**Grant Writing Guidebook**

Prev. grants

[[Data Empowerment Fund](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dP9-cI8Tp6z5MOSbYowG_YfyjiNk8W4IulhWnOG3V_M/edit?usp=share_link) - Arbiter]

[[SIO application](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nXeGDxci2AaMku50-IZgqHqqVDwVVwSoAvj9x6G6bqU/edit?usp=share_link) - (1/2 ) AI powered tipline]

[[SIO application](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1JqG6t7pvW3yU0VdBbOovFXvXLPIQD5pk/edit?usp=share_link&ouid=115030818502178580514&rtpof=true&sd=true) - (2/2) Itemized budget]

[[LLAMA Impact Grant](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uG6PVf_i1gsYeLgjJm6st7il2SgbddXfQxadu0QHN6k/edit?usp=sharing) - tiplines]

**Introduction**

✏️ Learn about our narrative for grant writing. Our goal is to ensure that all grant proposals are consistent in their messaging.

**Tone:** Don’t make your reader work to understand

**Writing Style:** When you’re answering a grant application’s questions, don’t make the reader work to find your answer.

**Creating a Compelling Narrative:** Your narrative should tell a story that people can easily love to listen and relate to. Think: why would the reviewers want to fund this? Focus on the following elements:

* **Who Are You?:** What are your credentials? Past experience?? What have you done this week??? 🙃
* **Problem:** What is the problem that your organization is addressing?
* **Solution:** How will your organization's project solve this problem?
  1. What will the grant be used for?
* **Impact:** What will be the impact of your project on the community?
  1. How can you measure impact?

\*\*Example from DEF grant below.

Arbiter

**🎤 Introduce yourself**

We are a student-led research collective called SimPPL, fiscally sponsored by a US-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit, the One Fact Foundation, developing open-access civic integrity tools for journalists and media development organizations. SimPPL was founded in 2021 by Dr. Swapneel Mehta, a postdoctoral associate at MIT and Boston University, researching platform governance and free speech. Insights from teams of student researchers across the US, UK, and Global South drive our organizational decision-making. Our diverse team has received grants from Google, the Wikimedia Foundation, Mozilla, Amazon, the Goethe Institute, the Belfer Fellowship, the NYC Media Lab, and others. We have successfully built multiple student organizations that are training hundreds of students each year called DJ Unicode (https://djunicode.in) and the NYU AI School (https://nyu-mll.github.io/nyu-ai-school-2023/).

Our core team comprises members who are postdoctoral associates, full-time data scientists working with cloud infrastructure, ML engineers, production engineers, political scientists, professors, and policy researchers. We’ve fostered a global community that champions community-based participatory research.

SimPPL offers technical and personal mentorship to students from non-premier institutes and underserved communities while paying them to develop scalable Trust and Safety tools to protect the public from online harm. Many of our student contributors have faced economic constraints and gender-based limitations, and their lived experiences inform our mission to build civic integrity tools to protect global users from overlooked communities. We recently launched a fellowship program to invite 60+ new students from Tier-II and Tier-III institutes in India and abroad to contribute to our goal.

In three years, we have built technology products like Parrot, analyzing hundreds of millions of online posts for The Sunday Times in the UK, Tech Global Institute, and Sakhi, a Bengali-speaking WhatsApp chatbot, securing research pilot commitments with communities in Bangladesh with additional interest for a Marathi and Hindi version with nonprofits in India. In 2022, we identified 400k malicious accounts and reported them to integrity professionals at X/Twitter. Our work and commentary are featured by Google, Deutsche Welle, Fast Company, and the Wikimedia Foundation (WikiCred).

**Problem Statement**: Trust and Safety (T&S) professionals and researchers have problems tracking malicious content spreading across different platforms fast enough, resulting in serious outcomes, including genocide, rioting, and election interference. Policymakers globally are developing guidelines and regulations to ensure that companies are required to share data to measure online risks and harms. However, ample technical expertise is needed to track the spread of harmful content across various social platforms, and T&S resources are limited. There are tradeoffs to prioritize which online escalations platforms must address based on potential virality, societal impact, brand and reputational risk, and other consequences. The nature of how flagged content is spread across different platforms provides a valuable signal on prioritizing escalations. For example, if there are multiple flagged misleading political deepfakes, the deepfake that has been populated across many platforms, gaining ample views, should be considered more harmful than a comparable deepfake that has limited engagement and has only been shared on one platform. This is challenging to do internally as teams at platforms are siloed and platforms have historically not collaborated on such issues beyond child safety and terrorism content.

**Solution** – To address these problems, we’ve developed an easy-to-use platform for the community, called Arbiter, a tool that allows users to track how individual pieces of content are populated across various social platforms. A T&S researcher can use Arbiter to monitor how videos that contain political advertisements or disinformation on YouTube are spread across other platforms such as X/Twitter, Truth Social, Bluesky, and Meta-owned platforms, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. Notably, the researcher tracking this populated information does not need to have a robust technical background because Arbiter is designed to be user-friendly with natural language queries, and can empower vetted third-party researchers from academia, journalism, and newsrooms to scale their online safety research. Tracking how information spreads across multiple platforms is crucial because people are more likely to believe in falsehoods following multiple exposures.

The grant allows us to develop a harm-monitoring system, through participatory policy research using Arbiter. We have received commitment from our partners across journalism, civil society, newsrooms, and fact-checking who would like to build community focused features into Arbiter. We have written up two prior reports using Arbiter independently, and seek to make this generally available for tech and policy researchers in industry and academia, especially students. We have run a Google and Mozilla backed fellowships program to advance responsible computing education in India with Arbiter and hope to use the grant to make this tool community-friendly and open-access. We aim to produce multiple reports for academic journals made in collaboration with the Data Empowerment Fund.

**Impact**

1. **In what country will your initiative have impact?** We aim to launch this initiative across India, Mongolia, and Bangladesh. Although Arbiter is agnostic to regional influences, we are focusing on the global south with our work, given decades of lived experience and significant experience building public health and AI tools for nonprofits operating in over a hundred villages, benefitting tens of thousands of people in India.

🚀 Pro Tips

* **Do your research**: Before you start writing, take the time to research the grantmaker and their funding priorities. (e.g. who’s on the review panel? What’s their background like?)
* **Follow the instructions**: Be sure to follow the grantmaker's instructions carefully. This includes using the correct format and submitting all required materials.
* **Proofread your work**: Before you submit your grant proposal, proofread it carefully for errors. (e.g. run it through Grammarly, pass it by teammates)