Seeking External Funding in Eurasia Studies: Sources, Resources, and Application Tips

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Goals

- Describe Title VIII funding opportunities at SSRC and elsewhere

- Highlight key funding and application issues

- Become familiar with strategic preparation issues: practical and academic
What is Title VIII?

The Title VIII Program, administered by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, provides funding for research and language training to American scholars and students for the study of Eastern Europe and Eurasia (Independent States of the Former Soviet Union). Title VIII maintains U.S. expertise in the regions and brings open source, policy-relevant research to the service of the U.S. Government.
Non-University Sources for Support of Research and Training

- IREX
- American Councils/ACTR
- ACLS
- NCEER
- SSRC—focus on graduate students and young scholars

Training
Field Development
SSRC Eurasia Program, 2012

Field Building Workshops
  Youth
  Quantitative Methods

Fellowships
  - Pre Dissertation Awards
  - Dissertation Development Awards
  - Post-Doctoral Research Awards
Pre-Dissertation Awards

- Aimed at those in the early stages of graduate training
- Focus on preliminary exploration of field sites, archives and other forms of feasibility studies
- Seeks to build research networks
- Meant to support promising research with clear policy links and disciplinary relevance
- Modest in size, but significant in impact
SSRC EURASIA PROGRAM PRE-DISSERTATION RESEARCH AWARDS*, 1999-2008:
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND KEY EVALUATION RESULTS
*Also known as the Advanced Graduate Training Fellowship

SUMMARY EVALUATION FINDINGS
(survey of all recipients with a 62% response rate, semi-structured interviews with 8 recipients)

- 65% of evaluation respondents report filing for ethical review at their home institutions prior to award travel
- 90% of evaluation respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the award, “enabled me to significantly enhance my methodological skills”
- 64% of evaluation respondents reported having advanced to candidacy (defending their dissertation proposal) within one year of the award.
- 87% of all respondents report maintaining strong research engagement in Eurasia

COMMENTS

**Without it, my dissertation research abroad would have taken longer and have been considerably less effective**

**I would just add that the fellowship is critical... The on-site research allows one to do all of the above... The colloquial language exposure, creation of scholarly connections, preliminary fieldwork and methodological experience are all equally important aspects of the training. Offering assistance... in the early stages of research allows more work to be done in depth and with realistic grounding**

SUMMARY STATISTICS ON SSRC PRE-DISSERTATION AWARD RECIPIENTS, 1999-2008

- 41.5% Male
- 100% received award in the first three years of graduate study
- 90% used the grants for preliminary field research in Eurasia
- As of 2/2011, 97.5% advanced to candidacy
- Less than half (49%), from Universities with Eurasian Title VI Centers
Aimed at supporting the **prompt completion** of promising dissertations
Focus on adv. graduate students, research for the dissertation should be completed the research prior to the fellowship period
Professionalization activities, travel grants, and networking opportunities
Meant to support promising research with clear policy links and disciplinary relevance
SSRC EURASIA PROGRAM DISSERTATION DEVELOPMENT* AWARDS BY DISCIPLINE, 1997-2010

*Includes Dissertation Write-Up Awards and Dissertation Fellowships. Please note no awards were funded in 2009.

SUMMARY EVALUATION FINDINGS

- 89% completion rate within 24 months of award between 1997 and 2007
- Over 90% of Fellows remain engaged in Eurasian research and teaching
- Several fellows are engaged in various forms of government service, but more needs to be done to raise awareness of employment options outside of the academy

SUMMARY STATISTICS ON SSRC WRITE-UP AWARD RECIPIENTS, 1997-2010 (N=96)

- 44% Male
- Over 18% of all awards relate to research in the regions of Central Asia and the southern Caucasus
- Over 95% remain active researchers and scholars with a significant focus on Eurasia
- Supported dissertation research, 1997-2010, has garnered BASEES [AAASS] book awards and honorable mentions to date.

COMMENTS

“While my University has a strong Eurasia program, it was very useful to meet with other students at the same stage of the dissertation writing process. Their comments were more useful than the peer feedback from my home University.”

“The new academic reality is that nearly no one is hired until the dissertation is complete. Write-up support is necessary, or we will lose placements.”

“Get this program back at all costs. Without uninterrupted time to carefully craft the dissertation, the time and resources spent in the archives and in the field are wasted. I believe this grant helped significantly speed the publication of my dissertation.”
Post Doctoral Research Awards

- Aimed at scholars who have completed their dissertation within the past five years
- Focus on moving the research agenda forward from the dissertation
- Seeks to build experience in managing external funding
- Meant to support promising research with clear policy links and disciplinary relevance
- Awarded to Universities, with a 10% cap on overhead
SSRC EURASIA PROGRAM POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH AWARDS, 1999-2007:
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND KEY EVALUATION RESULTS

SUMMARY EVALUATION FINDINGS
(semi-structured conversations with 5 selection committee members and 20 recipients)

- Selection Committee interviews were unanimous in support of the program, but stressed the importance of raising application numbers, especially in disciplines other than History.
- 85% of recipients interviewed noted administrative challenges regarding the award, stressing the need for University involvement to enhance recognition.
- Recipients noted that the flexibility of the award significantly increased their ability to use funds efficiently.

SUMMARY STATISTICS ON SSRC POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH AWARD RECIPIENTS, 1999-2007 (N=41)

- 48.8% Male
- Over 25% of all awards relate to research in the regions of Central Asia and the southern Caucasus
- 100% remain active researchers and scholars with a significant focus on Eurasia
- As of 2/2011, 73% of the 1997-2007 recipients are now tenured faculty members (Assoc. or Full Professors)
- Supported research has garnered 3 ASEEES (AAASS) book awards and 6 honorable mentions in the past 10 years.

"The program is well administered and organized" 
"This award is important. It provides a valuable symbol of confidence for young scholars from a highly respected institution" 
"With budgets growing tighter at Universities, it is important to reinstitute this program. I do not know how new professors can maintain research without something like this"
Areas of Note

- Awards reflect a wide disciplinary range
- Avoid jargon, the review panel is interdisciplinary
- Be inventive, and attentive, in thinking about policy relevance
- Convey your commitment to the project and preparation (language skills, knowledge of the literature, etc.)
- Think about cost-sharing
- Complete all elements of the application
- Send well before the deadline
Master your Methods

- Methodological training is increasingly important
- Join in on research programs, gain knowledge in secondary analysis OR methodological approaches
- Know the methodological similarities and differences you have with local scholars
- GET ETHICS TRAINING
Start the Fieldwork Certification Early

- Human Subjects Review, Get certified! certification is: http://cme.cancer.gov/c01/

An interesting site from a European University on research ethics can be found at http://www.cre.gu.se/publications.html

SSRC has a guide to applications:

And an excellent article in the Lancet on pragmatism in research ethics can be found at: http://www.findarticles.com/m0833/n9098_v351/20313173/p1/article.jhtml
Many fellowship essays can be edited to fit several competitions

Register at the Community of Science
www.cos.com

Take a few moments and register yourself on the Community of Science Web page (note computer must be linked with a participating University for you to be able to register). This search engine checks all grant postings for selected keywords and provides an email update of opportunities every two weeks. This is STRONGLY recommended.
Establish Contacts

- Identify individuals and institutions in the field
  - Look at the literature
  - Use faculty contacts
  - Spread your net widely

- Send them a short project description
- Obtain written collaborative agreements
- Get feedback on your project
- Focus on professional relationships
Letters


- Choose letter writers carefully – need specifics on your work
- Make sure you give all the materials well in advance
- Give an indication of the issues each person should cover
- Fill out forms, give addressed envelopes, follow-up
Work Together

- Form fellowship work teams
- READ the instructions and call for proposals
- Read over successful applications
- Keep in email contact
- Share insights—both successes and failures

These are not competitive but rather cumulative processes