



Political Science Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant FAQs

For comprehensive information about the program, please visit the [DDRIG page](#) on the American Political Science Association website or contact dissertations@apsanet.org.

Eligibility

Q: Which research areas are eligible for Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants?

A: APSA expects the Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants to represent the wide range of methods and approaches to empirical political science, including, but not limited to, quantitative and experimental approaches, archival and historical research, interpretive and ethnographical approaches, and qualitative interview and field research. APSA also welcomes uncommon and emerging research approaches, such as the use of large language models and other artificial intelligence tools. Substantive areas of funded, research will include, but will not be limited to: American government and politics; comparative government and politics; Indigenous politics; international relations; race, ethnicity, and politics; urban and local politics; women and politics research; political violence; conflict processes; public administration; public policy; political behavior; political economy; political institutions; and gender, sexuality and politics.

APSA Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants are intended to support basic, empirically oriented research. This grant cannot support applied research. Basic research is experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any particular application or use in view. Although basic research could result in a solution to a practical problem, that is not its primary aim. Applied research is designed to answer specific questions aimed at solving practical problems. Applied research is likely to directly make improvements on existing products, technologies, and processes.

Q: Who is eligible to receive the Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant?

A: The APSA Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants are available to all US-based graduate students who are at the point of initiating or are already conducting empirical dissertation research. Applicants must meet the following qualifications to be eligible for the grant:

- Applicants must be enrolled and in good academic standing at a doctoral degree granting university at the time of application.
- Applicants must be at a university accredited in and having a campus located in the United States.
- Applicants must have completed all preliminary degree requirements at the time of their application, including having successfully completed comprehensive exams and a dissertation prospectus defense on or before August 15 of the grant cycle year.

APSA is committed to broadening participation by supporting the most promising dissertation research projects from a wide range of backgrounds, institutions, geographic areas, research interests, and methodologies.

Q: I am a citizen of a foreign country. Am I eligible for the Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grants?

A: Yes. If you are at a university accredited in and having a campus physically located in the United States, you are eligible for the grant.

Q: If I have applied for the Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant previously, can I re-apply?

A: Yes. You are eligible to re-apply so long as you still meet all the application requirements. Grantees are not eligible to receive a second grant.

Q: Can the Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant be held concurrently with other awards?

A: Yes, the grant can be held concurrently with other awards and funding sources, though you are required to inform APSA of all additional sources of funding.

Application

Q: What materials are required for the application?

A: All proposals for APSA dissertation improvement grants are required to include:

- Proposal summary
- Project description and research plan
- Other sources of financial support
- Professional development plan
- Budget and budget justification
- Data management plan
- Adviser support form
- Institutional support form
- Research ethics requirement

For a full description of the application materials, please visit

<https://www.apsanet.org/PROGRAMS/Doctoral-Dissertation-Research-Improvement-Grants/Application-Materials-and-Format>

Q: What costs are considered direct research costs?

A: Funds are to be used exclusively for direct costs for research activities. Costs that are covered by the APSA DDRIG include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Travel expenses (e.g. travel to fieldwork or archives, including transportation, lodging, and reasonable travel associated expenses)
- Data collection (e.g. survey costs, payments to research subjects, archival photocopies)
- Research assistance (e.g. translation, transcription, and survey staff)
- Equipment, materials, and supplies (e.g. interview recording equipment, software & necessary office supplies)
- Training (e.g. methods or fieldwork training, training on software or other resources)

Q: What costs are *not* considered direct research costs?

A: Funds are to be used exclusively for direct costs for research activities. Costs that are not covered by the APSA Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A stipend or salary for the grantee or adviser (note that salaries or payments for work by other individuals whose assistance may be essential to conduct the project may be permitted when there is sound justification for such expenses)

- Indirect costs, also known as facilities and administrative costs, for colleges and universities
- Costs for conference travel (note that grantees will receive \$1,000 in direct conference travel reimbursement – see the Grantees section)
- Costs for tuition, textbooks, or other items not directly related to the conduct of dissertation research
- Publication costs for articles based on the dissertation, except when the university's degree requirements permit the substitution of published research results for a free-standing dissertation
- Costs for travel of the adviser to the field site
- Costs of living (e.g. rent, utilities, etc. at your primary residence)

Q: What criteria are used to select grantees?

A: Grantees are recommended for funding by a panel of experts based on the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impact of the proposed dissertation improvement activities. Intellectual Merit will be evaluated based on the project's potential to advance knowledge and understanding within political science or across fields (including the field of political science), while Broader Impact will be evaluated based on the project's potential to benefit society more broadly. Both criteria will be considered in the context of their originality and potentially transformative qualities, the organization and pragmatism of the research plan, and value of substantive and methodological variety in research. APSA staff review the expert panel's recommendations and total available funding to make the final grantee selection. More information on the NSF framework for understanding Broader Impact and Intellectual Merit is available [here](#).

Q: Does the APSA DDRIG application require a letter of recommendation?

A: No. The APSA DDRIG application does not require a letter of recommendation. The application does require that the applicant's adviser complete and submit the Adviser Support Form. This is done through the application submission system. The applicant will be asked to enter their adviser's name and email address. The adviser will then receive an email prompting them to upload the completed form.

Q: What should I do if I do not have all of the required form signatures before the application deadline?

A: Applicants should email dissertations@apsanet.org, copy the office(s) and/or individual(s) responsible for completing the form, and provide a timeline for when the completed form(s) will be submitted. These requests must be submitted before the application deadline and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Applicants that have requested and received an approval for a form signature extension should upload placeholder materials missing the required signature to be able to submit the application.

Q: My project has multiple grant activities that involve human subjects, do I need to provide proof of IRB approval/exemption for all of them?

A: Yes. Proof of exemption/approval OR proof that you have applied for approval/exemption must be provided for each grant-funded research activity that involves human subjects. If you are selected for funding, you will need to provide proof of approval prior to receiving the grant funds.

Timing

Q: When is the application deadline?

A: The application deadline is June 1, 2026, at 11:59PM Eastern Time.

Q: When will I hear back about my application?

A: For 2025 applicants, award notifications and announcements were made on August 21, 2025. For 2026 applicants, we aim to make award notifications and announcements in the late summer 2026.

Q: When will the funds be disbursed?

A: For 2026 applicants, we aim to disburse to grantees by October 2026, subject to the receipt of the appropriate paperwork and materials. This timeline may be delayed if APSA does not receive the funds for the administration of this grant from the National Science Foundation.

Q: Will I be able to use the funds for research activities completed before the grant funds are disbursed?

A: For 2026 applicants, projects that undertake research activities prior to grant disbursement are likely unable to use the grant funds for research activities completed more than 60 or 90 days before the grant funds are disbursed. Contact your university's grant office to determine whether you are able to use grant funds on research activities completed before grant funds are disbursed.

Grantees

Q: How many grants are awarded and how much money is awarded per grant?

A: APSA intends to award approximately 20 to 25 grants, each between \$10,000 to \$20,000 depending on the needs and scope of the proposed research project. In 2025, APSA awarded 22 grants. The issuance of this call for applications for research grants does not constitute a guarantee that APSA will make these grant awards.

Q: What are my responsibilities as a grantee?

A: Individuals awarded grants will have several requirements before and throughout the grant period.

- Grantees will be required to submit necessary financial paperwork before receiving grant funds.
- Grantees will be required to submit a one-page public facing summary describing their work at the beginning of the grant.
- Grantees will be required to attend professional development programming provided by APSA.
- Grantees will be required to document all spending.
- Grantees will be required to submit the required reports (a final report in the fall, at the conclusion of the grant and, for two-year grants, an interim report in the fall at the conclusion of the first year).

Q: Does the full dissertation need to be completed within the grant period?

A: No. The full dissertation does not need to be completed in the grant period. However, the activities for which grant funds are used should be limited to the time when the grant is active.

Q: Can the grant period be extended?

A: APSA recognizes that there may be unexpected delays or changes in research plans, and grantees may on occasion find it difficult to maintain the planned expenditure timeline. In this case, grantees may apply for a no-cost extension to justify using the grant funds over the course of an additional year. Applications for no-cost extensions must be submitted at the conclusion of the grant year, in lieu of the final report. APSA will review and approve applications for no-cost extensions. An application for a no-cost extension will require all the elements of an interim report along with a one-page explanation for why the extension is necessary. The grant period cannot be extended after the grantee defends their dissertation. APSA may be unable to offer no-cost extensions for the 2026 cycle if APSA receives a notice of discontinuation of funds and/or does not receive the funds for the administration of this grant from the National Science Foundation.

Q: Can I apply for a two-year grant period?

A: While the typical grant period is one year, applicants may apply for a two-year grant period. Applications must clearly explain why a two-year period is necessary for the project, particularly in the research plan, budget, and budget justification. APSA may be unable to offer two-year grant periods for the 2026 cycle if APSA receives a notice of discontinuation of funds and/or does not receive the funds for the administration of this grant from the National Science Foundation.

Q: How are the grant funds disbursed?

A: Grant funds are disbursed to the grantee's university. The university is responsible for receiving the grant funds and making them available to the grantee. The grantee will need to abide by their university's rules or procedures governing the use of grant funds. The application requires that each applicant's university agrees to this arrangement prior to submission of the application by signing the [Institutional Support Form](#).

Q: Is there any support for conference travel?

A: Yes. In addition to the budget request, APSA intends to offer grantees with \$1,000 in travel grant funds to present their DDRIG-funded research at the APSA annual meeting or at other conferences during their grant year. These funds are provided directly to the grantee on a reimbursement basis after the conference following [APSA's travel grant policy](#). APSA may be unable to offer travel grants for the 2026 cycle if APSA receives a notice of discontinuation of funds and/or does not receive the funds for the administration of this grant from the National Science Foundation.

Q: Who can I contact with further questions?

A: For more information and questions, please explore the APSA website or contact dissertations@apsanet.org.

Application Resources

Q: How do I address Intellectual Merit and Broader Impact in my application?

A: The National Science Foundation defines Intellectual Merit as the potential to advance knowledge within your field or across fields and Broader Impact as the potential for your project to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes. Review these [Intellectual Merit Framework](#) and [Broader Impact Framework](#) tools to help you think through how you can address these criteria based on your specific research topic and professional development goals.

Q: How do I estimate travel and cost of living expenses for fieldwork?

The US government provides several resources to estimate both domestic and international travel and cost of living expenses. These include the [State Department COL Estimator](#), the [GSA Per Diem Cost Estimator](#), and the [Defense Travel Management Office Cost Estimator](#). Asking colleagues that have done similar fieldwork for their budgets is often useful as well.

A: How do I create a data management plan?

Quantitative and qualitative projects have different considerations for making an effective data management plan. Review the [NSF SBE Guidance on Data Management](#) for a general overview of how to create a data management plan. For more specific guidance, the [ICPSR Quantitative Data Management Checklist](#) and the [IQMR Qualitative Data Management Checklist](#) offer concrete steps to creating a data management plan for political science projects.