

Grant Prospecting & Writing Guide

BYU Grantwell Project Winter 2026 | Ballard Center
Faculty Fellows

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Key Terms to Know

- **AVP:** Academic Vice President
- **CFAC:** BYU College of Fine Arts and Communications
- **CMS:** BYU College of Computational, Mathematical, and Physical Sciences
- **ENG:** BYU College of Engineering
- **FHSS:** BYU College of Family, Home, and Social Sciences
- **GE:** General Education
- **HBLL:** Harold B. Lee Library
- **HUM:** BYU College of Humanities
- **IDR:** Interdisciplinary Research
- **IRB:** Institutional Review Board
- **MSB:** BYU Marriott School of Business
- **MSE:** BYU McKay School of Education
- **NGO:** Non-governmental Organization
- **NIH:** National Institutes of Health
- **NSF:** National Science Foundation
- **NURS:** BYU College of Nursing
- **RAO:** Research Administration Office
- **RDO:** Research Development Office

Introduction

Purpose of the Guide

The main purpose of this Grant Prospecting and Writing Guide is to serve as a compilation of the basics of grant prospecting and grant writing for Ballard Center Faculty Fellows interested in social impact adjacent research and interdisciplinary work.

While it does not contain all available grants or the answer to every question you may have about the research funding process, it contains important information to consider as you get started.

BYU Research Offices

This resource is complementary to the many other resources offered to BYU faculty in the research process and not intended to replace the essential individualized support provided by BYU's Research Development Office (RDO) and Research Administration Office (RAO).

Contact your college RDO representative for personalized guidance, strategic feedback, and proposal development support. Find out who your point of contact is on their website [here](#).

Content of the Guide

This guide covers three main sections: grant prospecting, grant writing, and information on interdisciplinary grants. These sections answer the following questions:

1. How do I find grants?
2. How do I determine grant fit?
3. What makes a successful grant application?
4. How do I approach interdisciplinary grants?
5. What campus resources are available to me?

Getting Started

As you dive into this guide and begin the process of finding and applying for funds, consider the following questions about the scope and nature of your research. Your answers will prepare you to meet with your Research Development officer as you define your goals and needs and begin your application.



Grant Prospecting: How do I Find Grants?

Finding Relevant Funding Sources

There are three main categories of funding sources available to BYU faculty:

1. Internal university funding
2. External state or federal funding
3. Philanthropic funding

The first step should always be to contact your college-assigned representative at the Research Development Office at BYU. If you want to get started on grant prospecting on your own, first check with your college, then the university funds to see if funding your research internally is possible. This is the quickest and easiest way to secure funds.

BYU Internal Funds

Internal funding comes either directly from your college or from the university's general fund if funding opportunities at your college are not available. To access and apply for these funds, talk with your college representative about the following options and others that may be available to you. Each college has specific protocols and procedures for applying.

1. [College Specific internal funding](#)
 - CFAC, CMS, ENG, FHSS, HUM, Life Sciences, McKay School, MSE, MSB, NURS, etc.
2. [AVPR Larry Howell Office Grants](#)
 - Scholarly and Creative Work Grants encourage and support research and creative works at BYU, with special emphasis given to specific areas.
 - There is a total of 7 different grant types given by this office, each based on different areas of research.
3. [Interdisciplinary Research Awards](#)
 - Two Tracks:
 - Tenure-track faculty from three departments and one college
 - Tenure-track faculty from three departments and two colleges
 - Interdisciplinary Research (IDR) Origination Awards: \$40k - \$120k
 - Interdisciplinary Research (IDR) Special Topic Awards: \$20k - \$60k (different topics each year; some relevant to REL)
4. [Office of the International Vice President](#)
 - Has funds to aid faculty in research projects in Jordan, China, Ukraine, Mongolia, Vietnam.
 - Must provide a \$5,000 budget, an abstract, project description, literature review, methods and research questions, expected outcomes and anticipated impacts.
5. [Kennedy Center Grants](#)
 - Fund travel, conferences, Canadian research
 - Kennedy Center Faculty Fellow specific research grants
6. [Charles Redd Center for Western Studies](#)
 - Promotes study of the Intermountain West by sponsoring research, publication, teaching, and public programs in a variety of academic disciplines including history, geography, sociology, anthropology,

politics, economics, religious studies, literature, art, folklore, range science, forestry, popular cultures, and others.

- 18 awards given

7. [Gerontology Program Funds](#)

- Available to faculty who are conducting research or creative projects related to aspects of aging

State & Federal Government Grants

These are some of the most popular sources of government funding. Typically, federal or state funding takes around 1-2 years to be acquired. Most federal grant applications require SAM.gov and Grants.gov registration, which can take several weeks, so be sure to start the process early.

1. [National Science Foundation](#)

- NSF funds fundamental research in all non-medical fields of science, engineering, and mathematics, with an annual budget of about \$9 billion supporting roughly 12,000 new awards.
- Key grant types include standard research grants (submitted to one of seven disciplinary directorates), CAREER awards (~\$500K over five years for early-career tenure-track faculty), the Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP), and SBIR/STTR for small businesses.
- Proposals are submitted through Research.gov and governed by the Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG), which strictly enforces page limits and formatting. Deadlines vary by program as some are rolling and others are firm.

2. [National Institute of Health](#)

- NIH is the largest public funder of biomedical research in the world, made up of 27 institutes and centers.
- Common grant mechanisms include R01 (research projects), R21 (exploratory), K-series (career development), and F-series (fellowships). Domestic or foreign, public or private, nonprofit or for-profit organizations are generally eligible, though some have citizenship requirements.
- The review cycle runs for 9 months from submission to award decision. Standard R01 deadlines are February 5, June 5, and October 5.

3. [Department of Energy](#)

- DOE funds research in energy production, fundamental physical sciences, environmental management, and national security.
- The Office of Science supports work in areas like Advanced Scientific Computing, Basic Energy Sciences, Biological and Environmental Research, Fusion Energy Sciences, High Energy Physics, and Nuclear Physics. ARPA-E advances high-potential energy technologies too early for private sector investment.
- Eligibility and deadlines are set per individual Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), so always read the specific announcement carefully. Applications go through Grants.gov.

4. [Department of Education](#)

- ED administers grant programs to promote student achievement, foster educational excellence, and ensure equal access.
- It offers both discretionary grants (awarded competitively) and formula grants (distributed by set formulas) across categories including K-12, higher education, special education, teacher preparation, and workforce development. Eligibility varies significantly by program—some are limited to state agencies, others to universities or nonprofits.
- Deadlines are program-specific; ED publishes an annual forecast of upcoming competitions. Note that some ED programs are currently in flux, so verify program status before investing time in an application.

5. [NIH Fogarty International Center](#)

- FIC funds global health research and research training in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Nearly all of Fogarty's overseas grants involve American researchers, and two-thirds are awarded to U.S. institutions.
- Programs cover infectious diseases, HIV, brain disorders, bioethics, mobile health, and global health fellowships (including the LAUNCH and Fulbright-Fogarty programs).
- Most programs require U.S.-LMIC institutional partnerships. Fogarty does not accept unsolicited applications; all grants respond to specific program announcements posted online. Deadlines vary by program.

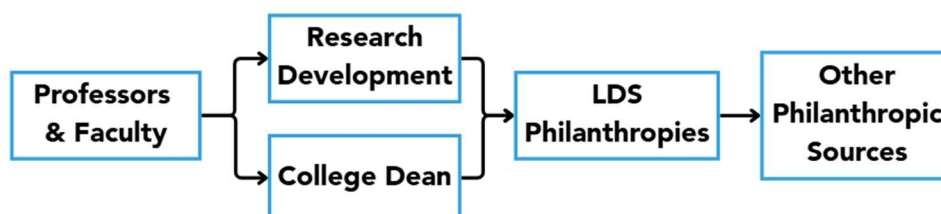
Philanthropic Funding Sources

Church Philanthropies, or PHI, is the authorized fundraising department of the Church and serves as BYU's tax-receipting entity for philanthropic funding. They grant funds exclusively for student support.

Because many funders have "single-contact" policies, all philanthropic gifts and grants involving outside organizations are coordinated through PHI to ensure proper donor management and relationship integrity

If you are interested in the philanthropic source funding route, this is the process you will follow at BYU:

1. Talk to your RD staff member first: They are your primary resource and will coordinate with PHI to check for existing funder relationships before you invest time in a full proposal.
2. Get college-level approval: Bring your idea to your department chair and college dean. PHI does not interact directly with individual faculty members. Rather, they work through college dean priority lists to secure funding for pre-approved projects at the college level.
3. Determine the right pathway: Your RD staff member will help route your request through PHI or other sources depending on the nature of the funding and existing funder relationships.



BYU Pivot Software

Pivot is a comprehensive funding discovery platform that provides access to tens of thousands of active grant opportunities from government agencies, foundations, and corporations worldwide. Users can search for funding, set up automated alerts, and receive personalized recommendations based on their research interests and publication history. It is available through the university system at no cost to affiliated researchers and staff.

Step 1: Create or log into your [PIVOT account](#) here.

Step 2: Watch this [PIVOT Navigation Video Tutorial](#) to learn to use it effectively in your funding search.

Contact your RD representative for additional training and support using PIVOT. Additional funding search tools are available through Candid and GrantStation, also through RDO.

AI Prompts to Help with Prospecting

AI can be a powerful and useful tool. The key to using AI effectively is a specific and thorough prompt. Here are some prompt examples to edit and give your preferred AI platform to help you in your search for grants.

The Research Profile Prompt

- *I am a [\[discipline\]](#) professor at a [\[type of institution\]](#) researching [\[2-3 sentence description of your work\]](#). What funding opportunities, including federal agencies, private foundations, and professional associations, should I be exploring, and what are the best search terms I should use to find grants in this area?*

The Search Strategy Prompt

- *Help me build a grant search strategy for a project focused on [\[topic\]](#). What keywords, funding categories, and sponsor types should I search in a database like Pivot-RP or Grants.gov? Also suggest any federal agencies or foundations I might overlook that fund work in this area.*

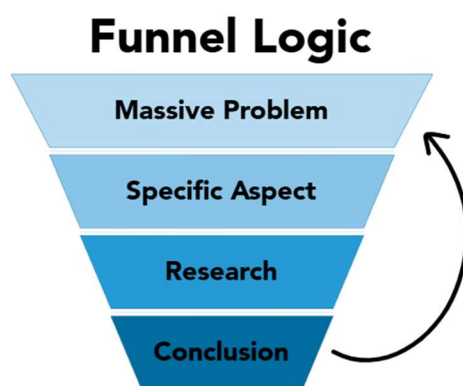
The Opportunity Fit Prompts

- *Here is a description of my research: [\[paste your bio or abstract\]](#). Based on this, suggest 5-10 specific grant programs or funding mechanisms that would be a strong match, and briefly explain why each one fits.*
- *Here is a description of my research goals and current projects: [\[paste your bio, abstract, or project summary\]](#). Here is the grant opportunity I am considering: [\[paste the grant description or link\]](#). Analyze how well my work aligns with this funder's priorities, identify any potential red flags or mismatches, and flag any timeline, eligibility, or budget considerations I should be aware of before applying?*

How do I Determine Grant Fit?

While you should establish a clear idea and vision for your research, it's helpful to stay open and flexible to find fit within grants that may work but are not an obvious initial match. Doing your research on the specific requirements for each grant upfront will reduce the risk of wasting time applying for funding that doesn't match your program while also opening opportunities you may not have considered before. It can be especially helpful to look at past recipients to get an idea of the types of projects they fund.

1. **Verify legal and institutional eligibility.** Confirm that you meet the following baseline prerequisites:
 - a. Organizational type: Is the grant limited to non-profits, higher education institutions, or government agencies?
 - b. Geographic restrictions: Check if the funder is only looking for projects in certain regions or countries.
 - c. Principal Investigator Qualifications: Do you as the PI have the required degrees or career-stage status?
2. **Assess mission and priority alignment.** Funders will choose projects that solve their problems and meet their goals, "good" research is not sufficient.
 - a. Use the funnel logic below to determine if your specific topic fits within the larger scope of the grant. Consider if and how your study fits within that scope and re-expand your conclusion to a larger problem that the grant attempts to solve.



3. **Evaluate logistics and feasibility:**

- a. Does the award amount cover your project's actual costs?
- b. Does the grant require "cost-sharing" or matching funds from your institution?
- a. Is the project period long enough to achieve your goals and is the deadline realistic?

AI tools can also help you evaluate grant fit. Refer to the sample prompts earlier in this guide for suggested approaches. If you still have questions after your initial research, don't hesitate to reach out directly to the grant contact for clarification or additional information.

Grant Writing: What Makes a Successful Grant Application?

Before you Begin

Grant writing can be a long and tedious journey. Give yourself plenty of time to work on and complete it. If you require any assistance throughout the writing, research, or revision process, please reach out to your RDO representative. Their office is here to help you write compelling applications.

Every grant has very specific application requirements. These differences could include formatting, information needed, and topic specific vocabulary. The information on these requirements is found in the Call for Proposal, where funding organizations allow for submissions. It is especially important that you format your grant to match the call for the proposal, otherwise your submission is likely to fail or be ignored.

To write a successful grant application, keep the following in mind:

- Explicitly respond to the proposal's requirements
- Make sure your font, format, and page, and text count fits the criteria
- If including a resume, format it to the proposal's requirements too
- Be aware of the submission deadline and submit your proposal before the date

The Executive Summary

An executive summary, or abstract, should be a summary of your application. It does not to be long, but it should accomplish two things:

1. Grab the reviewer's attention
2. Explain what your project will accomplish, why it is important, and how you will do it

Below is an example of a successful Executive Summary, from the [American Journal Experts](#):

Sample Executive Summary

Background: The cumulative intensity of human stressors has led to degradation of marine ecosystems and the deterioration of biodiversity in the Mediterranean Sea.

Gap in the field, need for this research: Practical conservation measures are required to shield threatened marine ecosystems from intrusive human activity. Conservation must involve social views supported by human values that differ significantly between Mediterranean countries. Social, financial, and political differences increase the challenge of balancing sea conservation with sustainable use. Extensive cross-regional cooperation is urgently needed to secure adequate protection of this region's marine ecosystems and biodiversity.

Research project goals: This research project aims to promote collaborative research to support marine management and conservation design and influence policymaking.

Methodology, team's abilities: We will devise innovative approaches and mechanisms to reduce knowledge gaps and promote marine conservation science.

This project involves collaboration between the Marine Conservation Department of Big Fish University and the G. W. Sharque Center for Applied Research. The project team comprises a multidisciplinary group of internationally renowned experts in marine biodiversity conservation.

These members have collaborated successfully in the past on two funded projects.

Expected project activities and outcomes: This partnership is uniquely positioned to support the development of cross-regional and national policies through four key activities:

1. Develop analytical tools to explore cumulative human impacts on the Mediterranean marine ecosystem
2. Determine key scientific and technical gaps in existing conservation actions.
3. Coordinate marine conservation policy across national borders in the Mediterranean.
4. Identify adequate governance procedures to establish and manage marine protected areas.

Practical applications, research impact: Meeting these research aims will have important practical applications. It will enable integration of marine conservation policy into cross-regional maritime planning agendas for the Mediterranean seas. In this way, it will help counter the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in this region.

The Narrative

The narrative is the meaning of your application and will encompass most of your paper. It consists of the following sections.

Needs Statement

Every grant application begins with a needs statement. Like the executive summary, a needs statement must address three key aspects of your proposal:

1. The What
2. The Why
3. The How

You can think of a needs statement like a hook for other papers. See a few examples of needs statements [here](#). It is meant to interest the reviewer and ultimately help them understand the importance of your project.

1. You explain the “what”, or problem, that you are seeking to solve.

2. You must also explain the “why”, or the impact of this problem and all audiences and possible audiences that are or will be affected.
3. You will address the “how” by explaining how you will solve the problem. Be specific in what you will accomplish and how it will improve the situation.
4. A concluding sentence will reconnect your proposed solution to the overall problem and lead the reader into the rest of your paper.

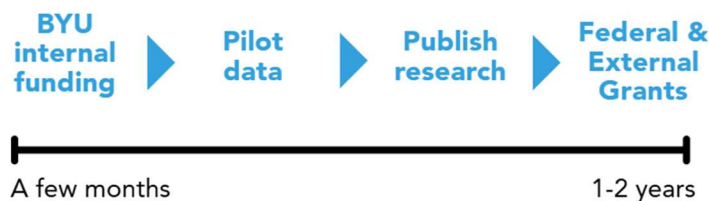
In answering the needs statement, you must also justify your research’s intellectual merit and social impact.

- Intellectual merit is demonstrated by explaining how you, as a researcher, are uniquely qualified to lead the research and how this project will affect research within this field.
- Social impact is earned by explaining the broad impact of the project and how the research will affect more than just the current audience.

Legitimizing your intellectual merit and social impact with real data and evidence can be a challenge if you have no previous research to use. BYU provides internal funding for professors if they need seed funding to build a strong proof of concept. The flowchart below gives an example of how this fits the grant making process.

Building Proof of Concept

Demonstrate that you have evidence of the problem and a credible plan for addressing it



Finally, a needs statements need to explain the length, price, and success of the grant. Funding and price will be covered in depth in the budget section of the guide. Regarding the length and success of a grant, be detailed and so your funders will know what will make your grant a good investment. Give clear numbers and outcomes that will provide them with a vivid idea of your project.

Literature Review

A literature review explains to the reader how your proposal fits into the broader academic sphere. Conducting one early in the grant process is essential to understanding the research that currently exists on your topic. You don't want to write a grant proposal only to discover that the same project was conducted five years earlier.

Staying current with academic research is essential to a competitive grant proposal. The BYU Library (HBLL) is one of your most valuable resources. The HBLL employs specialists dedicated to tracking research across disciplines, who can help provide context for work within the current academic landscape. We recommend contacting a library faculty member early in your proposal process, before you finalize your aims and literature review. Browse the full HBLL specialist staff directory [here](#).

Methodology

A methodology is the most important part of a grant application because it details how you will run your project. It explains who will work on the project, what tools you will need, how you will measure and record your findings, and the cost.

Here are some key characteristics of an effective methodology:

1. Be detailed and specific
2. Explain possible problems and solutions
3. Keep it focused
4. Make your vocabulary easy to understand

Be Detailed and Specific: Being specific and detailed includes using clear numbers and data to explain problems, solutions, and expected outcomes. As with the Needs Statement, specific numbers and outcomes give the grant funders more confidence in the success of your proposal and increase your chance in earning the funding.

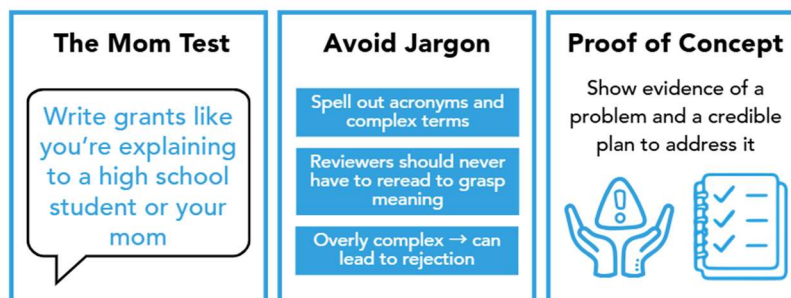
Explain possible Problems and Solutions: No grant research project will run without unforeseen challenges. As a grant writer, you are responsible for addressing some of the possible problems that will emerge in your project. By providing possible solutions to challenges, grant funders will be more willing to provide you with funding because you show you care deeply about the success of your project.

Keep it Focused: It is important that you keep your grant proposal focused on your purpose and how you will accomplish it. According to grant reviewers in The Grant

Writer's Handbook, unnecessary information is frowned upon and frustrates the reviewers.

Make your Vocabulary Easy to Understand: The curse of knowledge is a way of thinking that affects all people. The more you know about a subject, the harder it is to understand what the average person does not know about the subject. In your grant proposal, not every reviewer will be as experienced in your expertise as you. It is your responsibility that your proposal is easy to read and defines any words others may not understand. The best way to ensure your papers use clear vocabulary is to seek feedback from readers outside your area of expertise.

Writing Strategies



Creating a Research Budget

The purpose of the budget is to itemize the projected costs of the research, describe how they were calculated, justify why those costs are reasonable, and how they will contribute to the project's goals. While the methodology section of your proposal describes what you will do, the budget outlines the specific cost of your research.

You are also trying to justify why your proposed cost accurately reflects your project. A strong budget addresses inflation, equipment, and personnel needs, and accounts for potential problems your project may face (as addressed in the methodology). Showing that you have thoroughly considered implementation costs and will be a trustworthy steward of funds will strengthen your proposal and increase your chances of success. For more information, find grant budget examples and download a sample template [here](#).

Legal and Ethical Research Considerations

The BYU Research Administration Office (RAO) is responsible for ensuring research at BYU is ethical for both humans and animals. The RAO has many resources to help you conduct research ethically and responsibly.

- **Kuali:** BYU uses the Kuali Research system to submit grants. Submissions for this system go through the RAO and directly to the grant proposal.
- **IRB:** BYU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) will analyze grant proposals involving live participants for ethical approval. Every grant involving human and animal research must go through the IRB.
- **IACUC:** The Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee is responsible for ensuring animal testing is ethical. It is a federally mandated program and can terminate any projects that treat animals unethically.
- **IBC:** BYU's Institutional Biosafety Committee ensures that the handling of DNA is ethical in both human and animal subjects.
- **LARC:** The BYU Laboratory Animal Resource Center provides animals for research and testing. They are also responsible for tending, housing, and feeding the animals.

If you have further questions about compliance, RAO can help answer any specific questions you may have about your research.

How do I Approach Interdisciplinary Grant Applications?

Proposal Collaboration

Collaborative research is most successful when teams establish clear roles, organizational structure, and communication. An interdisciplinary grant application allows multiple experts to share the workload, demonstrate how diverse perspectives uniquely address a problem, and expand access to project resources. Successful teams employ the following strategies:

- **Share ownership of the project.** Each team member should review and take responsibility for the full proposal, not only their assigned section. Many grant

applications remain incomplete and unwritten because some faculty will try to do too much. Peer accountability improves quality and prevents bottlenecks.

- **Align on a shared vision early.** Make sure everyone is on the same page. Executing incompatible, separate plans can slow the project down and weaken the final product. Regular communication and shared documentation can help keep the project on track with team goals.
- **Lean into the diversity that legitimizes your team.** Grantors are often more comfortable awarding large sums if there are multiple credentialed experts on board. A well-composed interdisciplinary team also makes it easier to demonstrate broad social impact across disciplines.

What Campus Resources Are Available to Me?

The [2026 BYU Resources for Research List](#) contains a list of spaces and materials to help faculty in their research. Always check the RDO website for updates.

Faculty Support Resources

- The [BYU Center for Teaching and Learning](#) can assist you in classroom support. This office is trained on how to use Canvas and Learning Suite, putting together exams, and providing workshops to improve teaching.
- The [BYU Faculty Center](#) provides communication and community among all BYU professors and adjunct faculty. It is a good way to get help and advice from other faculty members.
- Faculty can request a TA to assist in teaching preparation, grading, and communicating with students through department secretaries.

BYU Research Development Events:

- NSF CAREER Grant Overview- February
- Grant Proposal Writing Retreat- April
- GRASP (Grants, Research, and Sponsored Projects) Conference- May
- Grant Writing Boot Camp- August
- Research Networking- August
- Finding Funding Online- September
- AIMS Academy- September
- BYU Research Ecosystem for Faculty- October

- Interdisciplinary Research Origination Award Informational Meeting- November

For current event details, you can find the full RDO event schedule [here](#).

Additional Resources:

- BYU RDO [Funding Search Tools](#)
- BYU RDO [Proposal Writing Help](#)
- U.S. Department of Education [Grant Training and Management Resources](#)