

Academia in the Public Sphere: Islamic Traditions and Muslim Societies in World Contexts

A Small Grants Program

The SSRC is pleased to announce the availability of grants to support public engagement by academic experts on Islamic traditions and Muslim societies. The grants program seeks to encourage projects permitting the dissemination of academic research on Islamic traditions and Muslim societies to targeted constituencies, with particular emphasis on media and policymakers. With this program the SSRC looks to nurture the public relevancy of area studies research by promoting strategic partnerships that will break down barriers and build connections between academic researchers, journalists, policymakers, and practitioners. The SSRC also seeks to assist faculty in developing the necessary skills they require to be able to engage specialized nonacademic audiences on the topic of Islam in the world.

Eligibility:

Grants are available to interdisciplinary research centers on U.S. university campuses, including but not limited to Title VI National Resource Centers. Research centers are eligible to apply individually for grants up to \$50,000 to be used over a period of fifteen months. Extraordinary projects involving multiple collaborating centers or universities may be considered for grants up to \$100,000. The grants program anticipates giving out approximately \$2.2 million in total awards over the next two grant cycles.

Funding Priorities:

Funds are available to innovative projects that will effect change by creating robust capacities for public and policy engagement on university campuses. Projects which include strong faculty participation and leadership will be given funding priority as will projects that disseminate expert knowledge born of context specific research or projects that offer communications training to faculty. Successful applications will demonstrate usage of adequate distribution channels for all deliverables intended to reach targeted constituencies.

Funds may be used additionally to promote collaborative partnerships between existing institutions on university campuses, such as interdisciplinary research centers and journalism or international affairs schools. Applicants may also propose collaborative working relationships with relevant non-academic institutions in order to produce jointly-developed deliverables that will be useful to journalists, policymakers, or the general public. We encourage both domestic and international collaborations.

Partnerships and engagement with media, policy institutions and policymakers, advocacy groups, business leaders, and the general public are permitted, but funds cannot be used for outreach supporting K-12 education. While there are no geographical restrictions to the regions that can be addressed by projects, we anticipate that approximately 40% of the awards will be directed toward projects that bring scholarly expertise to bear on political and social issues surrounding Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and/or Iraq.

Activities:

Activities to be proposed by applicant centers engaging journalists may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following:

- Media appearances, including print journalism and national or local broadcast affiliates (both television and radio), in order to enhance the public visibility of individual university faculty and researchers
- Sustained and intensive collaborations with journalists, journalism schools, media studies departments, public radio or television departments, which result in the joint production of materials for public dissemination
- Hiring of assistants or researchers to work with scholars on op-ed pieces and hiring of strategic communications specialists to provide training for scholars



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- Development of curricula to train journalists or to train faculty or graduate students in undertaking public scholarship on themes supported by the grants program
- Development of basic infrastructure such as installation of ISDN or high quality audio lines to facilitate interviews or the management of materials supporting engagement of different constituencies, including handbooks, directories, contact lists, mailing lists, databases and checklists to strengthen individual and institutional capacity for engagement

Activities to be proposed by applicant centers engaging policymakers may include (but are not limited to) one or more of the following:

- Closed door, off-record sessions bringing together academic specialists and policymakers on topics of importance to policy circles
- Training of scholars to write effective policy briefs, memos and recommendations which can be provided by international affairs schools, public policy schools, or organizations versed in these practices as well as means for disseminating such findings
- Sustained, intensive collaborations with think tanks or advocacy groups on issues which result in various deliverables improving policymakers' understanding of key topics
- Policy-relevant research and subsequent dissemination on understudied but critically important topics

This grants program also will support the dissemination of academic expertise to general publics. Applicants may propose activities addressing the history, culture, intellectual traditions, contributions to global culture, civilization, thought and the contemporary politics of Muslim societies.

Application Process:

Application instructions will be available through the newly developed SSRC application portal as of October 31, 2009. Potential applicants are encouraged to review the online materials and [contact relevant SSRC staff](#) in advance of submitting a proposal.

The grant period spans approximately 15 months: from March 15, 2010 to June 30, 2011. Grant funds can be used for honoraria, travel, meeting expenses, collaborations with partner organizations and schools, acquisition and preparation of materials for dissemination, web development, and costs associated with media appearances, communications training, and consultations with experts. Limited staff salary, graduate student stipend support, and summer research support for faculty can also be covered if directly relevant to the proposed project but in total these costs should not exceed 25% of the overall budget. The grants program will not support university overhead or indirect costs.

A final report describing the impact and additional long-term plans resulting from the activities supported by the grant will be required of successful applicants.

Applications must be submitted through the online application portal which can be found on the SSRC website and will be live on October 31, 2009. No hard copies will be accepted.

Deadlines:

Applications due – January 18, 2010

Notification given – March 1, 2010

Grant period commences – March 15, 2010

Grant period concludes – June 30, 2011

For inquiries contact Thomas Asher, Program Officer:
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<http://www.ssrc.org/fellowships/islam-and-muslims-in-world-contexts/>

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