

Guide to Writing a Proposal for the Circumnavigators Travel-Study Grant

A Note on Topic Selection

The Circumnavigators Club is **not** accepting applications for the following topics:

- Global environmental and conservation issues
- Microfinance and microcredit
- Alternative energy and rural electrification

Proposal Requirements

The proposal may be no more than five double-spaced pages (use Times Roman font of 11 or 12 points in size and one-inch margins). The proposal must include the following elements:

- A description of the proposed study topic. Examples of past study projects include: youth movements; the death penalty; freedom of the press; care for the aged; and the uses of technology in the elementary grades.
- Explanation of the project's significance/importance. Discuss the intellectual merit and original nature of the research with reference to scholarly literature.
- A description of specific case studies that you plan to explore during the trip and their anticipated relevance to the overall project goals. The research (as well as the final paper) must examine specific case studies in the context of global, or at least trans-regional, issues. In the final paper, the grant recipient will be expected to compare and contrast her/his case-study findings across regions of the world, generating conclusions and policy recommendations at the case-study, national, and global (or at least trans-regional) levels. You should choose your case studies with these goals in mind.
- A general itinerary. The itinerary must include a minimum of ten weeks of continuous travel outside the United States and/or Canada, must circumnavigate the globe, and must include substantive research conducted in at least five countries on at least three continents. Applicants should clearly explain the rationale for the selection of the proposed countries to be visited.
- The plan of study, including research and planning activities to be undertaken in advance of the trip and research methods proposed to be used in the field during the trip itself.
- An explanation of the relevance of the study project to the student's field of academic endeavor or interests, as well as to the student's life goals and career plans.

Developing the Proposal

While designed to support URG proposals, the **Crafting a Research Proposal** document on the Office of Undergraduate Research [Proposal Writing](#) page (<https://undergradresearch.northwestern.edu/proposal-writing>) is a useful starting point for thinking about how to structure your Circumnavigators Grant proposal. The sections explained in that document cover the elements key to most any effective research proposal.

The following overview, together with that document, will help you better understand how to present your proposed Circumnavigators Grant project as effectively as possible.

- Your **Introduction** should succinctly indicate 1) what your project is about, 2) how you plan to undertake it, and 3) why it is important to do.
- In the **Background** section, briefly provide your readers with any information that is essential to their understanding the context, parameters, and/or importance of your topic.
- In your **Literature Review**, identify scholarly trends or key works that help situate your proposed project within the larger academic discourse about your subject. Use this discussion of what has already been done, what is already known, etc., as a way of making the case for the novelty of, and need for, your own particular research project. The point is not to prove how well read you are on the subject matter, but rather to provide intellectual context for your own research questions and project—the details of which you will elaborate in the next two sections.
- **Research Questions** will highlight the knowledge that you want to gain through this trip. What are the goals of your project? What are the questions that you hope to answer?
- The **Methodology** section is the heart of your Circumnavigators proposal. Here you will outline specifically what you will do to obtain that knowledge: What countries/sites do you plan to visit, what are your proposed case studies, and what is the rationale for choosing these? What research methods do you propose to use in the field?
- Your **Preparation** should highlight why you are the person capable of conducting this research. Explain the training you have received or coursework completed that leaves you ready to successfully complete the project. Indicate your previous travel experience and any relevant language skills. Also include in this section any preparation that you expect to undertake in advance of the trip.
- The **Conclusion** need not summarize your proposal; instead it should look forward towards what you hope to do with the experience of this trip in the future. In other words, use this section to explain the relevance of the study project to your larger goals and future plans.

The text of your research proposal should be no more than five double-spaced pages. Longer proposals may not be considered. You may include additional information, such as details of your proposed itinerary or local contacts, as appendices.

Need help? Have questions? Contact the Circumnavigators Grant Coordinator at undergradresearch@northwestern.edu.