



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Research grants for early career scholars

November 2024

Overview

The Washington Center for Equitable Growth seeks to invest in early career scholars whose research agendas are policy relevant, related to how inequality affects economic growth, and who are interested in engaging with nonacademic audiences.

Social scientists and research can play a powerful role in shaping policy. Grantees will have the opportunity to participate in trainings and receive assistance in translating research findings for nonacademic audiences and identifying policy-relevant research questions. Our goal is to help equip an academic network with the necessary skills and opportunities to shape public debates and policy outcomes, including via temporary government service.

Early Career grants and the grantee resources that accompany them are intended to support early career scholars looking to advance their academic careers, as well as engage with nonacademic audiences. We are particularly interested in scholars who, as their career progresses, are willing and able to engage with media and policymakers on their research.

Research funded in response to this Request for Proposals will have the potential to generate actionable insights. This includes research that illuminates the policies that help or hinder more equitable growth in the United States, as well as research that identifies the need for a policy response. Equitable Growth takes an expansive view of policy, encompassing legislation, investments, regulations, standards, and oversight, among others.

Research proposals should relate to the broad areas of the economy described below. The research can take a macro perspective and focus on aggregate outcomes, or a micro perspective and focus on outcomes for individuals, families, or businesses. We support research inquiry using many different types of evidence, relying on a variety of methodological approaches and cutting across academic disciplines. The development of policy proposals will also be considered but should be grounded in empirical research.

Equitable Growth promotes efforts to increase diversity in the economics profession and across the social sciences. We recognize the importance of diverse perspectives in broadening and deepening research on the topics in this Request for Proposals and the need to elevate diverse voices to shape debates and policy solutions.

Funding priorities

Early Career grants are intended to provide support to scholars. Therefore, the relevance—to Equitable Growth and to policy—of applicants' overall research agenda, as described in the personal statement, is weighted equally to the relevance and strength of the proposal itself.

Inequality and growth is a very large space, so we have had to make some tough decisions about what falls within our funding interests. Research on K–12 education, health, immigration, trade, financial literacy, and the criminal legal system fall outside of Equitable Growth's funding priorities and are unlikely to advance, given our limited funding. Research using non-U.S. data or a non-U.S. context will only be considered if the findings are applicable to domestic policymaking.

The following are the broad areas of research that are of interest to us.

Macroeconomic growth

- How can policy best support the supply side of the economy to generate equitable growth? What government policies are most effective at crowding-in private investment and spurring growth? Research evaluating the macroeconomic effects of productive investments is of particular interest.
- How can economic modeling better inform government policy aimed at adapting to climate change? We are especially interested in models that will inform policies at the community or industry levels, those that take extremes and not just averages into account, and those that can more effectively consider the role of capital and labor frictions, as well as the effect of nonprice policies.

Fiscal policy

- What are the distributional effects of fiscal and regulatory policy, and do they differ across different demographic groups? We're particularly interested in techniques for conducting distributional analysis of regulatory reforms.
- How have changes to the tax code affected economic growth and inequality? We are interested in aggregate outcomes, firm outcomes, and household/individual outcomes. Research on the taxation of pass-through businesses, especially large partnerships with complex ownership structures, is of particular interest.

Labor market

- What policies, investments, or combinations of policies and investments are most effective at supporting workers and/or local labor markets to respond to transitions? We are especially interested in research addressing the energy transition and the use of new and emerging technologies.
- What are the effects on firms of policies intended to improve worker well-being? We're interested in firm outcomes of workplace policies, such as paid leave, of government policies, such as stable schedule mandates, or of outcomes stemming from worker representation through unions or other forms of collective action.
- We are particularly interested in research exploring the links between worker power, high-quality jobs, and economic growth. What forms of worker power or aspects of high-quality jobs lead to better outcomes for firms and for the economy?

Human capital and well-being

- What are the long-term returns to investments in children and families? We are particularly interested in the long-term human capital and growth outcomes stemming from income supports, including, but not limited to, the Child Tax Credit, Earned Income Tax Credit, or direct cash payments.
- How do policies designed to promote individual and family well-being affect labor force participation, consumption, or other outcomes?
- What policies are most effective at making child care accessible, affordable, and high quality, and at boosting wages and job quality for the child care workforce?

Economic mobility

- What policies, especially at scale, may be effective in making upward mobility more attainable and equitable?
- What mechanisms explain the strong correlations we see in who achieves upward mobility? While we are interested in both contemporary and historical approaches to these questions, we are particularly interested in research that will clarify indicators to guide policymaking today.

Market structure

- How effective are policies intended to promote competition, including, but not limited to, the state of antitrust enforcement and regulatory approaches? We are also interested in new foundations for antitrust actions that do not necessarily rely on prices and comparisons of the U.S. antitrust enforcement regime with other models.
- How have technological developments affected competition? How does market concentration affect the development or deployment of new technologies?

Eligibility and budget guidelines

This request for proposals is open to:

- Graduate students currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program at a U.S. college or university who are in the dissertation stage of their graduate career
- Early career scholars at a U.S. college or university whose Ph.D. was issued within the past 8 years. If you have received tenure, you are not eligible for an Early Career grant.

Graduate student grants are typically administered directly to the student. International students at U.S. universities are eligible to apply, though if awarded, the grant would likely need to be administered through the university. International students are advised to communicate their intention to apply with their institution to ensure adherence to institutional protocol if funded.

Graduate students who will complete their Ph.D. prior to September 1, 2025 should apply as an early career scholar, as we are only able to directly award funds to active students. Postdoctoral scholars are not considered active students and should apply as early career researchers. Applicants do not have to be in a tenure-track position to be eligible. If you are not a graduate student, the affiliated university must administer the grant.

Graduate student grants are set at \$15,000 over one year. Early career scholar grants are set at \$30,000 over one to two years, depending on the timeline of the research project.

If you currently have an open Equitable Growth grant with an end-date beyond June 2025, you are not eligible to apply.

We understand that research is collaborative. Applicants may have co-authors who are further along in their career, though those co-authors are not eligible for funding.

We frequently partner with other foundations to support projects jointly or to share proposals that are not a fit for our grant program but which may be of interest to other funders.

Equitable Growth is willing to fund a wide range of activities, including researcher salary and benefits, research assistance, data purchase, and costs associated with conducting experiments or participating in professional conferences. Our grants cannot cover indirect overhead.

How to apply

To apply for an Early Career grant, submit a one- to two-page personal statement, five-page research proposal, and two-page abbreviated curriculum vitae using the online application portal. Applicants are encouraged to use this [template](#) for the proposal.

The deadline to apply is 11:59 p.m. EST on January 21, 2025.

Funding decisions are announced in May 2025, and funding is typically dispersed at the start of the following academic year.

This grant program is intended for individual applicants, as we are interested in investing in your career. This is why we are asking for a personal statement, in addition to a research proposal that you may be working on with co-authors.

Personal statements must include:

- The motivation behind your research agenda
- The relevance of your research agenda to Equitable Growth's funding priorities
- The potential of your research agenda to provide actionable policy insights
- A brief description of your research to date and the future direction of your research
- Your interest and/or experience engaging beyond academia
- How the funding and resources provided by Equitable Growth would help you advance your career and professional goals

Your personal statement should be about you and your interest in engaging with nonacademic audiences. It should not be a paragraph version of your CV and must include the future direction of your research. We want to learn about what you hope to do in the next phase of your career.

Research proposals must include:

- The problem addressed by the research
- Engagement with and expected contribution to the literature
- The methodological approach, including data sources and research design
- The status of data access
- Policy implications
- A timeline for completion

Proposals are read as emblematic of your overall research agenda. Proposals provide reviewers with more detail on expected academic contributions, methods, and potential policy impacts.

If tables, graphs, or other images are helpful in explaining your project, they can be included. While they will not count against the page limit, we encourage you to limit them to one or two.

Citations should be included as endnotes and do not count against the page limit.

The application form requires the submission of a preliminary budget in the form of a brief narrative (approximately 150 words). A budget section is not required in the body of the research proposal. At this stage, we are interested in a general breakdown of how you plan to use the grant award. A detailed project budget will be required for those who are awarded a grant.

Abbreviated curriculum vitae:

We are particularly interested in examples of interest and experience engaging beyond academia. This could include broad-audience writing, previous positions, volunteer experience, or membership on committees, among others.

We encourage the inclusion of works-in-progress to the extent that they illuminate your personal statement.

Evaluation criteria

Application packages are evaluated by Equitable Growth staff and an external review committee. External reviewers consist of subject-matter and methodological experts ranging from early career to established researchers. External reviewers are chosen with a commitment to diversity of race, gender, discipline, area of study, and university affiliation.

Equitable Growth's Steering Committee approves all funding decisions.

All applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Relevance of the overall application package to Equitable Growth's funding priorities
- Scholar's potential to engage beyond academia to inform evidence-backed policy solutions
- Potential of the proposed research and overall research agenda to generate actionable insights and inform policy design and implementation
- Proposed research questions are appropriately framed within the existing literature
- Proposed research has the potential to advance the literature
- Methodological soundness of the research design, including appropriate data

If you have questions regarding your potential grant application, please reach out to us at grants@equitablegrowth.org.

Feedback prior to submission

Equitable Growth cannot provide feedback on a written proposal prior to the application deadline, but staff are available to meet with applicants to discuss questions they may have. Questions may include, but are not limited to, how to apply, budget guidelines, proposal structure, eligibility, and relevance to Equitable Growth's mission and funding priorities.

Please complete this [form](#) if you would like to schedule a time with our staff regarding any questions you may have about submitting a grant application. You will receive an email from grants@equitablegrowth.org to schedule a 15- to 30-minute Zoom call with Equitable Growth staff best positioned to answer your question(s).

Submit your proposal

Submit your proposal by creating an account and completing the submission form using our [online application portal](#).

If you have questions or are having trouble with the application portal, please email grants@equitablegrowth.org or call 202-276-3368.

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Equitable
Growth

The Washington Center for Equitable Growth is a non-profit research and grantmaking organization dedicated to advancing evidence-backed ideas and policies that promote strong, stable, and broad-based economic growth.