer suggestions for your proposal.

As part of our funding decision process, The Leakey Foundation will assign multiple peer reviewers to review your project proposal in addition to members of the foundation's Scientific Executive Committee. Suggested reviewers do not need to be personally known by the applicant.

Do not suggest:

- A member of your graduate committee
- A participant in your project
- A member of The Leakey Foundation's [Scientific Executive Committee](#).

Research Schedule

- Enter information about the schedule and timeline for your proposed project

Project Financial Data

- Project Budget

- Request Amount
- Funding Contingency (max 150 words)
 - If the total budget for your project exceeds the amount requested from The Leakey Foundation, please provide a detailed breakdown of all other financial support. You must disclose all potential funding sources, including institutional lab funds, departmental support, personal funds, and other external grants or fellowships (both secured and pending). Please ensure that each source corresponds to the additional columns in your attached Budget Sheet.
 - Please Justify: If you do not receive funding from The Leakey Foundation or any other sources from which you have applied, will any portion (or all) of your project be possible to complete?

Financial Responsibility

- Your Institutional Affiliation
- Enter information about your institution's financial contact.
- IMPORTANT: Please ensure that this information is current and accurate. If needed, double-check with your institution. Failure to do so can result in delays in transferring funds.

Step 2) Upload attachments

Format requirements for all attachments:

- Use 12-point black font
- Use US Letter page size (8.5" x 11") with no less than ½" margins
- Save all files as PDFs

Your documents **must** adhere to these guidelines. If your documents are not formatted correctly, your application will not be accepted for review.

Letter of Resubmission (only for applicants who are resubmitting)

Resubmitted proposals must include a Letter of Resubmission (1-2 PDF pages) addressing reviewers' concerns and the changes made. Please be sure to address all concerns, comments, and recommendations of the reviewers and your response to them.

Please note that beginning in fall 2026, proposals may now only be resubmitted **once**, regardless of how many times it may have been previously submitted.

Resubmitted proposals will be reviewed by members of our Scientific Executive Committee and may not be sent for external review unless requested by committee members. Resubmitted proposals are considered within a new round of proposals and are not given special consideration. Addressing reviewers' concerns does not guarantee funding.

Proposal Body

Your proposal must include the following elements in this order. The body of your proposal can not exceed seven (7) pages of single-spaced text:

1. A concise statement of your research objectives or the specific questions to be answered.
2. Description of the importance of the research project to your specific field and to the study of human origins. What is the relationship of your research to The Leakey Foundation's mission to increase scientific knowledge of human origins, evolution, behavior, and survival?
3. Brief history of attempts to answer the same or related questions by other researchers.
4. Detailed explanation of the information needed to answer your research question(s) and your methods (how you plan to gather and analyze this information).
5. Profile of your past experience using any specialized skills or analysis techniques required by your methodology.
6. Statement outlining any preliminary or pilot research you have conducted that is directly related to the project and a detailed account of the results.
7. Summary of any broader implications and your future goals relevant to the proposed research.
8. Brief description of your schedule for data collection, analysis, and reporting.

Data Sharing Plan:

- Up to one-page data management plan describing how the proposal will conform to the [Leakey Foundation's data sharing policy](#). Please include the following:
 1. Types of data, samples, physical collections, software, curriculum materials, and other materials stemming from the project
 2. The standards to be used for data and metadata format and content, or note lack of standards and possible remedies
 3. Policies for access and sharing, including provisions for appropriate protection of privacy, confidentiality, security, intellectual property, or other rights or requirements
 4. Policies and provisions for re-use, re-distribution, and the production of derivatives
 5. Plans for archiving data, samples, and other research products, and for preservation of access to them
- A valid data management plan may only include the statement that no detailed plan is needed as long as the statement is accompanied by a clear justification.
- The data management plan will be reviewed as an integral part of the proposal, considered under intellectual merit or broader impacts or both, as appropriate for the scientific community of relevance.

Figures, Tables, and Appendix

- Your figures, tables, and appendix **should not exceed two (2) pages combined**.
- Figures and tables should only be included if they are essential to your proposal. (i.e., if they clarify methods, the specific sample being studied, or the results of previous pilot projects with more efficiency than would be possible in the text of your proposal.)
- Figures, tables, and appendix should be aimed at experts in your field and clarify the methods or the specific study sample described in your research proposal text in more detail. This additional information might include a specific list of data to be collected, measurements to be taken, or museum specimens to be studied (their location, completeness, etc.).

- If the research project includes a genetics component, but someone other than the applicant will be doing the genetics work, please include an appendix from the actual person who will be gathering the genetic data or doing the genetic analysis.

General Contingency Plan

Considering potential impacts to your project plan (for example, COVID-19, political unrest, natural disasters, emerging infectious diseases, or unforeseen financial challenges), it's essential to have formal contingency plans for your proposed project. In up to one page, please describe the possible risks you may encounter that could hinder the successful completion of the project and outline your plans for adjusting this project if needed. Considerations for your contingency plan should include:

Operational contingencies: Please describe how you would modify key aspects of your project if disruptions occur. This may include modified start dates for travel, fieldwork, or data collection, alternative data collection strategies, alternative field sites, or alternative methods for recruiting and engaging participants, as well as any other potential modifications to research and development activities (including IRB/IACUC approvals/changes).

Financial contingencies:

- If the total budget for your project exceeds the amount requested from The Leakey Foundation, please provide a detailed breakdown of all other financial support. You must disclose all potential funding sources, including institutional lab funds, departmental support, personal funds, and other external grants or fellowships (both secured and pending). Please ensure that each source corresponds to the additional columns in your attached Budget Sheet.
- Please Justify: If you do not receive funding from The Leakey Foundation or any other sources from which you have applied, will any portion (or all) of your project be possible to complete?
- In addition, if The Leakey Foundation is only able to provide partial funding (e.g., 50% of your requested amount), please detail what you would be able to accomplish with this level of support.

This document should not exceed 1 page in length

Detailed Budget

Budget Guidelines

- Use the budget template in the Application Materials Packet.
- Itemize the total budget for your proposed research, including costs for items requested/secured from other sources.
- **No overhead is allowed.**
- Please use only the suggested major categories included in the budget template unless absolutely necessary. Major categories include:
 - Living expenses (food and lodging, per diem)
 - Expendable supplies
 - Travel (airfare, local or ground transportation)
 - Fees and other expenses (park or museum fees)
 - Personnel costs (justify in project description)
 - Special analysis costs (C14, SEM, pollen analysis, etc.)
 - Equipment *
- Important: If the total budget for your project exceeds the amount requested from The Leakey Foundation, please clarify the sources and allocation of your other funding (e.g., institutional lab funds, external grants, fellowships) as additional columns in your Budget sheet.
- Please refer to the sample budget included in the application packet for the level of detail we require.
- Make sure that the line item column is wide enough so all text is visible.
- **All budget PDFs must be exactly one page:** The blue lines (and dashed blue lines) will adjust the items that print to one page. Please adjust these within Excel so your budget fits on one page and is still legible. This is particularly important if you've added funding sources.
- **Save your file as a ONE PAGE PDF before uploading it to your application.**

* Note on Equipment Requests: The purchase of expensive permanent equipment such as computers, cameras, video and recording equipment, vehicles, boats, etc.

is not generally funded by The Leakey Foundation. Applicants are advised to request such items from other granting agencies. Equipment that is solely project-related is typically funded (i.e. external hard drives).

Budget Template Instructions

Please note: The budget template is pre-formatted, including formulas for summing line items. To avoid breaking these formulas, take care when adding new line items under each suggested heading.

- To add a line item, click the row number on the left side of the window to select the row. Then, from the “Insert” menu, select the “Rows” option. This will insert a new row while keeping all of the formulas in the spreadsheet intact.

Budget Justification

- Your budget justification should justify and clarify your budget items. Please use this section to provide any extra detail you think someone reviewing your budget may need. Please explain reasons for travel, why you need money for assistants or graduate students, how you arrived at flight, living expenses, and lodging expense estimates.
- Please include a description/explanation of the other sources of funds for your project and what they cover, including funds for which you have applied.
- This section should not exceed 1 page in length
- Please see the example Justification in the Application Materials Packet

Permits and Visas

Provide copies of the permits and visas necessary to conduct your research. Please include visas and permits (and permissions) from national parks, museums, zoos, laboratories, etc.

If these documents are not currently available or must be obtained in-country, we ask for “reasonable assurance” that the permits and/or visas can be obtained.

Reasonable assurance may take the form of:

- Documentation from the permit/visa agency that the permits or visas can be obtained without trouble. (PREFERRED)

- Copy of a previous year's permit or visa.
- Statement that you have obtained the permits in the past without trouble
- Statement from a colleague that has previously obtained the permits/visas that the permits/visas have been obtained in the past without trouble submitting your permits and visas
- Please scan your permits and visas in color if possible.
- You may upload multiple PDF files including your permits or visas. They need not be collated into one document.

If you have questions regarding permits/visas, please feel free to contact us at grants@leakeyfoundation.org.

Investigator CVs

A CV is required for the Primary Investigator and each of the Co-Investigators listed in the application. **CVs should not exceed two pages.**

Each CV should include education, relevant experience, awards, and publications.

Supplemental Attachments

When uploading attachments for your application, you may use "Supplemental Attachment" to upload additional documents that you believe are appropriate but do not fit into any of the other categories.

Bibliography / Works Cited

- The works cited section should not exceed two (2) pages.
- You may abbreviate and use a font smaller than 12 pt. for your bibliography.
- Do not attempt a complete historical literature review.
- Cite only the most significant references relevant to your research.
- References should list authors, date of publication, the title of the work, and where the work is to be found (i.e., journal, book, etc.).
- References should be listed in APA style. See examples here: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/>.

AI Disclosure & Accountability

While the Leakey Foundation does not prohibit the use of AI in proposal preparation, applicants are responsible for the accuracy of everything they submit, including all citations, data, and factual claims. Proposals containing fabricated references, inaccurate information, or unsupported claims may be declined regardless of how they were prepared.

On the last page of your application, please:

- **Disclose:** All applicants must disclose any forms of generative AI tools used.
- **Verify:** All applicants must verify the accuracy of all documents and information provided in their applications, whether or not AI was used.
- **Certify Integrity:** Acknowledge that this includes, but is not limited to, the manual verification of all factual claims, bibliographic citations, and author credentials or affiliations. Understand that the inclusion of fabricated references, inaccurate data, or unsupported claims, regardless of how they were generated, will result in the declination of your proposal and may affect my eligibility for future funding.

Step 3) Follow up on letter of support (PhD candidates)

PhD candidate only: After you have completed the application, be sure to confirm with your academic advisor that they have sent your letter of support to grants@leakeyfoundation.org prior to the deadline. **The PhD candidate applications will not be complete until a letter of support has been received.**

Tips for a Successful Application

- Use the application checklist found in the Research Grant Application Materials zip folder.
- State your hypotheses clearly with ways and means of testing them.
- Clearly articulate the relevance of your project to The Leakey Foundation Mission
- Carefully proofread the application before submission. If English is not your first language, consider having a native English speaker proofread it as well.
- Submit a spare (but realistic) budget. Find out from other researchers what they have spent on lodging, food, and transportation in your study area.
- Review and accurately cite related literature thoroughly.
- Provide assurances that necessary permits and visas are obtainable. Provide letters of permission for study of museum collections.
- For archaeological research, include sections, fossil lists, lithic lists, latitude and longitude coordinates, and an accurate map.
- When feasible, carry out and provide results of a pilot study.
- When creating your budget, make sure all budget items are visible in the final PDF.
- If you are a PhD candidate, follow up with your advisor to ensure they have submitted your letter of support.
- If you get stuck, reference the [Research Grants FAQ](#).

Grant Review Process

The following is the standard process we follow for selecting grants to fund:

- All grant applications are first reviewed by our Grants Department to ensure they are complete and within our purview.
- Proposals are then sent to our network of scientists with pertinent expertise for peer review (more details below).
- Next, proposals and peer reviews are evaluated by The Leakey Foundation's Scientific Executive Committee (SEC).
- Our SEC meets and recommendations are made for proposals to be funded.
- Our SEC then presents recommendations to our Board of Trustees for approval.
- Once recommendations are approved, applicants are notified and peer review feedback is shared.

More on the Peer Review Process and Feedback

Grant proposals are sent to scientists with pertinent expertise for peer review, evaluated by the Scientific Executive Committee, and must be approved for funding by the Board of Trustees.

Reviews that we have received will be sent to applicants. These reviews are intended to offer constructive criticism. Final decisions are also based on consideration of the current applicant pool, the relevancy of your proposal to understanding human origins, and the funds available during a given year.

Ethical Behavior and Conduct Policy

The Leakey Foundation does not tolerate sexual or other harassment or discrimination by awardees at facilities, field sites, conferences, or workshops where Leakey Foundation-funded research is conducted or presented.

Awardees are expected to comport themselves ethically, honestly, and respectfully in furtherance of The Leakey Foundation's mission. You must fully comply with all Leakey Foundation policies ([Click here to see our Community Standards of Ethical Values and Conduct Policy](#)). You must also comply with the rules, policies, and directives of your institution, the ethical codes of the professional organizations and societies to which you belong (e.g. the American Association of Physical Anthropologists), and applicable law. You must remain in good standing with your institution at all times.

Research shall be conducted with intellectual integrity, honesty, accuracy, and objectivity in compliance with applicable institutional research policies and protocols and with appropriate regard for human and animal subjects. Awardees shall not fabricate data or results; change or knowingly omit data or results to misrepresent findings in the research record; or intentionally misappropriate the ideas, writings, research or findings of others. Awardees are expected to comply with specific grant terms and conditions and to avoid conflicts between their private interests and The Leakey Foundation's mission.

Data Sharing Statement

The Leakey Foundation, like other funding agencies and journals, believes that transparency, openness, and accountability are essential parts of the scientific process, and we expect results/data of projects funded by The Foundation to be published in a timely manner.

The Leakey Foundation also aims to promote the sharing of data in an appropriate manner consistent with the needs of our grantees, but with the recognition that different fields of study require different approaches to data sharing. It is required that each applicant provide a brief statement (no more than one page) of how they intend to make the data resulting from their Leakey Foundation grant available to others. This statement should be submitted in PDF format.

The Leakey Foundation also aims to promote the sharing of data in an appropriate manner consistent with the needs of our grantees, but with the recognition that different fields of study require different approaches to data sharing. It is required that each applicant provide a statement (no more than one page) of how they intend to make the data resulting from their Leakey Foundation grant available to others. The data sharing statement must include a more detailed plan than an intention to publish or present at a conference. Please see the detailed application instructions for specific guidelines on the data sharing statement.

Urgent Funding Requests

Applications submitted between Spring and Fall cycle deadlines that request immediate review because of urgent research will be accepted on a very limited basis. Any such request must be accompanied by a thorough explanation of the urgency of the research.

Contact Information

The Leakey Foundation
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San Francisco, CA 94129-1359 USA

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E-mail: grants@leakeyfoundation.org