CELSS Grants for Undergraduate Student Projects

The Columbia Experimental Laboratory in the Social Sciences (CELSS) provides funding to support promising experimental projects by undergraduate students for their senior theses. Applications are accepted both for studies conducted in the lab and for studies conducted online.

Eligibility
Applicants must be undergraduate students at Columbia or Barnard preparing to write their senior theses and pursuing a major in Economics, Political Science, Sociology, or in a department affiliated with ISERP. At most one student from each department will be selected to apply.

Application
The deadline for responding to this call is February 21, 2024.
Applications will be evaluated competitively by a committee of referees.

The application must include the following, separate documents:

1. the proposal;
2. an appendix with experimental materials;
3. the budget (i.e., a summary table with a clear description of how the grant funds would be spent on participant payment, fees, etc.);
4. the applicant’s CV;
5. the endorsement of a faculty advisor.

The proposal should directly address the following items:

1. What question(s) does your project study?
2. What is the motivation for and contribution of your project?
3. What is the relevance of an experiment to your project? How will an experiment answer the question(s) your project studies?
4. Describe the procedures for your experiment, including the intended number of subjects, sessions, and payment structure.

Altogether, your proposal should consist of no more than 1,500 words, excluding references. Longer proposals will not be considered.

The appendix should contain materials that demonstrate what the experiment will look like. Examples of such materials include experimental instructions, questions, and screenshots.

The maximum budget is $1,000, the bulk of which should be payments to experimental subjects. If the application concerns a brand-new experimental project, it is strongly recommended to apply for a seed grant of less than $1,000 for running a pilot experiment. Upon successful completion of the pilot, a summary of preliminary results and a new budget can be submitted to request additional funding. The committee retains the discretion to allocate fewer funds than requested.
The endorsement of a faculty advisor can be a short email to the CELSS director (celss-director@columbia.edu), CCing the CELSS manager (celss-manager@columbia.edu). The advisor needs to state explicitly that he/she will be responsible for following the progress of the project. Please also include a copy of this email in the application package.

The applicant should send the documents, in a single compressed folder, to the CELSS manager at celss-manager@columbia.edu. The subject of the e-mail should be “Application for CELSS Funding” and the name of the compressed folder should be “LastnameFirstname_CelssFundingApp”.

Notes:
1. Unless part of a class, any experiment run on CELSS’ subject pool or with financial support from CELSS requires approval by the Institutional Review Board (http://www.columbia.edu/cu/irb/) and the respect of CELSS rules (https://celss.iserp.columbia.edu/research-projects/rules).
2. The funding allocation expires at the end of the second semester following the grant (here: May 2025). Unused funds will be reappropriated by CELSS.
3. CELSS requires that all experiments pay participants an average of $15/hr and a minimum of $1.
4. CELSS generally does not fund field experiments. Please contact the CELSS manager at celss-manager@columbia.edu if you’re unsure whether your experiment falls under this category.

Requests for clarification
Questions concerning this call for proposal and the use of the lab can be addressed to the CELSS manager, at celss-manager@columbia.edu, or to the CELSS director at celss-director@columbia.edu.