



Science of Trustworthy AI Program

Frequently Asked Questions

General Information & Logistics

Will the recording from the webinars be shared?

Recordings of completed webinars will be linked on our [website](#).

Eligibility

Which institutions are eligible to apply for funding?

The recipient of funding must hold a 501c3 designation or equivalent. The following entities are eligible to apply:

- Individual Researchers or Project Teams at Universities or Research Institutions (Including International Institutions)
- Non-Profits, Research Organizations or Agencies
- Multi-Institution Collaborations Between Universities and/or Non-Profits
- Non-Profits and/or Universities with Partnerships with Industry or For-Profits

Can commercial entities apply for funding?

No. For-profit entities cannot lead projects. However, for-profit companies may partner with consortiums of researchers, academics, and other parties that hold a 501c3 designation or equivalent.

Do we need to have 501(c)(3) status before applying?

No. However, your organization must have obtained 501c3 status by the final stage of project selection.

Team Composition & Collaboration

Can a PI or team submit more than one proposal?

Yes.

How many PIs are expected for different-sized awards?



We do not have strict guidelines on the size of project teams. However, the team composition should illustrate both the team's capacity to complete the project as well as the necessary expertise in the content areas.

Can junior faculty be competitive?

Yes. Junior faculty members can apply for funding, but must illustrate their ability to make a successful impact on the project goals.

Are cross-institution collaborations encouraged?

Cross-institution collaboration is welcome at all levels of funding, but not required.

Can postdocs be hired at the project's start?

Yes.

Project Scope & Content

Can you give examples of "policy-adjacent work" that is out of scope?

Any research whose outcomes are focused on advocating for specific policy or legislation.

Budget & Funding

Are there limitations on overhead/indirect costs?

Indirect costs must not exceed 10% for the entire project. For example, the indirect costs for an award totaling USD \$1 million should not exceed USD \$100,000.

Can allocated and directly incurred staff salaries be included in the budget?

Yes.

Can funding support PhD students?

Yes.

Can the grant cover the entire project cost?

Yes. We do not require co-funding for these projects.

Will you expect or allow no-cost extensions?



No-cost extensions will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and are not guaranteed. Please propose projects that can be completed within the time frame stated.

If we have multiple institutions on our project, how will you pay them?

We consider the institutional home of the lead PI to be the “host” institution for the award. We prefer all the funding to go directly to the host, as this tends to get the money to the scholars/scientists faster. If absolutely necessary, we can split this up into separate awards for co-host institutions, but we prefer that the lead host institution receives all the funds and then handles sending subawards to the co-hosts. In terms of budget reporting for the subawardees, only total subaward amounts need to be sent to Schmidt Sciences. The expectation is hosts will be actively managing those awardees and review reports to make sure they align with intended usage both in relation to programming but also in relation to Schmidt Sciences guidance.

We have no restrictions against second-tier subawards if you feel comfortable managing that collaboration. The selection and management of second-tier subawardees is the responsibility of the award recipient organization.

If funded, does my institution receive a gift or a grant?

- We have found the gift structure to be advantageous to both parties, as Schmidt Sciences can quickly accommodate changing local conditions and adapt the agreement terms to enhance scientific management, generally with less administrative burden and reporting requirements than a traditional grant.
- Gifts are provided via a simple letter; whereas grants are made pursuant to agreements signed by both parties that include customary contractual provisions (e.g., regarding governing law, intellectual property, and indemnification).
- Gifts tend to decrease administrative burden on a university and the PI, but if it does not, we can discuss a grant structure instead.

If funded, how does my institution receive the funds?

Schmidt Sciences funds large multi-year scientific projects as a series of one-year gifts (or grants) based on reported progress and plans. Future years of funding are anticipated based on scientific progress and performance.

We find this flexible funding model to be advantageous to both parties, as Schmidt Sciences can quickly accommodate changing local conditions and can adapt the letter (or agreement) terms if there is a clear regulatory and university policy requiring it to enhance scientific management, and ultimately success, such as instances where

- Certain universities have a legal requirement for funds to be secured multiple years ahead of formally hiring or advertising for a postdoc (e.g., French law). In cases where



this is truly a requirement, and evidence is provided, we are able to consider front-load funds for multiple years for specific postdoctoral fellowships or other critical scientific roles to address this administrative/legal issue.

- Schmidt Sciences may need to front-load funding to remain in compliance with local laws, in some instances, which we will consider when/if they arise for selected projects.

Annual gifts or grants for subsequent years are not assured. Their provision is directly dependent on how well the project progresses in alignment with the goals that the team has outlined in its proposal and detailed in its annual narrative and financial report.

Note that award periods do not necessarily align with calendar years.

Are there any special requirements for International Direct Awardees?

- In gift letters, there is generally no explicit reference to U.S. governing law aside from ED status.
- Schmidt Sciences will need to evaluate each international direct funding recipients' equivalence to a U.S. 501(c)(3) public charity. If not already in place, Schmidt Sciences will proceed with equivalency determination via NGOsOURCE (an independent U.S.-based service that assists in the equivalency process) for each institution directly receiving funds, and request specific organization information from university admin to facilitate this process.
- Schmidt Sciences will cover the costs associated with processing an ED and any future ED renewals during the project period.
- This process for a **new** ED can take up to 90 days. It is imperative that the institution be responsive to NGOsOURCE's information requests so as not to delay the start of the project.
- Schmidt Sciences relies on NGOsOURCE to conduct and certify equivalency determinations (EDs). If you've previously obtained an ED through another organization, please note that we currently work exclusively with NGOsOURCE for our due diligence process.

Other Financial-Related Questions

My institution requires that multi-year postdocs be fully funded up front. If one of these large multi-year awards is composed of contingent 1-year gifts (or grants), one could only offer one-year contracts to PhDs / postdocs, right?

We understand that certain universities have a requirement for funds to be secured multiple years ahead of formally hiring or advertising for a postdoc (e.g., French law). In cases where this is a requirement, we are able to front-load funds for multiple years for specific postdoctoral fellowships or other critical scientific roles.



We expect to collaborate with international institutions for whom single-year awards could present a barrier to hiring over multi-year periods. Do you have a standard response that we could share with them regarding terms as we develop our subcontracts with international partners?

Thank you for raising potential concerns regarding the funding structure. We understand there may be some regulatory reasons why Schmidt Sciences may need to front-load funding to remain in compliance with local laws, in some instances, which we will consider when/if they arise for selected projects. We have successfully implemented this flexible funding model in most cases and found it to be advantageous to both parties, as Schmidt Sciences can quickly accommodate changing local conditions and adapt the agreement terms to enhance scientific management and, ultimately, success.

Are there any restrictions on what we can use the funding for that we should be aware of?

Restrictions include those required by applicable law and regulations, including activities in sanctioned nations. Beyond that, one of the intentions of this program is to provide research awards with relatively flexible funds over an extended period (~3 years). These awards are intended to help international research partners and break down artificial walls to support the best scientific research and international collaborations to advance the scientific mission and scope of the program.

Previously awarded projects use these flexible funds to support grad students, postdocs, other scientists, support to facilitate conferences, meetings and exchanges between personnel at the collaborating institutions, software engineering support and cloud computational infrastructure (cloud compute/GPU, cloud storage), and other standard research expenses.

Can we include large scientific equipment in the budget for program funding? If yes, does that equipment then belong to the program? Is there a requirement that we calculate equipment depreciation?

Yes, you may include large scientific equipment in your budget for funding. If funded, that equipment will **not** belong to Schmidt Sciences. We do not require a calculation of equipment depreciation but you may include it if you would like.

The gift or grant will generally go to the lead institution(s) for the project, so the institution may ultimately be the owner of the equipment depending on their approach.

What are our limitations around our award dollars to international recipients being used for US travel/conferences?

- Grants to overseas institutions are not generally subject to tax withholding in the US, provided the recipient does not use the funds for activities in the U.S.



- In most cases, it will be most cost-effective for non-US recipients to fund US travel from sources other than Schmidt Sciences awards.
- If activities in the US (e.g., conference attendance) is essential for a project, and other resources are not available, a non-US awardee should contact us to discuss alternative options.
- For example, US tax withholding may not be required for awards to non-US awardees that permit use in the United States if the awardee provides Schmidt Sciences with a Form W-8EXP or W-8BEN-E US tax document evidencing that US tax withholding is not required.
- These considerations apply equally to any award to a non-US awardee, whether a grant or a gift.

Proposal Format & Submission

Can AI assist in drafting proposals?

Yes. But PI's are ultimately responsible for ensuring the accuracy of their proposal.

Are letters of support required?

No. Letters of support will not be reviewed or accepted.