

How to get your research funded

Tanu Kumar

About me

Assistant Professor in Political Science, 2020 Ph.D (Berkeley)

Study development, broadly construed

Focus on local politics, urban politics, and behavior in India and Africa

Original data collection and field experiments

My research requires \$\$\$. Raised over \$500k+ since I started grad school, applied for much more. Experience with success and failure throughout the process across **both** Poli Sci and Econ

About me

Assistant Professor in Political Science, 2020 Ph.D (Berkeley)

Study development, broadly construed

Focus on local politics, urban politics, and behavior in India and Africa

Original data collection and field experiments

My research requires \$\$\$. Raised over \$500k+ since I started grad school, applied for much more. Experience with success and failure throughout the process across **both** Poli Sci and Econ

Today: why and how **you** should get funding for your own research

Why do I need funding?

Conferences (travel, registration)

Why do I need funding?

Conferences (travel, registration)

To make your research better

Why do I need funding?

Conferences (travel, registration)

To make your research better
purchase a dataset

Why do I need funding?

Conferences (travel, registration)

To make your research better

purchase a dataset

travel to do fieldwork

Why do I need funding?

Conferences (travel, registration)

To make your research better

- purchase a dataset

- travel to do fieldwork

- run a survey or experiment (online or in-person)

Why do I need funding?

Conferences (travel, registration)

To make your research better

- purchase a dataset

- travel to do fieldwork

- run a survey or experiment (online or in-person)

- API access

Why do I need funding?

Other benefits of the process

Why do I need funding?

Other benefits of the process

Signal competence and research relevance

Why do I need funding?

Other benefits of the process

Signal competence and research relevance

Learn about research demand

Why do I need funding?

Other benefits of the process

Signal competence and research relevance

Learn about research demand

Improve your research, both in substance and how to pitch

Why do I need funding?

Other benefits of the process

- Signal competence and research relevance

- Learn about research demand

- Improve your research, both in substance and how to pitch

Research is a fundamentally entrepreneurial endeavor. Selling your project is an important skill to develop.

Where do I find funding?

Internal sources: at CGU

Lincoln funding: related to land policy (broadly construed). For conferences, research with a professor, fellowships

Doctoral dissertation fellowships (10-12k)

Crossing boundaries research award (10-12k)

CGU Fulbright award (travel to a host country)

DPE conference funding

Ask your advisors

When in doubt, apply

Where do I find funding?

External to CGU

Much wider set of opportunities, much more competitive

Usual suspects for dissertation grants: American Political Science Association (DDRIG and Centennial Center), Social Science Research Consortium, Innovations for Poverty Action, American Association of University Women

Foundations: Suroptimist Foundation, Agency Foundation, Haynes Foundation, Gates, Ford Foundation. Some are weird and may not have RFPs, Horowitz Foundation

Most major conferences have calls for grad student support

When in doubt, apply

Where do I find funding?

Many other sources out there; finding them is half the battle

What foundations and organizations care about my area of work?

Email lists: APSA sections, AEA, PolMeth, others

Get on social media and follow everyone relevant to your area

Look at the CVs of people who have come before you

Look at the funding info (in “acknowledgements”) for papers you like

Start a spreadsheet, crowdsource with your peers

The more niche an opportunity, the better your chances of success

Where do I find funding?

In-kind funding

Organizations you already know or are interested in often want to evaluate their programs

Possible to put together a win-win situation where you provide them a useful service and defray your costs

Partnerships → data sharing, randomized implementation, piggybacking on a survey, reduced costs

How do I get research funding?

The typical grant reviewer is busy and doesn't have time to read proposals. They're usually using a rubric

Make it easy for them!

Follow instructions **exactly. Not a single word over the limit**

Include all major buzzwords in the request for proposals

Signposts (headings, bolded words) to make the rubric easy to fill

Signpost everything: the puzzle, the contribution, methods

Spring Centennial Center Research Grants

Previously the “Small Research Grants Program.” Supports research in all fields of political science conducted by:

- Political scientists in non-tenure track or contingent positions who are ineligible for departmental funding
- Political science faculty of all ranks who are employed in departments that do not grant PhDs.
- Graduate students currently enrolled in a Political Science PhD program.

Maximum grant amount: \$2500. Total of \$40,000 awarded each year.

Deadline: April 15th of each year.

Application requires: CV, abstract, short proposal, budget.

[Apply for Spring CC Research Grants](#)

✓ Alma Ostrom and Leah Hopkins Awan Civic Education Fund

The Ostrom Fund supports the Association’s promotion of democratic engagement; efforts to advance understanding of self-governing systems; the possibilities of moving from authoritarian to democratic systems; and the critical role of citizens in a democratic polity. **Grants can support training seminars, publications, outreach activities, and research.**

Spring Centennial Center Research Grants

Previously the “Small Research Grants Program.” Supports research in all fields of political science conducted by:

- Political scientists in non-tenure track or contingent positions who are ineligible for departmental funding
- Political science faculty of all ranks who are employed in departments that do not grant PhDs.
- Graduate students currently enrolled in a Political Science PhD program.

Maximum grant amount: \$2500. Total of \$40,000 awarded each year.

Deadline: April 15th of each year.

Application requires: CV, abstract, short proposal, budget.

[Apply for Spring CC Research Grants](#)

✓ Alma Ostrom and Leah Hopkins Awan Civic Education Fund

The Ostrom Fund supports the Association’s promotion of democratic engagement; efforts to advance understanding of self-governing systems; the possibilities of moving from authoritarian to democratic systems; and the critical role of citizens in a democratic polity. **Grants can support training seminars, publications, outreach activities, and research.**

 Use as many of these words as possible!

How do I get research funding?

Know your audience. Will they want a policy/problem framing or a gap in the literature framing? Or both?

Feel free to boast

The description of what you'll do is just as important as the question.
The more concrete, the better

Add proof of concept if possible

Ask for examples from other successful applicants (but beware of survival bias)

Coauthor; consider applying with profs

How do I get research funding?

Budget

Value for money (don't inflate too much)

Signal you know what you're doing

Ask for budgets from people who have done similar projects, ask your advisors

Try to make the best and most informed guess about what something will cost. It's ok if it's not perfect

How do I get research funding?

Start early. Get as much feedback as possible, consider asking people not in academia for feedback

Make sure to check in with the Office of Research, Sponsored Programs, and Grants

How do I plan for funding?

Funding is unpredictable

Plan for best and worst case scenarios

What is the \$0 version of this project I can do?

What is the \$2000 version of this project I can do?

Apply for \$2000 and work on the \$0 version while you wait

Most ambitious projects have more than one stage of funding

The whole process is most effective for those who choose a topic early

The bigger picture

Failure is common; it's actually the norm

But developing a proposal makes your research much better

Structure in the endless swamp of dissertation writing

Gives you an idea of what people care about

In-kind funding: can you work with an org to learn about its mission?

Plan backwards with your timeline

When in doubt, apply. Often, nobody else applies