

Advancing the science and practice of supporting children to thrive

The LEGO Foundation launches new global research fellowship

The new, three-year fellowship will support up to 10 early- and mid-career researchers working across crisis and conflict settings, inclusion and wellbeing of neurodivergent children, and children's learning and development in an AI-enabled world.

Billund, Denmark, 1 June 2026 — As part of its 40th anniversary, the LEGO Foundation invites applications for the LEGO Foundation Fellowship, a new global research fellowship for early- and mid-career researchers whose work can strengthen the understanding of how children thrive across diverse contexts.

The fellowship has been developed in partnership with the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), which will administer the program and oversee the application and selection process.

The fellowship will provide flexible research funding of USD 300,000 over three years to up to 10 researchers pursuing ambitious, rigorous, and practically relevant work. Funding is administered by the fellow's host institution and may be used to support research personnel, professional travel, equipment, dissemination, trainee support, and related project costs.

The program welcomes applications from researchers across disciplines, methods, and geographies, including fields such as education, psychology, child development, public health, economics, sociology, neuroscience, data science, humanitarian studies, disability studies, human-computer interaction, and implementation science.

At a time when children's lives are being shaped by conflict, crisis, rapid technological change, and systems not always designed around their needs, the fellowship aims to support research that can help turn evidence into action for children.

“The LEGO Foundation Fellowship is an invitation to researchers around the world to help build the evidence needed to improve the future of childhood,” said Joe Savage, Vice President of Impact & Evidence at the LEGO Foundation. “As we mark 40 years of working to create the conditions for all children to thrive, we are looking for ambitious, rigorous, and practically relevant research that can deepen our shared understanding of what helps children learn, grow, and thrive.”

About the LEGO Foundation Fellowship

The launch of the LEGO Foundation Fellowship coincides with the Foundation's 40th anniversary. It is both a reflection of the Foundation's long-standing commitment to children and an invitation to come together around the knowledge, partnerships, and practical solutions needed for the years ahead.

Around the world, more children are growing up in conflict and crisis, while many others struggle to thrive in fast-paced societies and systems not designed with children's needs, nature, or wishes in mind. The demand for bold and creative support has not been greater in the LEGO Foundation's 40 years.

Through the fellowship, researchers will receive funding administered by their host institution and may use funds, in line with program guidelines, to support research personnel, professional travel, equipment, dissemination, trainee support, and related project costs.

The fellowship focuses on three urgent areas shaping children's lives: the youngest children in crisis and conflict settings; inclusion and wellbeing of neurodivergent children; and children's learning and development in an AI-enabled world.

The first theme welcomes research focusing on children from birth to eight years, and their caregivers, in crisis and conflict settings, including humanitarian emergencies and prolonged displacement. Relevant areas include the mechanisms of resilience, caregiving and family environments, scaling and sustaining effective interventions, and translating evidence into humanitarian practice.

The second theme focuses on neurodivergent children and young people up to 18, with a particular emphasis on Autism and ADHD. The fellowship seeks research that can strengthen understanding of support before diagnosis, family environments, inclusive learning environments, and supporting children through key life transitions.

The third theme welcomes research on children and young people up to 18 in an AI-enabled world. Relevant areas include AI and adult-child connection, AI and children's social and emotional development, AI and productive struggle in learning, and the differential effects of AI on children's lives.

Applications open on 1 June 2026 and close on 31 July 2026. The fellowship period runs from 1 February 2027 to 31 December 2029.

For more information about the LEGO Foundation Fellowship, including eligibility criteria, application materials, and selection process, [visit our program site on SSRC.org](https://www.ssrc.org).

Information to applicants

Applicants must be early- and mid-career researchers employed by a university or research institute at the start of the fellowship. They must hold a PhD or equivalent research doctorate by 31 July 2026 and have received their PhD within the past 10 years, subject to any approved career-break policy.

Applications are open to researchers from around the world, except where restrictions apply under relevant sanctions rules. Applications must be submitted [via the website](#) by 31 July 2026.

The LEGO Foundation Fellowship period runs from 1 February 2027 to 31 December 2029.

About the LEGO Foundation

We focus on the realities children face, addressing barriers, supporting learners of all abilities, and responding where children are touched by crises and humanitarian needs. By investing in the holistic ecosystems that shape childhood — from families and schools to communities and entire societies — we work to strengthen access to education, creativity, and play. This includes both grantmaking and impact investments supporting solutions that can grow and reach more children over time.

Since 1986, the LEGO Foundation has worked to create the conditions for all children to thrive. A good childhood is not a given — it is built — and too many children face challenges that limit their possibilities. Over the past 40 years, the LEGO Foundation has invested in organizations, initiatives, and individuals that help children learn, grow, and develop through play.

The LEGO Foundation Fellowship coincides with the LEGO Foundation's 40th anniversary. This is not only a celebration of impact — it is an invitation to come together for children. Around the

world, more children are growing up in conflict and crisis, while many others struggle to thrive in fast-paced societies and systems not designed with children's needs, nature, or wishes in mind. The demand for bold and creative support has not been greater in the LEGO Foundation's 40 years.

About the Social Science Research Council

The Social Science Research Council (SSRC) is an independent, international, nonprofit organization founded in 1923. The Council fosters innovative research, nurtures new generations of social scientists, deepens how inquiry is practiced within and across disciplines, and mobilizes necessary knowledge on important public issues.

The SSRC is guided by the belief that justice, prosperity, and democracy all require better understanding of complex social, cultural, economic, and political processes. We work with practitioners, policymakers, and academic researchers in the social sciences, the humanities, the natural sciences, and related professions. We build interdisciplinary and international networks, working with partners around the world to link research to practice and policy, strengthen individual and institutional capacities for learning, and enhance public access to information.

This announcement is also available online in our newsroom: <https://www.ssrc.org/news-events/>.

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