

# WAI's process for calls for proposals

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Wild Animal Initiative launched a [\\$3 million research fund](#) in July 2021. We plan to distribute most of those funds through calls for proposals. Below is a summary of the process we use to solicit proposals, review and improve applications, and select one or more finalists to fund.

## Stage 1: Expression of interest

1. Applicant submits "[expression of interest](#)" form.
2. We (the research team) review the applicant's expression of interest internally and decide to invite a full proposal.
  - a. At this stage, we are only assessing whether the topic is sufficiently relevant to the call for proposals (i.e. a project on a topic we would consider funding).

## Stage 2: Initial proposal

3. We email the applicant with instructions, links to download the [proposal template](#) and [animal methods form](#) (if applicable), and a link to the [proposal submission form](#) where they will upload these documents along with their CV.
  - a. The proposal template asks the applicant to explain the context and objectives of the project, the planned methods (including justification), and the relevant experience of the applicant and any collaborators. To help guide applicants' thinking, we require a structured explanation of how the proposed project would contribute to understanding wild animal welfare. Finally, we ask the applicant to include an approximate timeline and itemized budget.
  - b. The animal methods form requires applicants to enumerate, justify, and give a basic risk assessment for any interactions with animals that are planned to be part of their project, such as taking blood samples.
4. Applicant submits proposal and other documents for review.

## Stage 3: External review

5. After the deadline, we send proposal materials to reviewers using a collaborative review tool (i.e. an [Airtable](#) in kanban view).
  - a. Most reviewers will have agreed months in advance to be available to provide feedback. If a certain proposal requires specific expertise outside of what is represented among our main reviewers, we may reach out to others for urgent comments.
6. For each proposal they review, reviewers submit a [proposal review form](#).
  - a. Reviewers advise on project feasibility, including suitability of the methods and the qualifications of the applicant. We seek feedback in this limited capacity because we do not expect most reviewers to have sufficient value-alignment or context to make decisions on the overall value of an application.

## Stage 4: Internal review

7. We review the proposals and reviewers' feedback internally and come to decisions based on the following selection criteria:
  - a. Engagement: To what extent will this project accelerate or inspire other research or activity in support of wild animal welfare?
  - b. Scope: How many animals could potentially benefit from the results of this project, and by how much?
  - c. Tractability: Does this project have a high probability of being able to be carried out as described and delivering the expected answers or results?
  - d. Neglectedness: How likely is it that this project could be funded by another organization, without reducing its value for wild animal welfare?
  - e. Research ethics: How likely is the execution of this project to cause harm to non-human or human animals?

## Stage 5: Funding

8. Applicants are notified of our provisional decision on their proposal.
9. We carry out legal and financial checks and disburse funds to successful applicants.