

Interledger NextGen Higher Education Grant

Call for Letters of Intent (LoIs)

Application Guide



Interledger
FOUNDATION

A comprehensive guide to applying for the Interledger NextGen Higher Education Grant. The Applicant Guide provides prospective applicants with the resources and information on how to submit a Letter of Intent (LoI) for this grant program.

January 2025

INTRODUCTION

About the Interledger Foundation

The [Interledger Foundation](#) is a global nonprofit foundation and steward of the [Interledger Protocol \(ILP\)](#) and [Open Standards](#). We advocate for adopting open, interoperable payment solutions while supporting organizations that want to build on Interledger and maintain a robust open-source community.

We aim to increase access to digital financial services for the 1.4 billion people worldwide who are currently excluded from traditional banking systems. We do this by making it easier to send money to anyone, anywhere. When payments are powered by Interledger, transactions are not limited to a particular bank, mobile money provider, or location.

Mission

We aim to **build equity and inclusion within Interledger, the global payments network for inclusive digital financial service providers.**

We work with entrepreneurs, organizations, and government agencies to research, prototype, and implement Open Standards solutions aligned with our mission. We actively support underrepresented groups and vulnerable populations to advance digital financial inclusion which will ignite progress towards attaining the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Vision

In the same way that the internet has eased the way information is shared across the world, Interledger applies similar principles in easing the flow of payments across the web - through **packets**. It's a secure and fast way for anyone, anywhere, to send or receive payments, and one of its best features is that it can be in any currency. This supports **our vision for a world where anyone can send a payment as easily as an email.**

We work with partners worldwide who share our vision to change the way digital financial services work to improve people's lives. Our global strategy for change is:

- Support the development of digital financial systems in vulnerable areas.
- Fund innovative solutions geared toward serving underrepresented populations.
- Foster an ecosystem that supports a paradigm shift in payment systems.
- Create a robust and active Interledger community that grows together.
- Enrich talent pipelines to bring new voices and perspectives into the fintech space.

Values

We are a value-based organization operating on the following principles:

- **Be Open:** Our technology is always open, accessible, and shared with the global community.
- **Be Inclusive:** We bring new voices into the tech ecosystem, working with underrepresented groups and vulnerable populations.
- **Be Innovative:** Through fresh perspectives and creative thought partnerships, we intend to shake up the status quo.

To learn more about the Interledger Foundation, visit our [website](#) and/or preview our [presentation](#) on how our work seeks to revolutionize digital payments.

About the Interledger Foundation Programs

The Interledger Foundation Program Department designs and manages programs that advance the Interledger Foundation's mission and ILP's adoption through community-led, innovative projects. At the Interledger Foundation, we believe that the best solutions come from within the communities they serve. That's why we directly fund grassroots organizations and support whole governments in creating open payment solutions.

The Program Department manages competitive grants, funded partnerships, and community activation. All to build sustainable equity in technology and the global financial ecosystem.

The Program Department has various grant programs targeting individuals (developers, entrepreneurs, innovators, and leaders in open tech) and organizations (NGOs, Nonprofits, Companies, Governments, Universities, and other collectives). We support innovative ideas focusing on [digital financial services](#), university-level [youth education, and engagement](#) and connecting systematically financially excluded communities through [ambassador engagement](#).

To get an overview of the varying programs we have on stream, please visit our grants portfolio on our [website](#).

INTERLEDGER-NEXTGEN HIGHER EDUCATION GRANT

As part of our global strategy, we are seeking to collaborate with universities around the globe to create more diverse pathways for undergraduate and graduate students to help shape a future where people aren't just fixing legacy systems' mistakes but are building fairer, inclusive, and interoperable payment networks. Through this grant, we hope to nurture talent pipelines by working with educational institutions to inspire future leaders to advocate for inclusive digital financial systems; help shape the next generation of digital financial inclusion leaders, and prepare students to be innovators in open payments, open-source, fintech, and social change.

The Interledger Foundation has soft launched this program with two pilot undertakings with [Bowie State University](#) (USA) and the [University of Cape Town - Financial Innovation Hub](#) (South Africa). The 2025 grant cycle is an open call accessible to all registered, duly accredited universities, globally.

This open invitation to Universities worldwide is to submit a letter of interest for its competitive Interledger-NextGen Higher Education Grant funding opportunity. The application process will comprise two phases starting with the request for Lols. Shortlisted universities will advance to the application round, which will require more extensive details about the proposed project.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

This grant is open to registered, accredited institutions including public and private two to four-year institutions, colleges, institutional systems or consortia of institutions, and university-affiliated research centers and laboratories.

Applying universities must align the proposed initiative with their undergraduate or graduate departments in any of the following areas: computer science, information technology, business, sustainable development, or related fields.

FUNDING FOCUS

The proposed project/initiative should be built on diversity, equity, and inclusion principles and support the Interledger Foundation's thrust to foster an empowering ecosystem for digital financial inclusion.

To learn more about the Interledger NextGen Higher Education Grant, [visit here](#).

This grant seeks to collaborate with tertiary institutions to highlight the impact of technology on financial access and inclusion. Overall, the grant aims to accomplish the following goals:

- Increase student engagement, interaction, and learning about open-payment technologies, open-source, and digital financial inclusion with a significant focus on the Interledger Protocol and related technologies.
- Enable faculty to implement effective forward-thinking initiatives to enable digital financial literacy and inclusion.
- Showcase career pathways in open payments, open-source, sustainable development, and the multi-disciplinary fintech space.

EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS

The Interledger Foundation will consider a wide range of projects representing a blend of campus activities, including but not limited to, those that seek to

- Highlight new open-source technologies (Interledger Protocol & Rafiki) and intend to integrate them into the course curriculum by designing a project for students to complete using this technology. This could also take the shape of:
 - Revamping, developing, and delivering a curriculum with an essential focus on digital financial inclusion and how technology through open payments can foster access to underserved and unbanked communities.
 - Technological exploration which includes incorporating and/or prototyping a solution enabled by Interledger Protocol or Rafiki. This can be in the form of Hackathons or the development of a demo software solution.
- Provide career guidance and placement opportunities to connect students with emerging careers in open-source technology, whether through internships, fellowships, etc.
 - This focus should be on exploring means to build students' skills in the following areas: entrepreneurship, social impact, marketing & communications, fintech policy & regulations, research, etc.

KEY ELEMENTS

The following key elements describe the fundamental aspects of this grant cycle. Subsequent cycles will be implemented after a review of the current cycle, which may result in changes to key elements of the program and updated guidance for applicants.

→ **Minimum and Maximum Grant Request Amounts:**

The fund will grant up to USD 50,000 to cover both work on the proposed project and any costs associated with event participation, training, or software development.

→ **Minimum and Maximum Project Duration:**

The maximum project duration is 12 months.

GRANT TIMELINES

We will accept LOI submissions on an ongoing basis up to Friday, October 3, 205. Any changes to the timelines will be communicated to applicants.

Grant Cycle Timelines - NextGen Higher Education Grant	
→ Call for Lols window open for application submission	Feb 3, 2025
→ Grant Window Closes for Applications	Oct 3, 2025
→ Review and Shortlisting of Applicants	Ongoing
→ Invitation to Submit Full Application ¹	Ongoing

APPLICATION PROCESS

The Interledger Foundation uses [Submittable](#) as the online grants application and management system for our Grant Programs. Applications must be submitted through the Submittable portal as made available by the Interledger Foundation. Applications submitted by any other means are not admissible and will not be accepted or evaluated.

¹ Details of the application process and timelines will be provided to shortlisted candidates.

Terms of Service and [Privacy Policy](#)'."/>

The screenshot shows the Submittable sign-up interface. It features a 'Sign Up' button on the left and a 'Sign In' button on the right. The main area is titled 'Welcome!' with the sub-instruction 'Create your free Submittable account to get started.' Below this are four input fields: 'Email', 'Confirm email', 'Password', and 'Confirm password'. Further down are two more input fields for 'First name' and 'Last name'. A prominent orange 'Sign Up' button is at the bottom. A note at the bottom of the form states: 'By signing up you agree to our [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#)'.

If you are using [Submittable](#) for the first time, each organization must sign up and create an account. After verification, you may proceed to complete the application.

For technical support with the application platform, please contact the [Submittable Help Desk](#).

Applications must:

- Be submitted through Submittable, our online application platform
- Be submitted by the respective deadline stated.
- Be submitted in English (EN) (Lols should be submitted in English).
- Request a grant amount based on the available indicated grant funding.
- Propose a project duration that matches the indicated timeline.

Applicant Eligibility

All applicants will be required to complete a form to assess their eligibility for the grant. If successful, they will then gain access to the form to upload their letter of interest.

All eligible applicants must:

- **Be a registered, accredited tertiary institution.**
- **Applicants MUST be 18 years or older.**
- **Applicants MUST have read and agreed to the [ILF Participation Guidelines](#).**
- **Applicants should be a member of faculty/staff for the proposed institution.**

Once applicants meet the above criteria, they can access the form for completion.

Applicants must also:

→ **Support The Interledger Foundation's compliance with relevant U.S. laws, rules, and regulations.**

- ◆ The Interledger Foundation must comply with the economic and trade sanctions program administered by the Office of Foreign Assets Control ("OFAC") of the U.S. Department of the Treasury. These sanctions have been imposed on specific countries, individuals, and entities that appear on OFAC's List of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons (the "SDN List").
- ◆ The Interledger Foundation is prohibited from providing most goods or services to residents of sanctioned countries or their governmental entities or to SDNs without an applicable U.S. government authorization or exemption.

→ **Have no conflicts of interest.**

LETTER OF INTENT OUTLINE

The Letter of Intent (LOI) should be 2 pages or less. We've provided a sample template that can be downloaded from the application form. We ask that you include the requisite details using the outline below to populate the 2-page submission. Note, that this template is a sample and can be edited as you see fit, but it should contain the following critical points:

- **Executive Summary** - a paragraph summary of the overall proposed project's objectives, its intended impact, and the estimated budget/grant amount being sought with an indication of what the majority of the budget will be spent on.
- **University Profile** - provide an overview of the description of the University - demographics, location, and related course/department that this project would benefit.
- **Project Description, Implementation & Impact** - an overview of the proposed program including a high-level description of the nature of the activities to be undertaken e.g. course offering, curriculum reboot/development, etc. An estimation of the project execution timeline and key deliverables.
 - The project should indicate some level of investigation, integration, and student exposure to the Interledger Protocol, and engagement with the ILF ecosystem.
 - The proposed initiative should focus on developing skills in open payment technologies, social impact, entrepreneurship, and international development research. Successful projects must have a theory of impact.
 - The project should focus on broadening participation and serving youths who have been historically marginalized and underrepresented and value Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in their mission.

INSTRUCTIONS

Submitting Your Letter of Intent (LoI)

- Download this Word document/template.
- Populate your letter of intent by completing the missing aspects. Note this is a template for consideration but you may edit as you deem fit.
- Delete the details of the instruction.
- Save as a PDF and upload in the indicated slot in your Submittable application.

[Date]

Dear ILF Program Team,

[Name of your University] submits this Letter of Intent to notify the Interledger Foundation of our interest in applying for the Interledger-NextGen Open Payments Grant funding opportunity.

Our mission at [name of university or its Abbreviation] focuses on [*enter your mission*]. As such, we would like to [*executive summary*] that will benefit [*university profile*].

With the Interledger Foundation's generous support, [Name of your university or its Abbreviation] will execute [*project description, goals, and key project activities.*]. This project we anticipate can be executed within [*the implementation timeline*], yielding the following results [*key deliverables and its intended impact on the audience*].

[Name of Professor/Department Head] will be our main point of contact for the application process and can be reached at [PoC's email].

Thank you for the opportunity to submit our expression of interest for this grant opportunity.

Sincerely,

[Name Submitting LOI]
[Job Title]
[Email Address]

REVIEW & EVALUATION OF LOI

All submissions will be reviewed by the Interledger Foundation team to assess their suitability for consideration to submit a full proposal.

The submissions will be evaluated against the following criteria:

- **Project goals:** Clearly stated, measurable project goals that align with ILF's education focus and grant goals.
- **Impact:** Explanation of the short and/or long-term impact the project will have on the students and the broader university community at large.

- **Assessment:** A plan for assessing project goals by comparing students' learning before and after the implementation of the project.
- **Management:** An indication of how the project's implementation will be managed.
- **Timeline:** The project is feasibly accomplished within the one-year timeframe.
- **Budget:** The indicated expenditures are within the grant amount and relate to project goals.

Frequently Asked Questions

At the Interledger Foundation, we work to improve our process of continuously making and managing grants. Our goal is to increase impact and provide more guidance to help potential grantees innovate, incubate, and develop great ideas that ultimately achieve results for underserved communities across the globe.

This FAQ addresses common questions concerning the grantmaking process, our funding opportunities, and timelines.

Does the ILF Foundation have particular funding areas?

Yes, guided by the Interledger Foundation's vision and mission, we have specified funding areas related to open-source technologies. For more details on the current opportunities, please visit our grants listing on the [ILF website](#).

Does the ILF Foundation fund non-US organizations?

Yes, the Interledger Foundation welcomes applications and has granted organizations worldwide. However, as a US-registered NGO, ILF recognizes and cannot support entities registered in territories that are on the US sanctions list.

What funding area should I select for my project?

Please select the funding opportunity that best fits your organization/project. You can refer to our grants page for a breakdown of our funding areas and insights on some of the projects previously funded within each area. The application process and requirements differ for each funding area, so our foundation program team does not reassign applications to other funding areas.

Please review the requirements and be sure that this [grant opportunity](#) is the one you seek to apply for.

What are the basic criteria for applying for the Interledger NextGen Higher Education grant?

Applicant MUST be a recognized registered, accredited tertiary institution (e.g. university, college, or vocational institution in the country of its operation).

Applicants will be asked to submit proof of registration and accreditation as part of the application process.

Can I submit a LOI with just a few items missing and get those items to you after the deadline?

No. We require that submissions be completed and submitted to us by the stated deadline. We will not consider a proposal missing the required documents, and it will be withdrawn from consideration.

If you submitted a LOI and would like to make adjustments and/or upload additional documents before the grant deadline, you may submit a request to open your application for editing via the Submittable portal.

Organizations that have been declined may apply again. We strongly encourage all organizations to review our guidelines and contact us to discuss potential fit if necessary.

What will I need to start my grant application?

We recommend you read this **Grant Application Guideline** for the Interledger NextGen Higher Education grant before you begin applying. All funding opportunities with respective grant guidelines are also listed on our website.

How can I reach out if I have a question about the grant application?

You may submit your questions via our grant-dedicated [Slack channel](#), or contact the ILF program team at programteam@interledger.org.

Resources

About Interledger Foundation

- Website - <https://interledger.org/>
- Monthly Community Calls - [archive here](#)
- Interledger Foundation Presentation [here](#)
- Join the Interledger Slack community [here](#)
- [ILF Participation Guidelines](#)
- ILF Community Forum [here](#)

ILP Technology

- Interledger Protocol - <https://interledger.org/developers/rfcs/interledger-protocol/>
- Developer's Portal - <https://interledger.org/developers/>
- Engineers Blogs - <https://interledger.org/developers/blog/>

Open Payments

- Learn about the Open Payments API - <https://openpayments.dev/introduction/overview/>
- Open Payments Github - <https://github.com/interledger/open-payments>
- Code snippet guide for using the Open Payments API -
<https://openpayments.dev/snippets/before-you-begin/>

Digital Wallets (Interledger-compatible / Open Payments-enabled)

- Fynbos - <https://fynbos.app/wallet>

Rafiki

- What is Rafiki - <https://rafiki.dev/introduction/overview/>
- Rafiki Github - <https://github.com/interledger/rafiki>
- Setup a Rafiki developer environment -
<https://github.com/interledger/rafiki/blob/main/README.md#local-development-environment>
- Join the #rafiki channel on the Interledger community Slack - see “[Join the Interledger Slack community](#)”
- Setup a local playground with 2 connected test Rafiki nodes -
<https://rafiki.dev/playground/overview/>

Interledger test wallet

- The [Interledger test wallet](#) is an ILP-enabled test wallet provider that developers can use to test their Open Payments integrations. Sign up for a test digital wallet and get a wallet address at <https://rafiki.money/>

Digital Money Blog

- Explore monthly blogs that focus on digital money, financial inclusion, instant payment systems, and topical matters relating to digital financial services. Read blogs here: <https://community.interledger.org/t/digitalmoney>

Interledger Podcast

- Listen to thought-provoking ideas and conversations challenging the ways of thinking about our digital financial world and why it matters. Listen to the FutureMoney Podcast on Castapod - <https://podcast.interledger.org/@futuremoneypodcast> (available on all podcast platforms)

Interledger Summit

- Website - <https://interledger.org/summit>
- [2024 Summit - Talks & Presentations Playlist](#)
- [2023 Summit - Talks & Presentations Playlist](#)
- [2022 Summit - Talks & Presentations Playlist](#)

Previously Funded Institutions

- [University of Cape Town](#)
- [Bowie State University](#)