



TEMPLETON
RELIGION
TRUST

Always Seeking.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

ART SEEKING UNDERSTANDING

July 2019

1. About Templeton Religion Trust

Templeton Religion Trust (TRT) is a global charitable trust chartered in 1984 by Sir John Templeton with headquarters in Nassau, The Bahamas. TRT, active since 2012, supports projects and the dissemination of results from projects seeking to enrich the conversation about religion.

Learn more at templetonreligiontrust.org

2. About Art Seeking Understanding

Art Seeking Understanding (ASU) is a program strategy concerned with improving the methods of inquiry into the existence and nature of what Sir John called spiritual realities. ASU begins with Aesthetic Cognitivism (AC), a theory about the value of the arts that approaches them not simply (or not even) as sources of delight, amusement, pleasure, or emotional catharsis, but, instead, as sources of understanding. As Nelson Goodman put it in *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978), “the arts must be taken no less seriously than the sciences as modes of discovery, creation, and enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancement of the understanding.” But is there an empirically demonstrable connection between art and understanding vis à vis what Sir John referred to as spiritual reality and/or spiritual information in particular? And if so, what distinctive cognitive value does engagement with the arts (production and/or consumption) generate? Under what conditions and in what ways does participation in artistic activities encourage or stimulate spiritual understanding, insight, or growth (meaning- or sense-making)? Relatedly, if art has primarily to do with understanding, then what of beauty? Is it an unrelated aim, or one (in some cases) essential to understanding? And if essential, then what advantages, if any, does beautiful art have over non-beautiful (e.g. conceptual) art with reference to understanding?

Projects in this area would bring together writers, poets, painters, sculptors, musicians, dancers, filmmakers – artists of all kinds – as well as art historians and musicologists with philosophers, theologians, and scientists from a variety of sub-disciplines within the psychological, cognitive, and social sciences to conceive and design empirical and statistical studies of the cognitive significance of the arts with respect to spiritual realities and the discovery of new spiritual information.

3. What We Fund

- Projects that are truth-seeking and/or discovery-oriented.
- Projects firmly situated within a particular discipline (e.g. the arts, theology, philosophy, or the sciences) asking questions that cannot be answered without reference to one of these other disciplines.
- Projects with sharply focused questions and/or hypotheses, as well as an explicit methodology.
- Projects on which appreciable progress can be made within 12–18 months.

4. Types of Awards

In this initial round, TRT anticipates offering approximately 12 grants – including project grants and experimental pilot or proof-of-concept grants – of up to US\$200,000 (or equivalent) for projects lasting 12–18 months (beginning July 1, 2020). Successful grantees from this round may then be invited to submit follow-up proposals for 36-month projects up to US\$1,000,000 (or equivalent).

5. Eligibility Criteria

- The applicant can be a non-profit organization, academic institution, for-profit company, or another recognized institution that is incorporated in an eligible jurisdiction and is capable of receiving and administering funding.
- Travel & Lodging cost for persons who are not employees of the organization receiving the grant must be no more than 10% of the total budgeted direct costs.
- Institutional overhead or indirect costs must be no more than 15% of the total budgeted direct costs.
- Though cost-effectiveness of the proposal will be an evaluation criterion, requests of all sizes up to US\$200,000 will be given equal consideration.
- At this time, TRT is only able to consider proposals submitted in English.

Please note that we will not fund:

- Work that already receives widespread, financial support from other sources.
- General donations or operational support. Projects should be well-defined and designed in such a way that they can be completed in no more than 12–18 months.
- Contributions to endowments, support for “brick and mortar” buildings, or other capital projects.
- Projects with an exclusively historical focus.
- The creation of artistic works, artistic productions, or purchases.

- Ontological or critical discussions seeking to answer the questions “What is art?” and/or “Is this good art?”
- Projects having primarily to do with beauty (without reference to understanding), the therapeutic effects or uses of art, or animal cognition.

6. Evaluation Process

Proposals submitted in advance of the application deadline will first be assessed for eligibility based on the information outlined in this document. Proposals which meet the basic eligibility criteria will be reviewed by a minimum of four external experts. Top ranked proposals will be advanced to final review in February 2020 with successful grantees being notified by/before May 2020. All grant projects will begin July 1, 2020.

7. Application Process

Interested applicants should complete the online application form at https://webportalapp.com/sp/trt_rfp no later than 9:00am EST on 28 October 2019. For RFP-related questions, please email rfpinfo@templetonreligiontrust.org.

8. Summer 2020 Workshop

Grantees will be required to participate in a Summer 2020 “Meet the Grantees” Workshop in a yet to be determined location. Proposals should include \$5,000 T&L (for each PI or Co-PI) to cover expenses for this conference.

9. Bibliography

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