Simons Early Career Investigator in Marine Microbial Ecology and Evolution Awards Request for Applications: Frequently Asked Questions

These frequently asked questions (FAQs) aim to cover topics related to the application process for the Simons Early Career Investigator in Marine Microbial Ecology and Evolution Awards, including information on Simons Foundation policies and instructions on submitting letters of intent (LOIs) and full proposals online through proposalCENTRAL (pC) at https://proposalcentral.altum.com/. A glossary of personnel definitions is located at the end of the FAQ sections.

If you have a question regarding the request for application (RFA) guidelines or policies not answered below, do not hesitate to contact the Simons Foundation at lifegrants@simonsfoundation.org or call (646) 751-1280.

Letter of Intent (LOI) FAQ

Where do I submit the LOI?

New users first need to create a user account on proposalCENTRAL (pC) at https://proposalcentral.altum.com/. (For instructions on how to create an account, see the FAQ How do I create a proposalCENTRAL user account? below.) For all users with a pC account, log in under APPLICATION LOGIN at https://proposalcentral.altum.com/ and select CREATE NEW PROPOSAL or click on the GRANT OPPORTUNITIES tab. Scroll down to SIMONS FOUNDATION and then click APPLY NOW for the “Simons Early Career Investigator in Marine Microbial Ecology and Evolution Awards” program in order to start the LOI and access the templates. After all sections are completed, you will be able to click on the SUBMIT button to send.

With an accepted LOI, you then gain access to the full proposal application on proposalCENTRAL. (For more information on submitting a full proposal, see Full Proposal FAQs below.)

How do I create a proposalCENTRAL user account?

Go to https://proposalcentral.altum.com/ (pC) and click CREATE ONE NOW under APPLICATION LOGIN. Fill in the required fields, check the boxes to agree to pC’s “Terms of Service” and “Acceptable Use Policy” and then click SAVE.
Can I email or mail an LOI?
No, the Simons Foundation only accepts LOIs submitted online through https://proposalcentral.altum.com/.

Do I need an institutional sign-off to submit an LOI?
No, however, successful finalists will need an institutional sign-off for the full proposal.

Can someone else (assistant, staff member, etc.) submit my application for me?
Yes, you can add users with administrator access to the pC application so that someone other than the Principal Investigator (PI) can edit and submit the application. To add another user, go to section 3, “Enable Other Users to Access This Proposal,” and complete the required fields.

Can postdoctoral associates apply as Principal Investigators?
No, postdoctoral associates may not apply as PIs. All applicants and key collaborators must hold a Ph.D., M.D. or equivalent degree and have a faculty position or the equivalent at a college, university, medical school or other research facility. Funds may not be used for stipend supplementation unless specifically authorized under the terms of the program from which the funds are derived.

Can foreign institutions apply for this grant?
Applicants must currently hold a tenure-track or tenured position or equivalent at a U.S. or Canadian institution.

Can multiple Principal Investigators apply for a grant?
No, we are not accepting applications with multiple PIs for this program.

I will have one or more collaborators on my proposal. May I include multiple PIs or other senior personnel on my budget?
No. You may provide funds for others to work on your research or educational activities, but they may not be listed as multiple PIs or in the senior personnel section of the proposal, within the primary budget or within a sub-award to a collaborating institution. However, you may pay someone as a consultant in your project or pay for his or her travel and field/lab expenses, materials and supplies, or access fee to a laboratory.

Can I change the named Principal Investigator?
Yes, linked instructions for how to change the named PI can be found in the application.
The person who starts an application will be named as the PI on the Applicant/PI page. If the Applicant/PI section does not show the correct person (e.g., someone else started the online application and you are the PI, or you started the application and someone else is the PI), then you must update this section before submitting. PI details carry over to the full proposal.

**Can Principal Investigators submit multiple applications to this program?**

No, PIs cannot submit multiple applications to this program.

**What are the file format, font style and size requirements of the LOI?**

Please submit a PDF of the LOI document. Type should be set in 11-point, legible font. All margins should be set at 0.5 inches.

**Do I need to submit biosketches with the LOI?**

Yes. A biosketch is required for the Principal Investigator only.

**Can I submit a budget with the LOI?**

No, a detailed budget is not requested with the LOI.

**Where is the SUBMIT button?**

The SUBMIT button is located in the last section of the LOI. You will be unable to submit if you have not provided all the required information. If the submission deadline has *not* passed, use the VALIDATE button to check for missing requirements. If the problem persists, please contact pcsupport@altum.com.

If the deadline has passed, the submission period has closed and you will not be able to submit.

**I get an error message citing a missing section when I try to submit.**

The VALIDATE button reviews your LOI for missing sections. The submission instructions list the required sections and attachments. You must complete the missing sections listed. If you are still receiving error messages after completing and saving the indicated sections, please contact pcsupport@altum.com.

**Are deadline times adjusted for time zones?**

No, please be advised that deadlines are in Eastern Time. We recommend registering early and submitting LOIs with ample time for corrections prior to the deadline hour. Site traffic can slow page-load times. The SUBMIT button will not work after the deadline time has passed.
Is there a confirmation email when I submit?

A confirmation email is sent upon submission of the LOI. Please contact pcsupport@altum.com if you submitted your LOI and have not received a confirmation email within ten minutes. Make sure that spam filters allow emails from pcsupport@altum.com. The LOI will be in the SUBMITTED tab when you next log in.

Can I make changes to the LOI once it has been submitted?

Before you can make changes to your submitted LOI, you must first contact the Simons Foundation. Please email lifegrants@simonsfoundation.org or call (646) 751-1280. LOIs can only be changed prior to the November 7, 2016, deadline.

Does the Simons Foundation grant extensions for LOIs?

No extensions will be given. If you have any difficulties, please email lifegrants@simonsfoundation.org or call (646) 751-1280. Please do not contact pcsupport@altum.com directly.

Full Proposal FAQ

How do I submit a full proposal?

With an accepted LOI, you gain access to the full proposal application on proposalCENTRAL. Log in under APPLICATION LOGIN at https://proposalcentral.altum.com/, select the MANAGE PROPOSALS tab and then click IN PROGRESS. Click the EDIT button for the corresponding application you want to complete. Once all sections are complete and the attachments are uploaded, the SUBMIT button will be activated and you can click SUBMIT to send your application.

What are the font style and size requirements?

Type should be set in 11-point, legible font. All margins should be set at 0.5 inches.

Is there a minimum percent effort for Principal Investigators or Co-Investigators?

We seek applications from independent investigators who can devote a substantial portion of time to this project. While we do not require a minimum Principal Investigator (PI) effort, we expect the PI to commit to a level of effort that reflects a leading role in the project.

Are indirect costs included in the annual budget limits?
Yes. For example, the annual limit for an award is $180,000, which includes indirect costs at 20 percent. Please note that indirect costs cannot be taken on equipment with a unit cost of more than $5,000 or on tuition.

**Does the Principal Investigator need to sign the signature page?**
No, only the signing official is required to sign the signature page.

**Is there a confirmation email when I submit?**
A confirmation email is sent upon submission of the full proposal. Please contact pcsupport@altum.com if you submitted your full proposal and have not received a confirmation email within ten minutes. Make sure that spam filters allow emails from pcsupport@altum.com. The full proposal will be in the SUBMITTED tab when you next log in.

**I get an error message citing a missing section when I try to submit.**
The VALIDATE button reviews your full proposal for missing sections. The submission instructions list the required sections and attachments. You must complete the missing sections listed. If you are still receiving error messages after completing and saving the indicated sections, please contact pcsupport@altum.com.

**Can I make changes to the application once it has been submitted?**
Before you can make changes to your submitted application, you must first contact the Simons Foundation. Please email lifegrants@simonsfoundation.org or call (646) 751-1280. Applications can only be changed prior to the February 22, 2017, deadline.

**Is validating my proposal the same as submitting it?**
No. Validating the full proposal checks for errors and omissions and will alert you to missing requirements of your full proposal. If the full proposal is complete, you must then click SUBMIT. You will receive an email within ten minutes. Contact pcsupport@altum.com if you do not receive confirmation and do not see your full proposal in the SUBMITTED tab or with the status changed to SUBMITTED.

**The deadline for notification has passed. What is the status of my proposal?**
You should receive notification within 24 hours of the deadline. Please check your spam filter settings if you have not received notification by then.