



July 2026

Dear Research Grant Applicants,

We are writing to current and recent applicants of our research grant program to share several updates to how we manage applications, reviews, and resubmissions this fall cycle. These changes reflect a significant and sustained increase in application volume, 70% above our recent average, driven by shifts in the broader funding landscape for this field.

Behind our research grant program is a two-person staff and a Scientific Executive Committee (SEC) of 19 volunteer members. Many of you have served as external reviewers, often for more than one proposal across both cycles in a year. At current application volumes, we are sending out nearly 1000 external review requests per cycle. This is not sustainable.

Here is a summary of the changes we have made:

New Application Instructions: We are on Version 26.1. This version contains all of these changes. If the application packet's file name does not contain 26.1, then you probably have an older version. Please go to our website to download the instructions and materials packet.

Resubmissions: Moving forward, all proposals may be resubmitted only one time. Beginning in fall 2026, you have only one resubmission for a proposal that has been previously submitted or resubmitted. In addition, resubmitted proposals may not be sent out for external review unless this is requested by committee members.

Internal/Committee Review: All proposals are reviewed by SEC members. In some cases, written comments from committee reviews may be limited or omitted from the feedback packet we return to applicants. For example, this may occur when external reviews are thorough and/or the committee has reached a clear consensus on fundability.

Desk Rejections: We have always conducted an initial review of proposals before sending them out for review. We decline those that fall outside our purview or do



not meet quality standards. Going forward, this initial screen will be more rigorous and may result in our declining strong proposals that are not competitive with respect to our funding priorities. Please note that desk-rejected proposals are not eligible for resubmission; only proposals that have gone through full committee review will be eligible for a single resubmission. Because of the number of proposals at this stage, we are not able to provide detailed reviews for proposals that are not sent out for full review.

Finally, it is worth noting that our commitment to supporting students and early career researchers has not changed. We also remain committed to funding researchers from institutions around the world.

Here are a few tips:

Resubmissions: Take the necessary time to resubmit. Read your reviews carefully, consult your advisors and collaborators, and if possible, seek informal peer review before resubmitting. We often see resubmitted proposals turned around in a matter of days. This is understandable considering the timelines many of you face, but we now strongly advise against this. What was often accomplished within two resubmissions must occur within one. Also, a resubmission does not necessarily need to be submitted within the next cycle. You may skip cycles if that is helpful.

Our Mission: In more than one place, we ask how your proposed project relates to our mission “to increase scientific research, education, and public understanding of human origins, evolution, behavior, and survival.” An unconvincing answer could result in a desk rejection. If the connection seems obvious, spell it out anyway. Reframing a project for our purposes is legitimate, but the connection needs to be genuine. Responses to this question are consistently one of the most common weaknesses that our committee identifies.

Budget and Budget Justification: Our committee is paying close attention to budgets. Where possible, consider whether the project can begin on less, whether all proposed travel is essential or perhaps a collections-based approach might serve the same goals. This is not a signal that we will not fund fieldwork or ambitious projects. But when proposals are otherwise similarly ranked, a carefully prepared budget and justification carry real weight in deliberations.



Also, provide a clear and transparent funding profile of your proposal, including any other funding sources secured or anticipated, to help the committee understand the need and where our funds may be necessary in order for the project to commence. We ask you to provide this information in more than one place. Please take the time and use the space to do so.

In closing, we hope this information is helpful. We are aware that the funding landscape for human origins research has changed significantly. We are still here, and we remain committed to the science and the community that drives it.

Sincerely,

H. Gregory
Nyssa Cheruvattam

P.S. During the application process, you may notice a new crowdfunding opt-in.

The crowdfunding feature is not yet finalized. Our development department is currently working out the details, as it was recommended by our board for us to explore.

How it will work: if your proposal is ranked just below the funding line and would not otherwise be funded due to limited resources, you may be contacted with more information about a potential crowdfunding opportunity. At that point, you would have the opportunity to participate or decline. No commitment is made by opting in now. Please note that if you are selected for a crowdfunding opportunity, the timeline for receiving an award may be longer than the standard notification date. Additionally, opting in and being selected for crowdfunding does not guarantee funding.

If your proposal is selected for funding through the standard process, the opt-in has no effect on your award.