

# International Dissertation Research Fellowship Program

*Evaluation Criteria*



Applications to the International Dissertation Research Fellowship (IDRF) program undergo four review stages, each with their own evaluation criteria. This list specifies the criteria that guide staff, screeners, reviewers, and selection committee members at each evaluation stage.

## 1) Eligibility check

IDRF staff read over each application to ensure they meet the program requirements, including (but not limited to) the following:

- a. Application is properly formatted
- b. On-site and site-specific research lengths are of sufficient duration
- c. Applicants are conducting dissertation research about US Indigenous or non-US cultures and societies
- d. Applicants are enrolled in a PhD program at a US university
- e. Applicants have not previously received significant monetary support for post-ABD research in the proposed country
- f. Application is complete

## 2) Screening round

Three US-based scholars from a range of institutions and disciplines read the proposal abstract and three research relevance questions to ensure the application is a fit with the IDRF program's stated goals and priorities. Applications that do not move out of the screening round suffer from one or more of the following:

- a. A weak disciplinary engagement
- b. A lack of substantive engagement with a discipline other than the one in which the applicant is trained
- c. A lack of substantive engagement with the Mellon imperative to increase humanistic knowledge
- d. Insufficient answers to the stated questions
- e. Short, hastily constructed answers
- f. Numerous grammatical mistakes

## 3) Review round

Three US-based scholars from a range of institutions and disciplines read the full proposal and score the applications on the basis of 8 questions.

- a. How original and salient is the research topic in relation to discipline and region?
- b. How well-matched are the methodology and research question(s)?

- c. Is the project appropriately grounded in the major concepts, theories, and methods in the applicant's discipline?
- d. How well does the proposal engage with interdisciplinary and cross-regional perspectives?
- e. Does the project speak to a broad scholarly audience, informing debates beyond a specific topic and place (and discipline, where possible)?
- f. Is the need for an extended period of on-site research adequately justified?
- g. Is the applicant adequately prepared academically to undertake the research project?
- h. Does the applicant have sufficient language skills to carry out the project?

At this stage of the evaluation process, applications will be read by reviewers who are outside of both the region and discipline of the applicant, as well as reviewers within the applicant's region and discipline.

#### **4) Selection Committee**

Three US-based scholars from a range of institutions and disciplines read the full proposal. They then meet in person to discuss the proposals and work toward consensus in the selection of each application. Recognizing that all applications at this stage of review are worthy of support, selection committee members are asked to rate proposals in relation to the other proposals according to the following guidelines.

Applicants have been funded from the outstanding, excellent, and promising categories.

- a. Outstanding: original/innovative ideas well-grounded in theory; informs debates that go beyond specific topic, place, and discipline; innovative methodology with a feasible research agenda; applicant is fully prepared in terms of research and language skills; project is potentially path-breaking
- b. Excellent: similar in quality but relatively less innovative in approach, less feasible in research design, or less broadly relevant to other places, times, or disciplines
- c. Promising: good proposal on important topic; theoretically informed if less relevant across place, time, or discipline; no major theoretical problems; applicant solidly prepared
- d. Solid but problematic: connection of the topic to the data to be collected or the methodological approach is not clear; minimal relevance to other disciplines; insufficient attention to theoretical debates; covers well-trodden ground; need for on-site research not sufficiently justified
- e. Competent: proposal designed to fill a relatively narrow empirical gap without broader ambitions; research design poorly matches research objectives; more preparation needed for on-site research