

SLSA FUNDING SCHEMES: HOW TO WRITE A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

*Good news! SLSA has raised the maximum limits for awards across its funding schemes to reflect rising costs and enable applicants to be more ambitious with their plans. As these schemes reopen (see page 8), it seems an opportune moment to offer some advice on submitting a good quality application so as to maximise your chance of winning an award.**

This article applies to the SLSA schemes that open for applications at the end of June each year. These are:

- Research Grants
- Fieldwork Grants
- Seminar Competition and
- International Collaboration Fund.

Prospective applicants should note that the advice outlined below is necessarily general in order to be relevant to all SLSA schemes. Each scheme has its own specific guidance and its own criteria, so the first thing to do is to make sure that you are applying to the correct funding stream (ie the stream that best fits with your proposed project).

Please make sure you read the guidance for your preferred funding stream and follow it to the letter. Every year we unfortunately receive a small number of applications that are incorrectly targeted or do not meet the award criteria.

Reading and following the guidance carefully will ensure that you don't apply for activities which are ineligible. For example, the research grant fund doesn't support conferences – that's what the Seminar Competition is for. And make sure you don't budget for costs that your chosen fund doesn't cover – eg teaching buy-out or overheads. The funding can only be used for specified activities, clearly stated in the guidance for each scheme.

The window for applications is only open for four months, so start early to give yourself plenty of time to produce a polished and fully thought-out application.

There are several criteria which you should be thinking about when drafting your application. Some apply more to one scheme than to others, but all are worth considering.

Titles, aims, objectives and themes

The title of your project should be succinct, to the point and engaging. Just tell us what your work is about.

For research projects, your aims and objectives should be clearly set out and well planned. This section can be quite short, but be specific, explaining your overall aim along with three or four research objectives. Being clear and concise is the key here as this section is the first part of your application that reviewers see; it should give them a definite idea of what your project will do.

For the seminar scheme, decide what type of event you are organising and its theme: is it socio-legal? Who will be participating? Is it for colleagues in the wider academic world, or for a different audience – eg practitioners, or an outreach event for a specific community or non-academic organisation?

For the international scheme, talk through your aims and objectives with your potential international partners to narrow down options and agree on a tight proposal.

Remember that, depending on the scheme, the maximum awards are between £1500 to £3000, so don't overestimate what you can achieve.

Originality, innovativeness and importance

For all schemes. This is your opportunity to show how your use of SLSA funding enhances socio-legal research and scholarship. This is where background work, knowing your stuff and addressing these criteria with supporting evidence will really count. Explain why your event or project is important. Refer to the existing literature, and tell us how you will add to it.

Methods

For research projects, you need to provide details of your methodology which must be socio-legal (albeit in a broad sense). It must also be practical, appropriate and ethical. How will you collect and analyse your data? Will you be conducting a survey? For interviews, how will they be structured? Who are your interviewees? What ethical issues do you need to think about and how will you address them? Are you doing archival research? Tell us where and what you hope to find there?

Costing/budget

The best applications are those which are fully costed and provide as much detail as possible. For example, you may need to include travel, subsistence and accommodation. You may need to pay for interview transcription or research assistance. It's important to think about your methods, so refer back to those for clarity. Be as accurate as possible, but if it's not possible to get exact costs, then sensible estimates are acceptable. Check the specific guidance for the scheme you are applying for to make sure that what you are asking for is eligible.

Outcomes, results and impact

Whatever your project or event, it needs to have a purpose. Make sure that you clearly set out what you intend the outcomes to be. Will it be a traditional article, or chapter in an edited collection? Will you be presenting a paper at a future SLSA Annual Conference? Are you planning to launch a website, or write a series of blogs? Have you looked at audiovisual and multi-media options? There are numerous ways in which you can spread the word about your work, so let us know what your plans are.

EDI and precarity

The SLSA is committed to the values of equality, diversity and inclusivity and strives to ensure these principles are reflected in its policy, practice and governance. You should take this into consideration when putting together your application. See the SLSA [EDI page](#).

The SLSA Board has ring-fenced a proportion of each funding pot for applicants in precarious employment. All application forms have a voluntary declaration section for those wishing to be considered for this targeted funding.

General

If you've never applied for funding before, ask someone to look over your first draft and give you feedback. Take advice from colleagues who have been successful in the past or from your supervisor if you are applying for a Fieldwork Grant.

Visit the SLSA website to see the full list of **projects** and **events** that have been funded over the years under these schemes. And trawl through the **SLN online archive** where you can find details of all past successful projects including a wealth of detail on methodologies, outcomes and impact. Queries about this scheme should be sent to **e admin@slsa.ac.uk** in the first instance.

Rebecca Moosavian & Marie Selwood

* This guidance draws with thanks on earlier articles by John Flood, Dermot Feenan and Jess Guth.