

Switzer Foundation Leadership Grant Program Frequently Asked Questions

Following is a list of our most frequently asked questions about the Switzer Foundation Leadership Grant Program. Please also see Tips for Fellows and Organizations following these questions. Please contact Erin Lloyd, Program Director (erin@switzernetwork.org), with any questions.

HOW DO WE START TO PURSUE A LEADERSHIP GRANT?

Organizations should start early and get a Switzer Fellow's commitment first. It is critical that you connect with a Switzer Fellow before you begin the process. A specific Switzer Fellow must be named, and you must work together to develop your idea and submit a proposal. **Fellows** seeking a particular organization to work with should cultivate the relationship in advance of a concept letter deadline. Switzer Foundation staff is available to clarify guidelines.

HOW DOES AN INTERESTED ORGANIZATION FIND A SWITZER FELLOW?

- First and foremost, contact Switzer Foundation staff and indicate your interest in finding a Fellow. Often, we know of Fellows who may be looking and will suggest specific Fellows for you to contact.
- After initial contact with Switzer Foundation staff, organizations can post a description of their interest on our [Leadership Exchange](#). Organizations should send us a written description of your project idea and the description of your ideal candidate (several paragraphs), and we will post it on our Leadership Exchange and notify Fellows.
- Organizations should look through our [Directory of Fellows](#). Using keywords, you can search for Fellows in your field and can then contact them directly. Generally, Fellows who are just graduating from their academic programs are the most flexible.

WHAT ARE THE KEY CRITERIA FOR LEADERSHIP GRANT PROGRAM PROJECTS?

- **Your project is relevant:** You have related the goals and objectives of your project to a current and critical environmental issue. The project has the potential to solve a problem or improve a condition.
- **The project advances the leadership capacity and professional career of the Switzer Fellow.** The Fellow's role is substantive in carrying out the project. The project will fully utilize the expertise and professional interests of the Fellow in a way that advances their leadership on the issue.
- **The project and the Switzer Fellow will help build the capacity of the organization.** The Fellow has special skills needed to fulfill the project. The skills and expertise of the Fellow will leverage the organization to make a significant contribution on the environmental issue described in the proposal.

CAN PROJECTS IN AN ACADEMIC-BASED SETTING, WHICH MAY HAVE BOTH RESEARCH AND PRACTICAL (APPLIED) GOALS, COMPETE SUCCESSFULLY FOR A LEADERSHIP GRANT?

Yes, but there are additional expectations of projects housed in an academic setting. For more information, contact Switzer Foundation staff to discuss your idea and receive additional guidance. Please note that academic-based projects that are intended to create a new institution, center of study, or educational program will not be eligible for Leadership Grant funding. Only those projects in which Fellows will make a significant contribution to applied research, policy or practice BEYOND the university will be considered.

CAN A SWITZER FELLOW BE HIRED AS A CONTRACTOR RATHER THAN AS FULL TIME STAFF OF THE ORGANIZATION?

Yes. Many Leadership Grant projects are for a specified term with the Fellow hired as contract staff. If this is the case, the applicant will need to specify the exact working arrangement between the parties (full time or part time, length of term, payment rate and pay periods, whether the Fellow will work in the organization's office or at home, use of supplies and computers, etc.). In fact, hiring a more experienced Switzer Fellow for a contract position can be a very effective strategy for certain projects. However, staffing arrangements will be reviewed by Foundation staff to make sure they are tailored appropriately to the Fellow's leadership development needs.

HOW SHOULD THE PROPOSAL BE WRITTEN AND PRESENTED?

All proposals should be prepared jointly by the organization and the Fellow. Follow the program guidelines and be sure to include all the requested materials. Be sure your proposal is clear, free of jargon and emphasizes outcomes. Furthermore, responsibilities for accomplishing the project should be clearly articulated. The roles of the Fellow, the Fellow's supervisor, and other members of the organization involved in the project must be addressed.

HOW SHOULD WE ADDRESS PROJECT EVALUATION IN THE PROPOSAL?

Describe the lasting results expected from the project. Include a plan to evaluate the successes and challenges of the project, and measurable outcomes. (Note: Outcomes are the specific conditions you hope to achieve - like reduction in pollution, increase in community involvement, or changes in policy. This is different from outputs, or the things you will do - like hold meetings, write reports, etc.). How will the impact of your project live on after the grant period has expired?

WHAT TIME FRAME SHOULD WE PLAN FOR THE PROJECT?

Your project should match the resources available. Be realistic about what can be carried out within the time schedule and with the budget you propose.

ARE MULTI-YEAR GRANTS AVAILABLE?

At this time, multi-year grant proposals are not accepted. Grants of up to \$40,000 may be requested for a one-year period. Successful applicants may be permitted, on a case-by-case basis, to apply for a second year of funding if needed. If possible, please specify if you expect to apply for a subsequent year's funding.

ARE MATCHING FUNDS REQUIRED?

Yes. We expect that additional funds will be required to carry out the proposed project, and a plan for raising those funds should be articulated in the project budget. For organizations invited to apply for a second year of funding, we expect that the organization's cost share for funding the Fellow and the project will increase over time and that the Switzer Foundation's share will decrease.

WHAT IF WE NEED TO RAISE ADDITIONAL FUNDS IN ORDER FOR THE PROJECT TO HAPPEN? Fundraising and professional commitments must be made clear at the outset. The proposal must address who will raise other needed funds for the project and the role of the Fellow in any fundraising activities. For start-up projects, the Foundation may be willing to take on more of the costs, but a funding strategy for the duration of the project should be described.

HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT THE SWITZER FELLOW'S PROFESSIONAL OBJECTIVES WILL BE MET?

Applicants should have discussed the Fellow's career goals prior to drafting the proposal, and the proposal should present a strong case for how the work will fit strategically with the Fellow's career goals. The proposal should address specific steps to build the professional standing of the Fellow and appropriate training or professional development opportunities for the Fellow that will be available during the project period. If known, outline specific trainings or professional development opportunities that will be made available to the Fellow.

WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANT REPORTING? One FINAL REPORT (including a FINAL BUDGET) is required at the end of the grant cycle, one year from the time the grant is awarded. If a second year of funding is requested, an interim or progress report should be included with the renewal request. Reporting guidelines are available in the program guidelines on our website.

WHAT OTHER EXPECTATIONS DOES THE FOUNDATION HAVE FOR LEADERSHIP GRANT PROJECTS?

We expect that any media stories generated by the project will be shared with us, and that the Robert & Patricia Switzer Foundation will be acknowledged as a funder of the project.

The Switzer Fellow and a representative of the organization will be invited to attend a Switzer Fellowship Retreat or convening where they will have an opportunity to present strategies and results from the project, or to engage Switzer Fellows in the project, or to take part in a training or professional development opportunity. If it is not possible to attend a retreat or convening in person, the Foundation expects that the Fellow and an organizational representative will present findings or results to the Switzer Network via webinar, conference call or other shared learning opportunity. All Fellows will be asked, as part of the final grant report, to submit a brief (one page) summary of the project and outcomes for the Switzer Foundation's website.

Tips for Organizations

- Remember that **Fellows must have completed their academic studies** before beginning a Leadership Grant project. Proposals can be submitted while the Fellow is still in school, but start dates should be coordinated with the Fellow's degree completion.
- **Be prepared to support the Fellow's leadership development.** The Leadership Grant Program is designed to foster the leadership development of our Fellows. It is not simply a project grant program. Supporting leadership development could involve setting up trainings for the Fellow to participate in, guided leadership on the project itself, or other professional development opportunities.
- **Be clear about the scope of your project.** Although it is tempting to think you can accomplish all the big-picture plans you have, remember that Leadership Grants are for a one year time frame. It is much better to temper your plans to a realistic level. This will be scrutinized during the grant review process.
- **Work with the Switzer Fellow to prepare the proposal.** The proposal should be written jointly so that it captures not only the essence of the project, but also how the project fits into the overall career and leadership goals of the Switzer Fellow.
- If you are not sure about the long term commitment to the Fellow's position, **be honest and frame a realistic one-year project.** If it goes well and you are in a better position to commit to a longer term project later in the grant year, you may be eligible to apply for another year's funding.
- For grassroots organizations, be sure that your organization can handle the commitment to a

professional salary for the Fellow. This will include being able to handle the additional fundraising commitments that may be required.

- Be open to how a Switzer Fellow can bring project design and other skills to the project.

Tips for Fellows

- If you are contacted by an organization, **get to know the organization** first to be sure it is a good fit.
- **If it is a start-up or has minimal staff**, talk to us about questions to ask of the organization before you sign on. You will want to be clear about the ability of the organization to support your project to completion.
- **Review the overall mission of the organization.** Although you will be working on your particular project or in your specified position, be sure its mission is aligned with your interests and goals.
- **If you are unfamiliar with the organization, talk to as many people as possible** (staff, if appropriate; ex- staff, if appropriate; other colleagues) about its work, perceptions of the organization, and staffing stability.
- Work carefully with the organization to define the project scope and expectations. **Be sure you are a part of the proposal writing process.**
- **Be as clear as possible about the roles of all parties** and the relationship between you and your potential supervisor. Be sure your potential supervisor is also a part of the proposal process. This is particularly true if you will be working offsite. If that is the case, we recommend making an agreed upon schedule of meeting times with your supervisor to maintain regular contact.
- **Be clear and honest with the organization about your expectations for leadership development.** Ask about professional development trainings or opportunities that may be available.
- **Understand the pros and cons of working for small or large organizations.** Small, grassroots organizations can offer opportunities to lead and shape projects, but they may have limited fundraising experience or capacity. Large organizations may have so many good projects underway simultaneously that it can be challenging to get supervisors to focus on your work.
- **Realize when you are approaching an organization that the interview process should work both ways.** Not only will the organization want to know about your background and experience, but you should be sure to question the organization as well.
- **Inquire as to how much of your time, if any, will be devoted to raising funds** for the position or project. Is there a development director at the organization, or someone who is dedicated solely to raising money?
- **Look carefully at the structure of the organization in terms of number of staff in comparison to the work the organization does.** What is the culture of the organization in terms of work hours, communication and collaboration among staff as well as expectations for performance, overtime, or travel? Talk openly with your supervisor or the executive director about expectations and the work culture of the organization.
- **Ask about staff support available to you.** Depending on the specifics of your position, you may want to inquire about development staff, administrative staff, GIS staff, etc. If many of these duties will fall on you, you will want to be especially clear about expectations for job outputs during the course of the project.