



THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

NONPROFIT SECTOR RESEARCH FUND

# PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Grants for Doctoral Dissertation Research

2003

Proposals Must Be Postmarked  
By October 1, 2003

# NONPROFIT SECTOR RESEARCH FUND PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

The Nonprofit Sector Research Fund, a program of the Aspen Institute, was established in 1991 to expand understanding of nonprofit activities through the support of high-quality research undertaken by scholars and practitioners.

As part of its research grantmaking program, the Fund supports doctoral dissertation research focused on philanthropy and the nonprofit sector, including hospitals, universities, human service agencies, arts organizations, advocacy groups, and other tax-exempt entities. Studies may focus on philanthropic and nonprofit activities in the U.S. or other countries.

The Fund's interests include research projects that examine the overarching characteristics and impact of nonprofit organizations and philanthropy. This includes the basic legal framework for nonprofit organizations and foundations; the distinct contributions—if any—that nonprofits, philanthropy, and philanthropic institutions make to society; and, a comparison of the functions that the philanthropic, nonprofit, governmental, and business sectors perform separately and collaboratively.

The Fund also has an ongoing concern for research examining nonprofits and the people they serve in the context of current and emerging public policy concerns, such as shifts in government spending priorities; devolution of federal program authority to the states; welfare reform; privatization of governmental activities; challenges to nonprofit tax exemption; increasing use of managed care arrangements in health and other fields; expanding government support of religiously-oriented service providers; efforts to limit nonprofits' advocacy activities; new accounting standards for nonprofits; and proposals to treat different types of nonprofits (e.g., poor-serving vs. non-poor-serving organizations) differently under the law.

The Fund's interests also include research that contributes to efficient, effective, and accountable nonprofit organizations, practices, and management. This includes the examination of such issues as board practices; leadership development; employee compensation and training; financial resources; organizational accountability; ethics; performance standards for nonprofits; program evaluation; the role of consulting and technical assistance organizations; and public access to information about nonprofits.

## DISSEMINATION AND OTHER FUNDING EMPHASES

Priority will be given to projects that are likely to yield papers that are published in top-ranking disciplinary and interdisciplinary journals. Researchers should also plan to disseminate results to practitioner and policy audiences as appropriate.

The Fund seeks to broaden the base of nonprofit researchers. Thus, the Fund encourages applications from researchers who are underrepresented in the current nonprofit research community. Proposals that address the diversity of organizations and populations involved in the sector are also invited. The Fund will consider proposals for empirical research as well as plans for studies that aim at developing or refining theory related to nonprofits.

The Fund supports projects for which research findings have the potential to be generalizable to a broad range of nonprofit organizations. Case studies of single or multiple agencies will be supported only if research results are likely to apply to organizations beyond those that are directly studied.

## OTHER NONPROFIT SECTOR RESEARCH FUND INITIATIVES

Please visit the Fund's web site at [www.nonprofitresearch.org](http://www.nonprofitresearch.org) for information about other Fund initiatives.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURES

### ***Eligibility***

At the time of a grant award in Spring 2004, an applicant must have a university-approved doctoral prospectus or dissertation topic.

### ***Overhead Policy***

General overhead will not be paid for university-based projects. The Fund will also not cover purchase of equipment.

### ***Proposals***

Research proposals must be double-spaced, in 12-point type, not exceed 10 pages, and must include: (1) a one-page summary of the proposal with a brief description of the project, the main research questions to be addressed, and the types of organizations and populations to be studied; (2) an explicit statement of the questions to be examined; (3) a description and justification of the methodology, data collection and data analysis; (4) a clear statement of the project's importance; (5) a timeline for completing the project; (6) an analysis of relevant literature, with citations, indicating how the project will build on and go beyond existing work in the field; (7) a detailed dissemination plan that indicates how research findings will be communicated to academic and other audiences. Where appropriate, this should include outreach to top-ranking disciplinary and interdisciplinary journals within an applicant's field; and (8) a detailed budget, with a separate subtotal reflecting dissemination expenses, and a narrative description of the budget.

Proposal attachments must include: (1) a self-addressed stamped postcard to acknowledge receipt of proposal; (2) a fully completed Application Form; (3) curriculum vitae of the researcher; (4) a description of the researcher's institution (if other than a typical university department); (5) one brief sample of analytic writing, not to exceed five pages; and (6) names, street and email addresses, and telephone numbers of three persons who can serve as references.

Doctoral applicants must also include a letter from an appropriate university official (e.g., department chair, dean, director of graduate studies, advisor, etc.) verifying doctoral status and indicating that a dissertation topic has already been approved or that approval is expected by no later than February 2004.

Please submit 4 full copies of the proposal and all attachments, except the postcard.

## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about the application requirements, the Fund maintains a frequently asked questions (FAQ) list on the Web, at [www.nonprofitresearch.org](http://www.nonprofitresearch.org). From that page, follow the application guidelines link to the FAQ page, which provides detailed answers to common questions about our requirements and processes.

## **GRANTS PROCESS**

All proposals are screened by staff and reviewed by external reviewers, including university-based researchers, nonprofit practitioners, and policy experts. The governing Council of the Nonprofit Sector Research Fund makes final grant decisions.

## **GRANTS AND REPORTING**

NSRF dissertation research grants will not exceed \$20,000.

Applicants who receive a grant will be required to submit a publishable report upon the study's completion. The report must include an executive summary of key findings, and, when appropriate, a discussion of practical lessons learned. A separate dissemination report will be submitted one year after the research is completed, listing articles, presentations, workshops, papers, etc. that resulted from the grant.

## **DATES**

Proposals must be postmarked by October 1, 2003 for awards in early 2004.

## **NOTIFICATION**

Applicants will be notified no later than the end of March 2004.

# APPLICATION FORM:

## Doctoral Grants

Please type in the information requested on this application form. If there are more than two authors, please attach a separate sheet.

**Other Required Materials**

**Please attach:**

1. The proposal (required elements described in the Guidelines);
2. A self-addressed stamped postcard to acknowledge receipt of proposal;
3. Curriculum vitae of the principal researcher(s);
4. A description of the researcher's institution (if other than university);
5. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of three references.

*Please submit 4 full copies of the proposal and all supporting materials.*

**Send completed application to:**

Nonprofit Sector Research Fund  
The Aspen Institute  
One Dupont Circle, NW  
Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20036  
ATTN: Jill Blackford

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### AUTHOR INFORMATION

**Author 1**

Name .....  
Title .....  
Affiliation .....  
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.....  
City/State/Zip .....  
Telephone .....  
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E-mail address .....  
Discipline .....  
Ethnicity ..... Gender .....

**Author 2**

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Discipline .....  
Ethnicity ..... Gender .....

### PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title .....  
Amount Requested \$ .....  
Project Start and End Dates .....  
Other Funding Received ..... Amount \$ .....  
Other Funding Received ..... Amount \$ .....  
Other Funding Applied For ..... Amount \$ .....  
Other Funding Applied For ..... Amount \$ .....

## ONE PARAGRAPH SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

*In 100 words or less, describe the project and its relevance, for use in press releases, etc.*

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### NONPROFIT SECTOR RESEARCH FUND

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To submit proposals or to receive additional information, please contact:

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