

## **An ethical analysis of Gary Becker's Immigration Market Proposal**

Type of Funding Request: Online Funding Inquiry

Status of this Funding Request: Submitted

### **Instructions:**

This PDF document is a read-only version of the final Full Proposal you submitted to the John Templeton Foundation. You may print or save this document for your records. No further edits to this funding request can be made at this time.

## **Funding Request Info**

- **Title:** An ethical analysis of Gary Becker's Immigration Market Proposal
- **Request Status:** Submitted
- **Core Funding Area:** Individual Freedom and Free Markets
- **Last Updated Date:** 08/30/16 8:02pm

## **Cycle & Area**

### **Grant Program:**

### **Small Grant Program - 2016 Cycle 3**

- Request Amount is Less Than or Equal to \$217,400 USD
- Submission Due Date is August 31, 2016
- Notification by September 30, 2016

**Is this funding inquiry related to Science and the Big Questions, or to one of the Foundation's other funding areas (Character Virtue Development, Genetics, Individual Freedom and Free Markets, etc.)?:** One of the other funding areas  
**Please select the specific funding area from the list below.:** Individual Freedom and Free Markets

## **Project Description**

**Project Title:** An ethical analysis of Gary Becker's Immigration Market Proposal

**Executive Summary:**

This project investigates the ethical foundations of Gary Becker's radical solution for an immigration market, first presented in 1987. Becker became known for applying market principles to problems of human behavior, such as organ donation, marriage, and reproduction.

Economists and philosophers are often at odds when it comes to market solutions to policy. While economists claim markets are neutral, philosophers argue that they can alter valuable moral and social norms. This project looks into the whether immigration markets can corrupt citizenship or nationality, two core social values for Nation states. To date, there is no ethical analysis of Becker's proposal albeit it receives support from economists. We will also suggest changes to current United States (U.S.) immigration policy based on the findings of our analysis.

The activities of this project are academic in nature, which involve drafting working papers, meeting other experts, and participating in conferences and presenting papers. There will be two products: (i) an academic paper and (ii) one (or more) op-ed(s). Our goal is to introduce (a) market solutions to the U.S. immigration policy political debate and (b) the ethical debate around a market for immigration.

**Project Justification and Description:**

Current immigration policies are obsolete. They cannot handle the increasing flows of people moving from country to country, they do not mitigate the impacts of immigration in source and destination communities, and they have no humanitarian answer for illegal immigration. We set out to address these issues by proposing an innovative policy solution: the establishment of immigration rights markets.

This policy proposal is not entirely new. Nobel laureate Gary Becker first suggested an immigration market in 1987. Becker is known for applying market reasoning to human behavior. While most economists rely exclusively on utilitarianism to decide whether such a policy is fair, philosophers draw from many ethical theories before making moral judgements. This project sits in the midst of this debate of whether market policies are fair solutions to social problems.

Our approach is novel in two ways. First, we provide the first rigorous analysis of the fairness of immigration markets. Philosophers have looked into the ethical elements of a market for organs, for marriage, and for women's reproductive rights, but have largely ignored markets for immigration. At the core of the debate is the neutrality of markets. Economists claim markets are neutral and pass no moral value on the transactions they bring about. Philosophers argue that markets can change moral values and social norms which are essential for society. We want to clarify this debate.

Second, we suggest changes to Becker's proposal to make it fairer from a distributional perspective. His proposal is groundbreaking in that it assigns a monetary value to immigration rights, which in turn can be used to mitigate the effects of migration. We advance Becker's proposal by suggesting a better distribution of costs and benefits based on the latest empirical evidence of the impacts of immigration. Migrants are largely responsible for benefits and positive externalities, but unfairly pay most of its costs.

Finally, we put together the results and suggestions aforementioned and compare them to current U.S. immigration policies. Under utilitarian principles of justice and acknowledging the right to exclude, we show that current rules-based or lottery policies are likely less efficient than Becker's proposal. Current policies are less transparent, have larger costs, and create smaller benefits. Our goal is to start a serious discussion about a new U.S. immigration policy that incorporates market solutions and price theory so as to increase the benefits to society.

In order to achieve the goal of influencing immigration policy reform, our project is centered on two products: (i) an academic paper and (ii) opinion piece(s). The paper lays the ground for debate and defines what are the most important issues policymakers should have in mind when designing a market-based immigration policy. The op-eds, however, serve the purpose of informing the public about what is our proposal. It is fairly common that experts cannot communicate their ideas to the public, creating a divide which is unproductive both for scholars, whose ideas never see the light of day, and for society, which loses out with other ill-implemented policies.

This project will best be carried out at UNC Public Policy. First, we have a multidisciplinary team of researchers who will contribute to the

project. Philosophers, economists, and political scientists are not isolated in their departments but are tackling policy issues together, contributing independent angles. Second, the team leader has over five years of experience in project management in government (United Kingdom and Brazil) and has managed portfolios over £300,000. In particular, these key elements set us apart in how to translate academic insights into useful policy advice.

Since this is an academic/policy project in nature, the activities will be proper of academia, think tanks and government. First, there is the research stage, in which funds will be used to cover researchers' work. Project resources will also be used to purchase access to databases and relevant literature. The research activity represents 70% of project allocation. Next, there will be workshop type activities, which involve travel to conferences and presentations at universities, think-tanks, and government institutions. The project will cover these travel expenses, which will make 15% of project allocation. Last is outreach, in which we will submit papers to peer-review journals and news articles to media outlets as well as attend media-related events to promote our project through interviews, events, and conferences. This activity will make up the final 15% of project resources.

**Project Description Attachment:****Relation to Sir John Templeton's Donor Intent:**

First, the project promotes scientific advancement, fundamental to spiritual and human endeavor. Often markets are met with disbelief in their power to create social welfare, in particular when they promote the exchange of non-traditional goods and services. Under rigorous scientific analysis, we show that this skepticism is unfounded. Second, the project advocates for economic freedom over excessive legislation in the formulation of policy. Current U.S. immigration policy is a collection of previous statutes which restrain individual choice and deliver poor outcomes for society. We plan to show that a more open and competitive market for immigration can greatly increase social welfare. Finally, the project advances previous research sponsored by the Foundation, such as one of the Big Questions Series (Does the free market corrode moral character? Autumn 2008) and grant 39880 (Markets and Morality: Do Free Markets Corrode Moral Values?).

**Project Relationship to Previous Grants:** No**Proposed Project Start Date:** 01/01/2017**Proposed Project End Date:** 08/31/2017

## Personnel

### Primary Contact Information

**Prefix:** Mr.

**First Name/Given Name:** Andre

**Middle Names:**

**Last Name, Family Name, or Surname:** Assumpcao

**Suffix:**

**Title:** Doctoral Student

**E-mail:** aassumpcao@unc.edu

**Phone Number:** 8572007739

### Project Leader

**Project Leader Status:** The Primary Contact is the Project Leader

**Project Leader's CV/Resume Upload:** aassumpcao-academic.pdf

### Project Co-Leader

**Project Co-Leader Status:** There is no Project Co-Leader for this request

**To the best of your knowledge, is the Project Leader or Project Co-Leader a JTF Trustee, Officer or staff member or related to a JTF Trustee, Officer or staff member as a spouse, sibling, child, or parent?:** No

**Additional Personnel:**

N/A.

**History with the Foundation:**

N/A.

## **Organization**

**Applicant Country:** United States

**Organization Name:** The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Department of Public Policy

**Also Known As:** UNC Public Policy

**Did this organization receive 50% or more of its annual funding in any one of the last three years from any combination of the John Templeton Foundation, Templeton World Charity Foundation or Templeton Religion Trust?:** No

## **Budget**

**In what currency are you requesting support from the Foundation?:** USD

**Total Project Amount:** 46859

**Request Amount:** 22400

**Brief Budget explanation and Sources of Additional Funding:**

John Templeton Foundation:

1x researcher at \$25 per hour, 10 hours per week, 32 weeks = \$16,000  
15% travel expenses (flight tickets, accomodation, subsistance) = \$2,400  
15% outreach (events, paper submissions, interviews) = \$2,400  
10% overhead to the university = \$1,600  
TOTAL: \$22,400

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:

1x semester out-of-state tuition = \$ 14,408.58  
1x teaching assistantship requirement = \$ 8,750  
1x semester graduate student health insurance = \$900  
TOTAL: \$24,058.58 (co-funding)

PROJECT TOTAL: \$22,400 + \$24,058.80 (co-funding) = \$46,859