PRE-PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Request for Pre-Proposals: FY25 Wildlife – Reptile/amphibian health and welfare with special focus/funds available for chytrid research.

Established Investigator, First Award, & Pilot Study Awards

PROGRAM SUMMARY

The mission of Morris Animal Foundation is to bridge science and resources to advance the health of animals. To achieve this mission, we fund hypothesis-driven, humane research projects with high scientific merit and the potential for significant impact. We are a non-profit organization that is funded by public support from individuals, corporations, clubs, and foundations, and by earnings from our endowed funds. Our donors are interested in funding research that results in impactful animal health achievements and benefits both scientific and non-scientific stakeholders including veterinarians, wildlife researchers, and communities.

This request for pre-proposals is focused on reptiles and amphibians (pre-proposals on other topics will not be accepted). Morris Animal Foundation is focused on advancing animal health and welfare; while conservation is a priority, any conservation focused proposals must be through an animal health lens. Animals in managed care settings can be a valuable proxy for wild counterparts but all submitted proposals must have direct translational value to free-ranging wildlife populations. The value of your project for wildlife health must be clearly outlined in the Animal Health Impact section of your proposal.

To fund the most impactful research successful pre-proposals will demonstrate 1) defined animal health and/or conservation need, 2) collaboration with natural resource managers, communities, and policy makers before, during and after the research, and 3) clear strategy for achieving project outcomes.

*Note that many of the following guidelines apply to all three categories of award (Established Investigator, First Award and Pilot Study) *However, some instructions are award-type specific, and these instructions are in bold italic type*. Please read all instructions carefully so that you can complete your application with reference to the correct eligibility and award criteria, budget maximum, project duration and page limit for your award. Failure to adhere to guidelines may result in your proposal being declined.

APPLICANT QUALIFICATIONS

Established Investigator: Competitive applicants for this award will have a record of expertise demonstrated through peer-reviewed publication.

First Award: First Award grants are designed to assist early career researchers in establishing a successful research program by supporting their first award as an independent investigator. The applicant must have completed a PhD, DVSc, DVM or equivalent degree and have a permanent position in a university, accredited zoo or conservation organization, or a non-academic equivalent. Principal Investigators should have a history of research publication as a Co-PI or Co-I. Individuals currently in a residency program are not eligible. Postdoctoral researchers should be completing their program and proposing research intended to be conducted in a permanent position. Applicants must not have received previous funding of more than $25,000 for any single extramural award as a principal investigator leading independent research. Applicants are eligible to apply if they have received funding during training or education such as the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship Program or the Morris Animal Foundation Fellowship Training grant. The applicant should clearly describe prior funding in the candidate letter of intent. Previous funding as a co-investigator is acceptable. This application requires supporting statements from one or more appropriately experienced mentors.

Pilot Study: Pilot Study Awards provide funding for proof-of-concept studies in animal health research.

All applicants for all categories of award must convince the scientific and animal welfare reviewers that they clearly understand the health problem, have sufficient expertise to conduct the study, are using a scientifically sound approach, and have given appropriate consideration to the overall environmental impact of their research. A maximum of one application as PI in response to this RFP is permitted.

AWARD DURATION AND BUDGET LIMITS

The maximum duration of an Established Investigator Award is 36 months. There is no limit to the budget request, however we expect the average award to be approximately $100,000.

The maximum duration of a First Award is 24 months, and the total budget cannot exceed $120,000.

The maximum duration of a Pilot Award is 12 months, and the total budget cannot exceed $20,000.

For awards that allow projects of more than one year, the applicant can allocate costs as appropriate. Costs do not have to be evenly spread across the lifetime of the project. Applicants are not required to use the maximum award duration.

MORRIS ANIMAL FOUNDATION POLICIES

Health Study Policy: Projects must adhere to the Foundation's [Health Study Policy for Animals Involved in Research](#). Note that proposals recommended for funding by scientific reviewers are reviewed separately by animal welfare and ethics experts prior to funding.

Office of Foreign Assets (OFAC) Disclaimer: The Foundation is committed to full compliance with U.S laws and regulations establishing trade and economic sanctions. The Foundation will not fund any proposal where individuals, activities, or financial transactions occur within Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Syria, or the Crimea Region of the Ukraine. In addition, all individuals and entities involved in the proposal must not be sanctioned under U.S. trade and economic laws or regulations. You can learn more about sanctioned countries, entities, and individuals at [this link](#).

Parachute science: Projects that include international collaborations should address international scientific engagement and benefits and **MUST** include a named Principal Investigator, Co-Investigator, or mentor in the country where the research will occur. The Foundation endeavors to achieve impact through ethical pathways and with the clear intention of inclusivity, diversity, and the elimination of the practice of parachute/colonial science.

Progress Reports: if you are the PI or a co-PI on an active Morris Animal Foundation grant award, all progress reports and other contractual obligations must be current.

For questions about Morris Animal Foundation Policies that are not answered within the proposal guidelines or our [FAQ page](#), contact grantapplications@morrisanimalfoundation.org.

REVIEW PROCESS

All pre-proposals will undergo administrative and scientific review. Each pre-proposal is assigned to two scientific reviewers and is scored for Scientific Merit and Potential Impact. **Applicant information during the pre-proposal scientific review process will be blinded. Please do not include any self-disclosing information in your pre-proposal.**

Proposal Timeline:
- October 23, 2034: Pre-Proposals due; upload Pre-Proposal as a single document (PDF) via AIBS platform (see submission instructions below).
- December 4, 2024: PIs with successful Pre-Proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal and will be provided full proposal guidelines and template.
- January 22, 2025: Full proposals due; proposals should be submitted as a single PDF document to AIBS no later than 5:00 pm (EST).
- Mid-April 2025: PIs will be notified of final decision; proposals recommended for funding will move into Animal Welfare Advisory Board review.

PRE-PROPOSAL FORMAT, GUIDELINES AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Carefully review and adhere to these pre-proposal guidelines, including page length. Deviations from these guidelines may result in the rejection of your proposal.

American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS) submission instructions:
Applications must be submitted through our portal at https://morrisanimalfoundation.aibs-scores.org/. All applicants must register to use the portal; your username will be your email. The portal home page will list open grant calls, and you can begin your submission.

Important Submission Points:
- The user submitting the proposal should be the Applicant/PI.
- Ensure that you do not lose any information - save your work often (click "SAVE ALL ANSWERS") and for as many times as needed before submission.
- Mistakes happen. If you discover a mistake after submitting your proposal, you can correct your work. You must "un-submit" then revalidate to finalize and resubmit.
- Give yourself time - you may need technical assistance to complete your submission.
- **Your application must be received by 4:59 *PM Eastern Time on the designated due date.***

You will receive an email confirming your approval. You also can check the status of your submission by logging onto the submission portal.

Submission Components:
The application comprises four sections: Title, People, Attachments, and Finalize. Each section must be completed. The main project pre-proposal is completed in the Attachments section - other sections are completed directly in the portal.

I. Title (max 200 characters).

II. People
A "Person Record" is created for the PI, any other investigators, mentor(s) (if applicable) and your authorized institutional signer who is needed to submit your application. A named Co-Investigator and / or Mentor serving as the in-country collaborator is required when the PI is not located in the country where research will occur.

III. Attachments

- For the attachments section, make sure that you use the provided template to help you organize your submission and do not remove any headers or sections.
- Proposals should be single-spaced or greater, using no smaller than Times New Roman 11-point font with a minimum of ¾ inch margins.
- Technical terminology should be defined on first usage; acronyms and abbreviations may be used subsequently.

The template (.docx) is sub-divided into four parts (sections A-D) and must be converted to a PDF for submission.

A. Study Proposal. (2-page limit including figures). Organize your Study Proposal with the following sections:

i. **Hypothesis and Objectives**: Be precise and enumerate specific, testable hypotheses with realistic objectives to be achieved within the timeline and budget of the proposal.

ii. **Problem Description and Significance**: Include a brief literature summary and preliminary data (if applicable) that describes the current state of the problem and justifies the need for the proposed study. If the PI is conducting research outside of their country of institutional affiliation, they must clearly stipulate how the information gained from their study will be used by stakeholder groups locally.

Preliminary Data: "Established Investigator" and "First Award" applicants should succinctly describe any previous results by the investigator which supports the proposed research. If this project is a continuation of a previous Morris Animal Foundation study, include grant ID number, title, and a brief summary of the final results. Preliminary data is not required for Pilot Studies but should be included if available and relevant.

iii. **Study Design and Methods**: Include the experimental design and methods for each objective. Data analysis methods must also be described.

B. Animal Health Impact: [Example Animal Health Impact Statement] (1-page limit) Impact is vitally important to our donor-supported organization. We may decline proposals where impact is incompletely addressed, particularly those lacking in impact beyond the scientific community. Scientifically robust studies in which non-academic and broader impact are integral to the study design will have the highest chance of success. Remember that the scoring rubric allocates half of the points available to impact and engagement. **Well written proposals will consider the following questions:**

Scientific impact, including impact beyond this research field. Key questions include:
- Why is this work integral to the health and/or welfare of the species?
- Is this project likely to make a rapid contribution to solving a problem or addressing a key knowledge deficit that is obstructing progress?
- How likely is it that the findings will have an impact beyond the period of this award?
- Is there potential for wider impact e.g., for other scientific fields, animal populations, species, or geographic regions?

Non-academic impact, including stakeholders and beneficiaries. Key questions include:

- Who might be interested and who might benefit from this project?
- What are the needs of these stakeholders and how were they identified?
- Will stakeholders be involved in project design, execution, preparation of training, and/or dissemination of results? Have any been included as applicants?
- If applicable, describe the extended impact this work (or subsequent work) may have on the environment, policy, human behavior, industry, economics, or public awareness.

If applicable, have connections with policy makers been established? Outline your engagement activities and outputs plan (i.e., knowledge exchange activities). Engagement beyond academic/scientific communities will substantially strengthen your proposal. Key questions include:

- What time and effort will be committed to these activities? Please include in the budget and timeline below if appropriate (section I)
- Who do you propose to engage with and how? Include letters of support if applicable.
- How will the success of engagement activities be evaluated?
- What experience do the applicants have with non-academic engagement, and/or what training or other resources are available?

C. Project Duration (In months): Do not exceed the budget limits and timescales described for each grant type on page 2 and 3 "Award Duration and Budget Limits."

D. Estimated Total Grant Amount Being Requested from MAF: Do not exceed the budget limits described for each grant type on page 2 and 3 "Award Duration and Budget Limits."

V. FINALIZE YOUR SUBMISSION
Before you click "FINALIZE" you can review your entire submission by clicking on "Click here to preview your current submission content prior to finalizing it." If all components are present/uploaded, the submission can be finalized. At this point the content cannot be changed.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE SUBMISSION PROCESS?
Please contact morrisanimalfoundation@aibs.org for technical assistance.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Ready to submit? Please review this Applicant Checklist to double check your grant proposal and maximize your chance of success prior to clicking 'Submit'. This checklist should not be uploaded as part of your application.

- ❑ Pre-proposal length conforms to allowable length (≤ 3 pages)
- ❑ Animal Health Impact Section completed and adequately addresses questions within the pre-proposal guidelines
- ❑ Estimated timeline and budget is within allowable request
- ❑ All pre-proposal template sections are completed
- ❑ Application submitted as 1 full proposal document in .pdf format
- ❑ Register in Fluxx to receive updates on your proposal status. Please use the same email address that you used to register with AIBS SCORES to apply to this RFP.

For applicant questions not answered by the proposal guidelines or in the Grants FAQ, please reach out to the Scientific Grants Program Team at grantapplications@morrisanimalfoundation.org