



# Request for Proposals

Applied Research on Intellectual Humility

Project duration:  
October 2023-April 2026



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## Project Overview

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With the support of a generous grant from The John Templeton Foundation, the Center for Stress, Trauma, and Resilience at Georgia State University welcomes empirical proposals from various disciplines to investigate the development of interventions to cultivate intellectual humility. We anticipate proposals for empirical projects from scholars—including early career scholars and graduate students—that address one or more of the Big Questions listed below. Projects will run from October 2023 – April 2026. It is expected that 10-12 standard awards and 5-6 early career awards will be made.

## Definition and Conceptualization of Intellectual Humility

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Intellectual humility has recently received increased attention from scholars across disciplines. Intellectual humility is a subdomain of humility that differs from general humility (Davis et al., 2016). We seek to fund projects that directly examine intellectual humility rather than humility in general. Here, we conceive of intellectual humility (IH) as a kind of attentiveness to and owning of intellectual limitations (Whitcomb et al. 2017). We take this definition to include a range of intellectual limitations that one might notice and own, such as one’s cognitive mistakes and deficits in intellectual skills, one’s ignorance and gaps in knowledge, one’s tendency to overlook the weaknesses of one’s evidence for a cherished belief, and one’s unwillingness to adjust one’s confidence in a cherished belief to match the strength of the evidence for it. Intellectual humility is the set of dispositions that enables a person to notice and own intellectual limitations. For instance, intellectual humility enables a person to notice (rather than be unaware of) their lack of cognitive skill in a particular area, to accept that they overlooked weaknesses in their evidence for a cherished belief and admit this to themselves (rather than be in denial about it), to admit their cognitive mistakes to others (rather than pretend they don’t exist), to care about their limitations because they are motivated to gain knowledge, and to feel regret (rather than get defensive) about them. We take this conception of intellectual humility to be connected to a wide range of intrapersonal and interpersonal behaviors and attitudes that are measurable. Expected intrapersonal behaviors and attitudes include the motivation to adjust one’s confidence in a belief so that it accords with the evidence (Leary et al., 2017; McElroy et al., 2014), an awareness of own’s own intellectual limitations and biases (Haggard et al., 2018), and a reduction of concern about one’s own intellectual accomplishments. Expected interpersonal behaviors and attitudes include admitting when one is wrong or does not know, an eagerness to learn from others and seek help about cognitive matters, a willingness to consider alternative perspectives and viewpoints, and regulating selfish impulses in order to express beliefs nondefensively.

This way of conceptualizing IH clearly allows for cases where a person reduces their confidence in a belief or changes their mind as a result of virtuous intellectual humility—when, for instance, they notice a reason to be suspicious of their evidence for a particular cherished belief, investigate whether their evidence is reliable, rightly conclude that it is not and reduce their confidence in the belief or revise it altogether. Importantly, however, this conception also allows for cases where virtuous IH does not result in belief-revision, or a reduction of confidence, and strong convictions are maintained—when, for instance, a person notices a reason to be suspicious of their evidence, investigates whether their evidence is reliable, and rightly concludes that it is and maintains confidence in the belief. So, we do not think IH entails a lack of commitment or conviction, or the absence of attitudinal strength. Nor do we think that IH necessarily entails reducing confidence in a belief or revising it altogether. Maintaining strong conviction can be consistent with virtuous IH.

The problem is that not all strong convictions should be maintained and defended, even if for some people, every issue feels like a moral certainty that needs ardent defense, and even if in some contexts in particular, there might be an amplification of a perceived moral righteousness that seems to require stalwart protection. We favor proposals that will tackle these issues directly by inviting applicants to consider intellectual humility in the context of strong commitments: situations in which people feel a strong pressure to conform to group norms, defend their extant views, be oblivious to or avoid owning cognitive limitations, or protect a particular viewpoint, in order to preserve group-level benefits, assure belonging, or mitigate existential anxiety. That is, we are interested in proposals that directly assess situations in which intellectual humility is important to demonstrate but when doing so is difficult because the stakes are so high: either because acknowledging that one is wrong, or acknowledging other cognitive limitations would have considerable psychological consequences (e.g., existential anxiety) or social implications (e.g., exclusion from a particular religious, political, or social domain).

## RFP Overview

The present funding competition is designed to advance the applied science of intellectual humility. While there have been substantive developments in the definition, measurement, and functions of intellectual humility, very few intervention studies have been published. Though it has been suggested that intellectual humility has implications for how society handles disagreement around contentious topics, such as politics or religion, more work is needed to translate basic research into approaches to help people develop and cultivate skills related to intellectual humility. We invite empirical proposals from scholars who may approach these questions from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (e.g., psychology, sociology) and who can consider interdisciplinary work (e.g., philosophy) on intellectual humility.

A central purpose of the RFP is to identify how to develop long-term, sustained, intentional change in behavior and attitudes related to intellectual humility—what some might call the formation of virtuous habits. Particularly, each grant project should consider existing interdisciplinary theoretical work that integrates divergent perspectives from intellectual

humility, habit research, virtue ethics, virtue epistemology, and clinical/counseling psychology. The criteria for rating each proposal includes appropriate integration of interdisciplinary work (e.g., from philosophy, theology, and / or religious studies) into the conceptual and theoretical framing of the project.

Each grant project should also consider domains where commitment to a specific belief system or set of values is high, such as in the domains of religion, politics, culture, leadership, and education. In situations with high stakes, competing convictions, and disincentives to acknowledge one's cognitive limitations, intellectual humility may be of central importance. Accordingly, we seek proposals designed to catalyze applied research on intellectual humility.

The overall project has two primary aims:

**Aim 1: Identify psychological mechanisms to promote intellectual humility.** The field has identified some hypothesized mechanisms that, if manipulated, could facilitate growth in intellectual humility. The field would benefit from further exploration and empirical evidence, including seeking out additional mechanisms, interaction effects, and specification of effects. Projects along these lines could involve innovative, lab-based interventions designed to isolate the impact of manipulating a specific mechanism to promote intellectual humility. The focus of such projects should include domains where individual commitment to a belief or ideology is particularly strong, such as religion, politics, or existential concerns.

**Aim 2: Develop interventions to promote intellectual humility in real-world contexts.** More research is needed to develop applied research projects that promote intellectual humility. Ideally these projects would use rigorous research designs and compare several competing active interventions and a control condition, and/or explore possible heterogeneity of effects, identifying specific characterological, demographic, or situational factors that may enhance intervention effectiveness and further our understanding of the causal pathways. Here too, we prioritize projects that explore domains where high-stakes generate strong commitments to extant ideas and strong disincentives to own limitations, including domains such as health and mental health settings, science, education, leadership, and religious communities.

## **RFP Big Questions**

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### **Big Question 1: What are the psychological mechanisms responsible for enhancing intellectual humility?**

We invite projects that will take a basic science approach to identifying reliable and replicable interventions to increase intellectual humility. Evidence for such interventions must be drawn from rigorous empirical methods with high internal validity, such as experimental manipulations and / or longitudinal designs (e.g., randomized clinical trials). The focus of these projects should examine a domain in which it is important to manifest intellectual humility, and in which commitment to a particular belief or ideology is strong and the stakes are high (e.g., religion,



politics, existential concerns), or in which disincentives to own a cognitive limitation are strong and the stakes are high (e.g., leadership, politics, education). Projects can focus on basic psychological processes or may be more applied in nature. In addition, the development of interventions to increase intellectual humility likely operate through various psychological processes. It is valuable to identify the specific cognitive, emotional, and / or behavioral mechanisms by which intellectual humility can be cultivated. Doing so will help advance both the basic science of intellectual humility, but will also help develop a wider range of applications for this work. Particularly:

- (a) How can people hold their beliefs with commitment while also expressing intellectual humility?
- (b) What is the nature of an effective intellectual humility intervention?
- (c) How strong of an effect on intellectual humility can be reliably produced?
- (d) How long do the effects persist over time?
- (e) Why does a particular intervention enhance intellectual humility (i.e., what is the mechanism)?
- (f) What is the domain-specificity (vs. domain-generality) of an intellectual humility intervention?
- (g) What explanatory framework can be offered for the theory of change of intellectual humility?

**Big Question 2: In what real-world domains, applications, and contexts are interventions most beneficial?**

We also invite projects that will advance the science of intellectual humility by developing interventions in important real-world contexts. Priority will be given to projects that enable causal conclusions to be made (e.g., randomized controlled trials). We see this as most beneficial in domains where commitment to one's beliefs are high and there might be associated biases when people adhere to ideologies with strong convictions. We specifically see religion as one arena in which balancing one's conviction with intellectual humility is particularly important. We also see fruitful work to be done in other domains including politics, leadership, science, education, and health / mental health training. Specifically:

- (a) In what settings are intellectual humility interventions most effective?
- (b) In what settings are intellectual humility interventions most well-received?
- (c) How can intellectual humility interventions be translated into various contexts?
- (d) How might intellectual humility interventions need to be tailored to different domains or applications?
- (e) How can intellectual humility interventions recruit and retain individuals who may need intellectual humility the most?
- (f) How might the appeal of intellectual humility interventions be increased in various settings?

## Award Types

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Award Type	Award Limit	Project Duration	Eligibility
<b>Standard Grant</b>	Up to \$250,000	Up to 30 months	Must have Ph.D. or appropriate terminal degree (e.g., Psy.D., DMin, DPhil, JD, MD)
<b>Early Career Grant</b>	Up to \$25,000	Up to 30 months	Advanced doctoral student or no more than 5 years post terminal degree

We anticipate making two types of awards for empirical projects.

- **Standard Grants.** Applicants seeking a Standard Grant for empirical projects may request up to \$250,000 for projects not to exceed 30 months in duration. For exceptionally promising projects requiring greater funding, we may consider funding 2-3 projects up to \$400,000. We anticipate making 10-12 standard grant awards. We will give some degree of preference for projects that include early career psychologists (within five years Post PhD) as PI or Co-PI.
- **Early Career Grants.** Applicants seeking funding for an Early Career Grant may request up to \$25,000 for projects led by an advanced doctoral student (in collaboration with a graduate advisor) or early career professional (i.e., no more than five years post terminal degree) in psychology, philosophy, theology, or religious studies. Projects can be any length of time between 12 months and 30 months in duration and must have the support of the applicant's advisor. We anticipate making up to six (6) early career grants.

## Grant Eligibility

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For the **Standard Grants**, the PI must have a Ph.D. or an appropriate terminal degree (e.g., Psy.D., DMin, D.Phil, JD, MD) and be affiliated with either (1) an accredited college or university, or (2) a recognized institution with academic interests (such as a research center or institute) prior to the beginning of the supported research. A letter of institutional support is required to accompany full proposals. Some degree of preference will be given to early career investigators who are no more than five years post terminal degree and serve as PI or Co-PI.

For the **Early Career Grants**, the PI must be either (1) advanced to candidacy for the Ph.D. degree (or appropriate terminal degree) and working on their dissertation or (2) be no more than five years post terminal degree. Graduate students must have the support of their academic advisor for the proposal.

**For all submissions**, applicants are allowed to be PI for only one proposal but may serve in other capacities (consultant, collaborator) on other proposals. Questions about meeting these criteria may be asked on the project website.

## Requirements

This project involves two conferences that the PI of each project must attend. The **Launch Conference** (Fall 2023) is scheduled to coincide with the launch of the projects, and is designed to allow grantees to present their proposed projects, receive feedback, and stimulate interdisciplinary collaboration. This meeting will be held at Hope College, in Holland, Michigan.

The **Capstone Conference** (Spring 2026) is scheduled for the conclusion of the grant period, and is designed for grantees to present their findings to a larger, public audience and to stimulate future collaborative efforts. The purposes of this capstone conference are to: (a) strengthen ties among leading researchers and other scholars on intellectual humility, (b) allow PIs to provide feedback to one another that will improve their future work on intellectual humility, and, (c) with portions of the conference, share ideas and knowledge with the broader intellectual community, including graduate students and other young researchers investigating intellectual humility. This meeting will be held in Palm Springs, California.

PIs must commit to attending both conferences.

## Schedule and Deadlines

Date	Description
January 15, 2023	Letters of Intent are due
March 1, 2023	Notifications are made
June 1, 2023	Submission of Full Proposals are due
August 1, 2023	Final award decisions
September 2023	Launch Conference
October 1, 2023	All funded projects begin
March 2026	Capstone Conference
April 1, 2026	All funded projects must conclude
June 1, 2026	Final Reports due



## Application Process

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### Letter of Intent (LOI) Stage

Letters of Intent are due by **January 15, 2023**. All materials must be uploaded via the project website.

Applicants will submit:

- A **letter of intent** that includes the central questions of the project, the background and significance of the questions, anticipated outputs/deliverables (e.g., journal articles, conference presentations, media interviews), identification of which RFP question(s) (listed above) the project addresses, and a summary of the methodology and specific hypotheses in testable form. The letter should be between 1,000-1,500 words (references do not count toward this total).
- **The amount of funding requested** (a one sentence rationale is sufficient at this stage). No budget narrative or justification is needed at this stage. The amount can be revised at the full proposal stage but should not normally exceed a 20% increase over that specified in the LOI.
- A complete **curriculum vitae** for the project leader and all other team members (if applicable).

### Full Proposal Stage

Those applicants who are invited to submit full proposals must include:

- A **cover letter** with the title, amount requested, duration of the project, and team members (if applicable).
- A **project description** of the work to be carried out, not to exceed 6,000 words (references do not count toward this total). The description should include the central questions of the project, the background and significance of the questions, identification of which of the RFP question(s) (listed above) the project addresses, anticipated outputs/deliverables (e.g., journal articles, conference presentations, media interviews), a summary of the methodology and hypotheses. Higher priority will be given to projects that acknowledge and integrate existing interdisciplinary perspectives to intellectual humility.
- An **open science statement** (not to exceed one page), in which applicants commit in advance to best practices in open science, including (1) preregistration of all hypotheses and of analytic code for all confirmatory work; (2) sharing of all research materials; and (C) sharing of all research data. Proposals should meet the standards required to be awarded relevant badges as described at <https://osf.io/tvyxz/wiki/1.%20View%20the%20Badges/>. If applicants have legal or ethical concerns about sharing their research data, they may must provide an explanation in place of this statement.
- A **project abstract** of up to 500 words that explains the project, which would be published on the project website (and possibly in Templeton materials) and included in publicity materials if the proposal is funded.

- A **project timeline**.
- A **detailed budget** with accompanying narrative explaining line items. Overhead is limited to 15%, and funds cannot be used for major equipment purchases.
- **Approval** of the department chair and the institution's signing officials.

**NOTE:** For all awards, applicants must commit in advance to making all research outputs openly accessible, without embargo. Article processing charges for non-hybrid journals are an allowable expense, but need to be incurred within the overall 30-month project duration (by 4/1/2026).

## Submission

The window for LOI submissions will be open until **January 15, 2023**. All application materials, letters of intent and full proposals should be submitted to the project website via the log-in portal. Questions about the application process can be asked on the website. Full proposals will be accepted only from applicants who have been invited to submit by the project directors, on the basis of the letter of intent phase.

## Selection Criteria

Proposals at the letter of intent stage will be evaluated on the following dimensions:

- **Depth and integration:** Proposed projects must address one or more of the identified domains articulated in the RFP or must hold unusual potential for substantially deepening understanding within one particular domain. Proposals should explicitly identify which domain is being addressed. Depth is more important than breadth.
- **Conceptual grounding:** Proposed empirical projects must test hypotheses that clearly emerge from current literatures and that address fundamental questions, including integrating interdisciplinary perspectives on intellectual humility.
- **Scientific merit:** Proposed empirical projects must have realistic and rigorously developed methods, strong research design, and appropriate plans for analysis.

In addition, Full Proposal selection criteria will include:

- **Relevance of the project to the themes of the RFP as described above, coherence of the intended research plan, originality, grounding in the literature, innovation, and significance of the intended project, feasibility of the project in the specified timeframe, prior research accomplishments of the project leader and other team members, cost effectiveness and quality of the budget justification, and balance and complementarity among the various projects to be funded. We anticipate that one-third of the projects funded will focus on the mechanisms of intellectual humility interventions, and two-thirds of the projects funded will focus on translating interventions into important contexts.**
- **While additional funding from other sources is not required, applicants are encouraged to seek such funding and to list the amount and sources of additional funds in their**

proposals. All applications must be submitted in English and all payments will be made in US dollars.

## Measures to be Included Across Projects

For consistency across projects, applicants should plan on including the following IH measures in their research. Applicants are welcome to include additional scales as well.

### **Leary et al. (2017)—General Intellectual Humility Scale**

1. I question my own opinions, positions, and viewpoints because they could be wrong
2. I reconsider my opinions when presented with new evidence
3. I recognize the value in opinions that are different from my own
4. I accept that my beliefs and attitudes may be wrong
5. In the face of conflicting evidence, I am open to changing my opinions
6. I like finding out new information that differs from what I already think is true.

### **Hoyle et al. (2016)—Specific Intellectual Humility Scale**

*(Example below is in the domain of religion; please adapt target to fit your research question.)*

1. My views about *religion* are just as likely to be wrong as other views.
2. I recognize that my views about *religion* are based on limited evidence.
3. Although I have particular views about *religion*, I realize that I don't know everything that I need to know about it.
4. It is quite likely that there are gaps in my understanding about *religion*.
5. My sources for information about *religion* might not be the best.
6. I am open to new information in the area of *religion* that might change my view.
7. My views about *religion* today may someday turn out to be wrong.
8. When it comes to my views about *religion*, I may be overlooking evidence.
9. My views about *religion* may change with additional evidence or information.

### **Zachry et al. (2018)**

1. I complimented the good ideas of those who disagreed with me
2. I viewed the challenging of my ideas as an opportunity to grow and learn.
3. I was open to constructive criticisms of my ideas.
4. I searched actively for reasons why my beliefs might be wrong
5. I asked others to provide constructive criticism of my ideas
6. Even when I was certain about my opinion, I researched information supporting the opposing viewpoint.
7. I preferred to seek a second opinion from someone who has a different point of view from my own.
8. I feel that it was important to work through competing solutions to the problem.
9. I enjoyed trying to make sense of conflicting information.
10. I learned a lot from person(s) whose beliefs differed from mine
11. I used new information to reevaluate my existing viewpoint.

## Questions and Contact Information

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For more information about the project and to access resources, visit [intellectualhumilityscience.com](http://intellectualhumilityscience.com).

Please direct any questions to [info@intellectualhumilityscience.com](mailto:info@intellectualhumilityscience.com).