



TIRF CALL FOR PROPOSALS: **DOCTORAL DISSERTATION GRANTS**

TIRF invites proposals for its 2026 **Doctoral Dissertation Grants (DDG)** competition.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE:
Wednesday, May 13, 2026
(11:59pm Pacific Daylight Time – Canada/USA)

INTRODUCTION

The International Research Foundation for English Language Education (TIRF) was founded in 1998 as an international, non-profit organization. Its aim is to generate new knowledge and to collect and organize existing knowledge about the teaching and learning of English for the purposes of informing educational policy; improving classroom practices; and, ultimately, expanding educational, occupational, and social opportunities for individuals in a global society.

TIRF is governed by an all-volunteer Board of Trustees composed of scholars, authors, and individuals working in the corporate sector and is supported by charitable donations. TIRF is committed to developing and implementing an innovative, proactive applied research program to help ensure that English as a second, foreign, or additional language is taught, learned, and tested in a manner that is demonstrably effective, expedient, and economical. TIRF is also committed to strengthening links between theory, practice, and policy and to fostering partnerships among researchers around the world. One of the activities TIRF undertakes to advance its mission is the funding of doctoral research.

Description

The 2026 DDG competition is intended to support worthy applicants who have advanced to candidacy (i.e., the dissertation phase) in their doctoral programs and whose dissertation research plans address TIRF's Research Topics (see below). Proposals are due by Wednesday, May 13, 2026.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a DDG, applicants **must have clearly advanced to doctoral candidacy** (dissertation stage) in accordance with the requirements of their institutions. In other words,

candidates will have completed any coursework and/or examinations required by their universities and will have had their dissertation research plans approved by a faculty committee or supervisor. This criterion is absolutely necessary and must be confirmed by the doctoral candidate's research supervisor in the supervisor's required letter of support. The Foundation is particularly interested in research proposals that have clear implications for educational policymakers and others in positions to make decisions about English language education practices.

The following descriptions present the different types of DDGs offered by TIRF in 2026:

TIRF-Cambridge DDG:

The first is our long-standing TIRF-Cambridge DDG, which is supported by Cambridge English (part of the Cambridge University Press & Assessment) and many of our individual donors. To be eligible for this type of DDG, an applicant **must have clearly advanced to doctoral candidacy** (dissertation stage) in accordance with the requirements of his/her institution.



CAMBRIDGE

TIRF-Duolingo DDG:

To be eligible for the TIRF-Duolingo DDG, doctoral candidates must be conducting research on teaching and learning English as a foreign language in accordance with any of the following TIRF Research Topics:

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Content-based Instruction
- Digital Technology in Language Education
- English for Specific Purposes
- Individual Learner Differences and Effective Language Education
- Language Assessment
- Language Teacher Education
- Migrants and Refugees: Teaching and Assessing English
- Teaching Second and Foreign Languages to Young Learners





TIRF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION GRANTS

Research Topics

Proposals for TIRF DDGs should closely and explicitly address an area of focus under one of TIRF's Research Topics. A detailed explanation of TIRF's Research Topics can be found by [clicking here](#).

- Artificial Intelligence (AI)
- Content-based Instruction
- Digital Technology in Language Education
- English as a Medium of Instruction
- English for Specific Purposes
- Individual Learner Differences and Effective Language Education
- Language Assessment
- Language Policy and Planning
- Language Teacher Education
- Migrants and Refugees: Teaching and Assessing English
- Plurilingualism and Multilingualism in Business, Industry, the Professions, and Educational Contexts
- Revitalization of Endangered Indigenous Languages
- Teaching Second and Foreign Languages to Young Learners

Features of TIRF DDGs

- DDGs are awarded for up to US \$5,000 per proposal. Smaller sums may be awarded and are dependent on the budget for the proposal and the ranking of the proposal.
- Allocations of funds are made subject to budgetary availability.
- TIRF will allow a maximum of US \$2,000 for conference travel and dissemination of their research in the budgets for DDGs. Monies are intended to support travel for the DDG recipient only, and for the dissemination of their research. Items related to conference travel that are allowed in the budget include conference or workshop registration fees, accommodations, and transportation. Additional travel funds may be allocated in the budget for data collection or essential researcher meetings. As part of the \$2,000 limit, applicants may include a request for open-access publishing support. Personal expenses, such as the cost of tuition, storage, moving, insurance, childcare, income replacement, editing the dissertation, and rent, are not permissible budget items. Requests for reimbursement of expenses that were incurred before submission of the DDG proposal are not allowed in the budget. In no case will DDG awards exceed US \$5,000.
- Additional sources of funding applied for or received for the same research project or a larger project should be declared. Seeking or obtaining other sources of funding for the project does not disqualify a TIRF DDG applicant; however, it is important that applicants state the unique contribution a TIRF grant will make to their research project.



- If English/language proficiency testing is planned (for either students or teachers), TIRF strongly recommends the use of appropriate international, standardized language tests, so that researchers in other contexts can easily interpret the results. If other tests are to be used or developed, applicants should explain the rationale for the selection or development of these particular instruments.
- DDG applications must address an area of focus in TIRF's list of Research Topics. The research must be either related directly to English language education or have strong implications for English language education, including the relationship between the spread of English as a majority language and minority language endangerment.
- Dissertations can be written in any language, but applications, interim reports, final reports, and all correspondence with TIRF must be in English.
- TIRF strongly encourages grantees to disseminate their findings via electronic media, as well as via the standard means of academic and professional presentations and publications as well. **TIRF must be acknowledged in all forms of dissemination**, including conference presentations.
- In addition to submitting the interim report to TIRF six months after initial award, grantees must submit a two- to five-page narrative final report for the project no later than August 31, 2028. The final report should be written for a general audience, and the report should reflect current APA 7th formatting guidelines in both the summary and the reference list. TIRF also requires a brief final financial report by August 31, 2028, documenting how the funding was used. Grantees must write to TIRF and ask to be sent the final report guidelines. Final reports should be sent to info@tirfonline.org and to Ryan Damerow (ryan.damerow@tirfonline.org), TIRF's Chief Operating Officer.

TIRF DDGs FUNDED IN PREVIOUS YEARS

Characteristics of Successful Proposals

To complete their proposals, applicants must use the application form (link provided below). We expect that successful applicants will supply all of the required information and not exceed the page limits. In the past, the strongest DDG proposals have been submitted by applicants who do the following:

- have written proposals directly and clearly related to one of areas of focus under TIRF's Research Topics;
- have written literature reviews that (a) demonstrate familiarity with other recent research on the topic and related issues and (b) identify a gap in the research that motivates the proposed doctoral research;
- have clearly articulated the research question(s) and/or hypothesis/es;
- have provided detailed accounts of the data collection procedures and the data analysis methods to be used;
- show scholarly and professional promise, as judged from the activities and prior publications documented on the applicant's CV;



- propose research projects in which data collection can be completed in one year and doctorates finished within two years;
- have projects that articulate clear implications for policymakers and others in positions to make decisions involving English language education practices;
- have proposals in which the research methods (both data collection and data analysis) are clearly articulated and are definitely appropriate for addressing the research question(s) and/or hypothesis/es;
- have used, where suitable, a multi-methods research design; and
- have strictly followed APA 7th edition guidelines, including for in-text citations, formatting of their proposal, and reference list.

Common Reasons Proposals Are Not Funded

The most common reasons for not funding a DDG proposal are the following:

- The applicant is not a doctoral student.
- The main supervisor's letter of support is weak and/or does not clearly state that the candidate is advanced to candidacy.
- The applicant is not yet far enough along in his/her doctoral studies (i.e., has not been advanced to candidacy).
- The proposal does not fit well with any of TIRF's Research Topics.
- TIRF's proposal guidelines have not been followed carefully.
- The proposal has not been carefully proofread.
- The proposal is poorly written.
- The literature review is weak (incomplete, not up to date, etc.).
- In-text citations and formatting issues did not follow APA 7th guidelines.
- The reference list is inaccurate, incomplete, or does not follow APA 7th format.
- The budget proposes items that are not fundable under TIRF's guidelines.
- The budget proposes no expenses related to research, only conference travel.

In the application form, TIRF asks applicants to indicate whether their supervisors have provided feedback on the applications. It is strongly recommended that applicants have their research supervisors read their proposals before submitting them to TIRF.

In the application form, TIRF asks applicants to indicate that they have received ethics or IRB approval for their research.

DDG APPLICATION PROCEDURES

- The deadline for receipt of complete proposals is **Wednesday, May 13, 2026** (11:59 p.m., Pacific Daylight Time — Canada/USA). Late submissions will not be accepted.
- Complete the [DDG application form](#).
- All applications must be submitted electronically **via TIRF's website using a single PDF document** that includes all parts of the completed application. (The DDG proposal



format is found near the end of this call for proposals.) Applicants must upload their documents to TIRF's website by [clicking here](#).

- Applications may not be submitted more than once in any given competition year. If multiple copies of an applicant's proposal are submitted, only the first one received will be processed.
- Acknowledgment of the receipt of an application will be sent to the email address provided by the applicant within five business days after the file is uploaded. If applicants have not had their applications acknowledged within five business days of sending it, they should contact info@tirfonline.org using the subject heading "DDG Application Received?"
- If applicants have any difficulties submitting their proposals, they should send an email to info@tirfonline.org using the subject heading "2026 DDG Application – Technical Difficulty."
- Applications must comply with the required proposal format located at the end of this document.
- Applications that do not follow these specifications or are incomplete will be rejected.
- Applicants may not exceed the page lengths indicated for each section of the proposal.

TIRF DDG Fellows Webinars

[TIRF's DDG Fellows](#) are offering two, one-hour webinars during the 2026 DDG funding cycle. These Q&A sessions are designed to assist prospective applicants as they prepare their proposals for the 2026 DDG program. The webinars will be recorded and posted to TIRF's website and YouTube channel. Additionally, especially for those unable to join the live webinar, questions may be asked in advance by prospective applicants via a form linked to below. Note that registration is required using the links below.

- Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 8:00am ET - [Register here](#)
- Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 8:00pm ET - [Register here](#)
- If you are unable to attend, you may submit questions to the panelists using [this form](#). Questions submitted will be asked by the moderator during the webinars.

To view a recording of the 2025 TIRF DDG Fellows Webinar, please [click here](#).

ADJUDICATION OF DDG PROPOSALS

Research proposals will be adjudicated by the TIRF Research Advisory Committee (RAC) and other scholars in the field who have agreed to serve as external reviewers. Each proposal is reviewed by at least two reviewers. If the two reviewers are not in agreement as to the merits of the proposal, the proposal is sent to a third reviewer. Supervisors who have doctoral students applying for the DDG competition do not serve as external reviewers. TIRF's RAC retains final authority over all decisions concerning recommendations for funding made to the TIRF Board of Trustees.



The Foundation is unable to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants about the reasons for which they were not funded. Unfortunately, because of the limited grant money available, not all applications worthy of support will be approved for funding.

Notification of Results and Disbursement of Funds

Notification of results for DDG awards will be made by **October 1, 2026**. The project summaries of successful proposals and photographs of grant recipients will be posted on TIRF's website by October 31, 2026.

For DDG award recipients, an interim report is expected six-months after the award date, or by February 26, 2027 for the 2026 DDG awardees. Second installments are tied to this interim report (see #2 below).

Funding is typically paid in three installments.

1. Once awardees accept a TIRF grant, they will receive the first installment, which is 40% of the award. At that time, they will also indicate what they expect to accomplish by the time the first interim report is submitted (i.e., the benchmarks).
2. In the interim report, awardees must note which of their research benchmarks they have reached. At that point, the second funding installment will be sent. This installment will consist of 40% of the award.
3. When their dissertation research is completed, DDG awardees have successfully defended their dissertation, and two- to five-page final reports have been submitted and accepted by the RAC, the third and final payment (20% of the grant) will be sent to the awardee. Grantees must write to TIRF and ask to be sent the final report guidelines. The two- to five-page final report should summarize the research findings for a general audience and include a clear statement about the implications for practitioners and policymakers. A complete and accurate reference list from the grant recipient's dissertation must also be included and must strictly follow APA 7th formatting guidelines even if APA format was not used in the original dissertation research. All in-text citations and formatting in final reports must also follow APA guidelines. In addition, TIRF also requires a final financial report documenting how the funding was used. It is expected that 2026 DDG awardees will complete their research and defend their dissertations within two years; therefore, final reports for DDG awards for the 2026 competition are due by August 31, 2028. Final reports should be sent to info@tirfonline.org and ryan.damerow@tirfonline.org. Requests for extensions beyond this date must be approved by TIRF; otherwise, monies for final payments may not be available.
4. In some cases, grants are awarded in dollar amounts that are between US \$1,000 to US \$2,000. In such cases, TIRF reserves the right to pay the awardee 80% initially, with the remaining 20% being paid upon the completion of the final report mentioned above. Awardees in this instance are still expected to submit interim reports at six-month intervals, as discussed above.
5. TIRF's preferred method of payment is by check. However, for grantees who cannot cash checks drawn on a U.S.-based bank account, we will transmit payments via PayPal. Grant



recipients living outside the United States will need to create a PayPal account to accept payment. Should a DDG recipient request a direct, bank-to-bank wire transfer, the fees associated for such a transfer will be deducted from the grantee's award. The fees for bank transfers are costly and cannot be estimated in advance. Fees are determined when a transaction is initiated. TIRF will not under any circumstance provide a grantee with an audit trail for the transference of award monies.

TIRF reserves the right to use information from project proposal summaries and final reports, including the grant recipient's photograph and email address, for dissemination on its website and in other media. APA citations of publications and presentations resulting from TIRF-funded research should be emailed to TIRF at info@tirfonline.org and to ryan.damerow@tirfonline.org. In addition, all publications and professional presentations resulting from a TIRF grant must acknowledge the support of TIRF.

TIRF 2026 DDG PROPOSAL FORMAT

You must use the DDG application form when submitting your file. [Click here](#) to download the application form. Note that regardless of which award you are applying for (Cambridge or Duolingo), only one application form needs to be submitted.

Items 1-5 must be sent in a single document. Be sure to save your file as a PDF before uploading it to TIRF's website. Also, it is vital that you ensure that your doctoral dissertation supervisor writes a strong letter of support for your application (see Item 6 below). Your supervisor must submit his/her letter of support at the link provided at the end of this document.

A brief [walk-through video](#) is available for applicants to view if they wish.

1. Cover page must contain each of the following pieces of information:

- Title of project
- TIRF Research Topic(s) addressed
 - Artificial Intelligence (AI)
 - Content-based Instruction
 - Digital Technology in Language Education
 - English as a Medium of Instruction
 - English for Specific Purposes
 - Individual Learner Differences and Effective Language Education
 - Language Assessment
 - Language Policy and Planning
 - Language Teacher Education
 - Migrants and Refugees: Teaching and Assessing English
 - Plurilingualism and Multilingualism in Business, Industry, the Professions, and Educational Contexts
 - Revitalization of Endangered Indigenous Languages
 - Teaching Second and Foreign Languages to Young Learners

- Your full name and affiliation(s)
 - Your email, phone number, and mailing address
 - Name, address, and email address of the research supervisor or advisor
 - Indicate whether AI was used to produce/complete your application.
 - Indicate that your supervisor has provided you feedback on your application.
 - Indicate that you have received ethics approval from your doctoral institution.
2. Project summary (200-250 words): NOTE: The summaries of successful proposals will be made public on the TIRF website as well as through other media. Please prepare your summary with this general audience in mind, and please proofread your proposal carefully.
3. Detailed proposal (six-page maximum, single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font): using the following section headings:
- **Statement of research issue:** State the problem and its relationship to a [current TIRF Research Topic](#).
 - **Theoretical background:** Please integrate within this section the research literature that you are drawing upon to situate your study; you must convince the reviewers that you are familiar with current, relevant research in the area of the Research Topic.
 - **Research methodology:** Articulate the research questions (and/or hypotheses) and clearly explain what data collection and data analysis procedures will be used. The data collection and analysis procedures must be well chosen to address the research question(s) and/or test the hypotheses.
 - **Implications:** Provide a clear statement of the likely implications of the proposed research for theory, policy, and practice
 - **Timetable:** Provide a clear timetable (in months) of the tasks that will be accomplished in order to complete the research and write the dissertation.
 - **Plans for dissemination:** Include the scholarly conferences at which you would be likely to present the research results. Also, list the journals or other forms of publication that would be appropriate. TIRF must be acknowledged in all types of dissemination.
 - **Research ethics:** Provide a brief explanation of how principles of research ethics will be upheld. Indicate that you have ethics approval from your doctoral institution, such as IRB approval.
 - **References:** Provide an up-to-date list of selected references (one to two pages maximum) in APA 7th format. References are not included in the six-page limit for your detailed proposal.
4. Detailed budget and brief rationale for all items (two-page maximum):
- Itemized expenses directly related to the research (e.g., personnel, transportation, communication, dissemination, supplies, and other expenses).
 - Please note that purchases of computers or computer hardware are not allowable budget items. Personal expenses, such as the cost of tuition, storage, moving, insurance, childcare, income replacement, and rent, are not permissible budget items. Requests for reimbursement of expenses that were incurred before the time of submitting a DDG proposal are not allowed in the budget. Travel funds for data collection and/or required researcher-meetings are allowable. A brief rationale is needed for all budget items. Please

be as specific as possible and indicate all costs in United States Dollars. Also, please make sure to include a final total amount and double-check that the total is correct.

- Conference travel is limited to US \$2,000 and is intended for travel by the DDG recipient only. Because TIRF is interested in funding research, budgets that propose only conference travel for dissemination purposes, will not receive the highest rating.
- If applicable, provide a statement about other research funding applied for or received for the same project or for a larger/related study. Also explain how the TIRF grant will make a unique contribution to the successful completion of the project. (NOTE: You are permitted to seek or obtain additional funds to complete the research project, but you should explain the nature and function of the funding from the different sources.)
- For other information about allowed/disallowed budget items or limits, please see the “Features of TIRF DDGs” section above.
- The budget is not included in the six-page limit of the detailed proposal.

5. A short, current CV (two pages maximum) must be included within the master document uploaded to the TIRF website.

- Please do **not** send separate attachment files for each section of the proposal, including this one.
- The two-page CV is **not** included in the six-page limit.

6. Letter from doctoral supervisor:

Supervisor letters are due on the same day the DDG applications are due. A **one-page letter of support** must be uploaded to TIRF’s website by the doctoral student’s supervisor. Supervisors **must first save the letter as a PDF** and then [click here](#) to upload the document. (After clicking the link, the supervisor must select “Supervisor Letter of Support for DDG Applicants” and complete the remaining fields. It is important to include the DDG applicant’s name in the “Subject Title or Description” field.) Supervisors will receive a confirmation email from TIRF within five business days notifying them that their letter of support has been received.

Please do not submit letters from more than one supervisor. To be eligible, you must have advanced to candidacy. In other words, you must have completed all doctoral program requirements apart from the dissertation and must have had a research proposal or topic already approved by a supervisory committee or appropriate faculty board. The letter from the research supervisor should comment on your readiness and ability as an applicant to undertake the proposed research project. Supervisor should also indicate that they have read the proposal that is being submitted. Applicants should make sure their supervisors understand that the letters of recommendation are essential to the DDG proposal adjudication process and must be submitted by the stated application deadline.

[Click here to submit your 2026 DDG proposal.](#)