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Prospective Applicant Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

We hope this FAQ document provides helpful information as you consider applying for GFI funding. If you have any remaining questions not answered here, please feel free to contact us directly at research_grants@gfi.org.

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Who is eligible to apply?

Applications submitted from any sector (academia, government, industry, nonprofits, etc.) and from around the world will be considered. Individuals at the graduate student or postdoctoral levels may serve as the lead investigator on a project proposal, provided that the project proposal is accompanied by a brief letter of support signed by a faculty member at the student's higher education institution. The letter of support should state that the faculty member agrees to serve as a project collaborator and advisor and allows the proposed research to be carried out in his or her laboratory. Undergraduate students may participate in projects but are not eligible to serve as the lead researcher.

Lead researchers from projects that have previously been awarded a grant from GFI are eligible to apply. Proposals from labs that are currently receiving GFI grant funding are allowed if the lead researcher of the new submission is different from the lead researcher of the previously funded project.

What types of research is GFI looking for?

Specific details and a list of potential research topics are given within the Requests for Proposals (RFPs) found at gfi.org/researchgrants. In general, we are seeking to fund innovative projects that will specifically advance the *science and technology* of the plant-based, fermentation-derived, and cultivated meat industries. "Meat" includes seafood such as fish and shellfish.

The scopes of our open RFPs emphasize the areas we think are most in need of additional research and have the greatest potential to positively impact the alternative protein industry. We are specifically focused on improving the sensory properties, cost, and scale of the alternative protein industry.

What types of research is GFI NOT looking for?

GFI aims to improve environmental sustainability, human health, and animal welfare. To that end, we want to be cognizant of how the research we support impacts these areas. Researchers must demonstrate a good-faith effort to identify any aspects of their research that present environmental, human health, and animal welfare hazards and to attempt to find suitable alternatives that mitigate these hazards. GFI grant funds cannot be used for any test, experiment, or any other activity whatsoever that could reasonably be expected to cause harm and/or death to animals.

GFI is not currently interested in funding research in the following areas:

- Insect farming or insect-based foods. Projects focused on insect tissue culture may be acceptable, provided the project outputs are directly applicable to improving the sensory properties, cost, or scale of the plant-based or cultivated meat industries.
- Human subject research. Projects that involve trained sensory panels as one part of the project may be acceptable if the purpose of that analysis is to test the sensory aspects of a new ingredient, process, or product developed as part of an eligible project.

- We recognize there is a tremendous need for research in social sciences, economics, environmental science, public policy, law, marketing, etc., but this program is specifically focused on scientific and technical research. Therefore, we are not currently funding market research, consumer preference studies, life cycle analyses, and other similar types of research.

Does GFI give preference to researchers in the United States?

No. To date, we have funded research in thirteen different countries across five continents, and we will continue to focus on providing funding for the best research from around the world. We understand that because we only accept proposals in English, there may be a language barrier for some researchers. We do not penalize researchers who may be writing in a non-native language and we seek to fund the best scientific research, regardless of language.

Why does GFI only fund open-access research?

Our grant program is structured to ensure that any funded research is carried in the public interest and is benefitting the public at large in accordance with our charitable purposes. Current alternative protein R&D happens largely in private laboratories. GFI's research program is designed to be maximally helpful to the entire sector, which means making research findings available to everyone. A rising tide lifts all ships.

What principles apply to intellectual property generated through GFI-funded research?

The following principles outline GFI's position on intellectual property (IP) generated through research we support:

1. Ownership of IP generated through GFI-funded research will be jointly owned by GFI and the grantee.
2. Research results must be published in an open-access peer-reviewed journal or on a publicly available website (e.g., GFI.org).
3. Publication of research results may be delayed at the request of either party to allow for the filing of a patent application.
4. The grantee is expected to license IP on a royalty-free basis to academic institutions for research use and at a reasonable royalty rate on a non-exclusive basis to any business that wants to commercialize the resulting IP.
5. The grantee should use their best efforts to grant only non-exclusive licenses, with royalties shared equally between GFI and the grantee.

These principles advance GFI's foundational mission to support open-access research that will be available and accessible to benefit the alternative protein industry and global society as a whole. If you have specific questions or concerns about these principles, we encourage you to email us at research_grants@gfi.org.

What does your grant agreement look like?

Please find a copy of GFI's standard grant agreement [here](#). Please reach out to our Grants Management team at research_grants@gfi.org if you have questions about our standard terms.

How does GFI define direct and indirect costs?

Direct costs are project-specific expenses. These are costs for personnel who will be involved in the project, supplies and consumables needed for the specific research proposed, travel to a conference to present results, publication charges for submitting a manuscript, and other costs that can be specifically identified with the proposed research project.

Indirect costs are real costs incurred by organizations in support of research activities that cannot be directly applied to a specific grant. These costs result from shared services, such as utilities, administration, lab and computer equipment, and office and laboratory space rental.

Indirect costs must be no more than 10 percent of the requested direct costs for projects submitted by researchers at academic institutions, government labs, and nonprofit organizations. No indirect costs may be included in project budgets from researchers at for-profit companies.

Does GFI accept proposals that involve joint funding?

Yes. We understand that some research projects may need more funding than GFI alone is able to provide. We encourage applicants to leverage GFI funding opportunities to secure additional research funds (or vice versa). However, we do not require matching funds for our funding opportunities unless specified in a particular RFP.

How are proposals reviewed?

All submitted proposals first undergo administrative review to determine if they fall within the scope of the RFP. A review committee composed of GFI scientists evaluate Phase 1 proposals and determine whether each project proposal will be invited to Phase 2. Phase 2 proposals are evaluated by at least three reviewers. A review committee composed of GFI scientists and external reviewers (scientists not employed by GFI, from academia and industry) participates in the evaluation of Phase 2 proposals and determination of awards.

Proposals are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Scientific alignment**
Anticipated likelihood of addressing one of the research challenges or opportunities identified through GFI's [Advancing Solutions for Alternative Proteins \(ASAP\) Initiative](#). If the proposal does not address an ASAP idea, does the researcher provide sufficient justification for how the research will advance the science of the plant-based, fermentation-derived, or cultivated meat

industry? Some RFPs focus on a specific technical challenge. In those cases, submitted applications should directly address the research needs explained in the RFP.

- **Expected impact**
Anticipated likelihood of positive impact on the sensory characteristics, price points, or production capacity of plant-based, fermentation-derived, or cultivated meat.
- **Contribution to the scientific community**
Plan for sharing project protocols, data, results, and/or research tools and materials with the larger scientific community and alternative protein industry.
- **Project planning**
Feasibility of project goals (including realistic timeline and budget as well as clarity, soundness, and logic of research plan) and suitability of project team to successfully carry out project goals.
- **Commercial relevance**
Ability to outline a path for research outcomes to meaningfully advance the alternative protein industry. This includes the potential commercial applicability of research and relevance to industry.

How long does it take to receive a decision from GFI?

Timelines differ slightly between funding mechanisms. We strive to make decisions as quickly and efficiently as possible, while also being rigorous in our review process. At times, decisions will take longer than what is proposed below, usually due to high numbers of submitted applications. We will let applicants know when we will not be able to meet the timelines proposed below.

If applying for an Exploratory Grant, you will receive a decision no later than the end of the month after you submit your proposal. For example, if you submit a proposal for funding consideration any time in February, you will receive a decision no later than the end of March.

If applying for a White Space Collaboration, you will receive a decision no later than six weeks after the submission deadline.

If applying to our Annual Competitive Research Grant Program, you will learn within four weeks of submitting your Phase 1 proposal whether or not you have been invited to submit the Phase 2 proposal. You will receive a final funding decision on your Phase 2 proposal no later than six weeks after its submission deadline.

If we need any further clarifications or have specific requests for you during our review, we will reach out to you directly.

How competitive is GFI's research funding?

Funding availability differs for each RFP we release. Historically, we have funded ~15% of the proposals we receive through our Annual Competitive Research Grant Program, though funding decisions do not consider that metric in any way. Because we have just established our White Space

Collaboration funding mechanism and our Exploratory Grants, we do not have data on the competitiveness of these opportunities. We award funding only to projects that we feel significantly contribute to the scientific and technological foundation of the alternative protein industry.

Who is funding this research? Where did the money come from?

This program is made possible thanks to generous donors who wish to remain anonymous. These donors are not affiliated with any alternative protein companies or traditional food companies. GFI is a nonprofit that is supported completely by philanthropic donations. All of our programs and the work that we do is only possible because of philanthropic support.

Where can I find additional resources about the plant-based and cultivated meat industries?

Please visit <https://www.gfi.org/resources.php> to find GFI's essential readings and research on plant-based and cultivated meat. To learn more about our online community and events, please visit <https://www.gfi.org/community>.