



Promoting competition and supporting workers in an era of AI innovation

November 2024

The Washington Center for Equitable Growth seeks to support research that will generate actionable insights for policymakers and inform policies that lead to strong, stable, and broad-based economic growth.

How can we encourage use of artificial intelligence technologies that is more beneficial for U.S. workers and society? We are currently requesting proposals for research that will inform policies that would harness the potential of generative AI and other emerging technologies to boost growth, innovation, and productivity while ensuring robust competition and making sure that productivity gains are broad-based and lead to improved job quality. We are open to research on a range of technologies, such as generative AI and large language models, but also algorithms, electronic surveillance, and various forms of automation. For the sake of concision, we use AI throughout this Request for Proposals to refer to all of the various forms of technologies.

Designing effective policy responses to govern the rapid development and deployment of new technologies poses serious challenges. We support research inquiry using many different types of evidence, relying on a variety of methodological approaches and cutting across academic disciplines, including research on designing new technologies and algorithms. Research can take a macro perspective and focus on aggregate outcomes, or a micro perspective and focus on outcomes for individuals or businesses. Case studies or other qualitative or descriptive designs that can shed light on how and to what extent technologies are currently being deployed and experienced are of interest, as is research using quasi-experimental methods or other rigorous statistical approaches. Historical analysis of policy regimes that led to equitable economic growth are of interest if lessons learned are applicable to the current policy landscape and to the potential disruption new technologies pose.

Preference will be given to scholars who are willing to engage with policymakers on their research. 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.

We recognize there are a range of other important implications for the use of AI that are relevant to inequality and growth, such as copyright, access to credit, and health care applications, just to name a few. However, this Request for Proposals is only interested in research that is directly relevant to workers and market structure. Research that is only tangentially related to the questions below falls outside of Equitable Growth's funding priorities and is unlikely to advance, given our limited funding.

Our funding priorities fall within the following two broad areas of interest: workers, work, and workplace organization, and market structure, supply chains, and competition.

Workers, work, and workplace organization

Policymakers need more information to ensure that AI develops in a way that increases jobs, wages, and worker productivity. How can AI be a complement to workers and center them in the production process?

For all questions, we're interested in differences across industries, occupations, wage levels, business types, and demographic groups.

How do current AI technologies affect workers and wages?

- How does AI affect wages and worker well-being? We are interested in effects on bargaining power, health, safety, productivity, authority, job satisfaction, and other measures of well-being.
- How are employers deploying AI and for what purposes? Are there notable gaps in employers' understanding of the technology that affect how they are using it, and what role do tech vendors play in addressing or not addressing any knowledge gaps?
- How do employees perceive the purpose of AI adoption, and do those views converge or diverge from employer perspectives?
- What institutions, including and beyond unions, are associated with successful mediation of how AI is being adopted and deployed?

How does the use of AI affect how work and workers are organized?

- How are the bundles of tasks that make up occupations changing? Which workers are likely to be most affected, and in what ways? Is the adoption of AI leading to upskilling/deskilling or displacement, and where are there notable differences?
- What work arrangements are associated with AI use, and is its adoption associated with more or less upward job mobility?
- What market dynamics drive trends in work arrangements most associated with AI use?

How can we best prepare the workforce for the potential disruption AI presents?

- Do we have the workforce needed to develop and harness the potential benefits of AI? Where are there critical bottlenecks?
- What can we learn from past technological developments that helps mitigate the disruption or harness the potential of AI for workers across the distribution?

Market structure, supply chains, and competition

Policymakers need more information to effectively govern the development and application of AI. How can firms be incentivized to develop and use AI tools as a complement to workers, augmenting work and productivity while reducing inequality?

For all questions, we're interested in the implications for regulatory and/ or enforcement approaches, as well as alternative incentive structures and nondisciplinary tools.

How is the AI market structured?

- How does current market structure affect the direction of technology?
- What trends or patterns are common, particularly around horizontal or vertical integration or disintegration? What market dynamics are driving those trends?
- What can current trends tell us about how the market is likely to develop?
- What can the flow of capital and investments and other financial relationships between firms tell us about the supply chain and how the market is developing?
- What lessons can we draw from regulatory or oversight regimes in the technology sector or other industries that can inform regulatory approaches to the AI market?

How (un)competitive are markets up and down the tech stack?

- What is the incidence of market power in the tech stack, and what is driving it? What are the implications for workers, innovation, and competition?
- What barriers to entry or network effects exist that could stifle innovation or competition in the market?
- What are the relationships between different markets in the tech stack, and what are the implications for market power and structure across various points in the supply chain?

Advisory committee

- **Daron Acemoglu**, Equitable Growth Steering Committee member; Institute Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- **Sorelle Friedler**, Shibulal Family Professor of Computer Science, Haverford College
- **Jason Furman**, Equitable Growth Steering Committee member; Professor of the Practice of Economic Policy, Harvard University
- **Alex Hertel-Fernandez**, Visiting Fellow at Equitable Growth; Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University
- **Elizabeth Wilkins**, Senior Fellow at the American Economic Liberties Project

Eligibility

This Request for Proposals is open to researchers affiliated with a U.S. college or university and graduate students currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program at a U.S. college or university in the dissertation stage of their career. The affiliated university must administer the grant.

Researchers not affiliated with a college or university, or with non-U.S. colleges and universities, can be part of a research team and can receive support via a grant. However, the Principal Investigator must be affiliated with a U.S. college or university, which must administer the grant.

Researchers who are the Principal Investigator for an open Equitable Growth grant with an end date beyond July 1, 2025 are **not eligible** to apply. Co-Principal Investigators/Collaborators with open grants are **eligible** to apply.

Deadline

The deadline to apply is 11:59 p.m. EST on Monday, February 10, 2025.

Funding decisions will be announced in June 2025 to allow funding to be dispersed at the start of the 2025–26 academic year.

Budget guidelines

Grants awarded in response to this request are expected to fall in the \$25,000 to \$80,000 range. Slightly larger grants may be considered if the budget is well-justified. Grant timelines should be limited to 2 years.

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 research-related travel. Our grants cannot cover indirect overhead.

Summer salary is capped at \$20,000 per year per Principal Investigator, not including fringe.

Fringe/benefit costs are allowable up to a maximum rate of 35 percent.

Tuition and related fees are an allowable cost if student research assistants are included in the budget request.

How to apply

To apply for a grant, use the [online application portal](#) to submit a six-page proposal, a two-page abbreviated curriculum vitae, and a draft budget using Equitable Growth's [budget template](#). Applicants are encouraged to use this [template](#) for the six-page proposal.

Proposals must include:

- Research question or problem the study seeks to address
- Engagement with and expected contribution to the literature
- Methodological approach, including data sources and research design
- Status of data access (note that we are unlikely to fund a project if the process for securing data is not underway)
- Timeline for completion
- Policy implications of potential findings and what types of policy tools the research is most likely to inform
- Any experience of the research team in engaging with nonacademic audiences

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 the use of images to one or two.

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

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.

Evaluation criteria

Grants made in response to this request must be approved by the Advisory Committee. Proposals will be evaluated by Equitable Growth staff and external reviewers. External reviewers consist of subject-matter and methodological experts and are selected with a commitment to diversity of race, gender, discipline, area of study, and university affiliation.

All applications will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Responsiveness to the questions posed in this request
- Anticipated ability of the proposed research to provide policymakers with actionable insights to inform effective policy design and implementation
- Research questions that are appropriately framed within the existing literature
- Potential for proposed research to advance the literature
- Methodological soundness of the research design, including appropriate data
- Researchers' potential to engage beyond academia to inform evidence-backed policy solutions

Feedback prior to submission

Equitable Growth cannot provide feedback on a written proposal prior to the application deadline, but staff are available to respond to questions. Email grants@equitablegrowth.org with questions.

You can also complete this [form](#) if you would like to schedule a time with a staff member to discuss your project or application. You will receive an email from grants@equitablegrowth.org to schedule a brief Zoom call.

Submit your application

Submit your application 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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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.