



Sylff Leadership Initiatives (SLI)

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

Current and graduated fellows who are committed to taking the small steps that can make a big difference for the benefit of society are encouraged to apply for an SLI grant to undertake initiatives that are aligned with the Sylff mission. The Sylff Association will provide a maximum of US\$10,000 per successful project.

1. About Sylff Leadership Initiatives (SLI)

To encourage Sylff fellows to take initiatives that can change society for the better, the Sylff Association provides financial support for two categories of SLI activities: (1) social action projects and (2) the organization of a forum, conference, seminar, or workshop; such gatherings may be of either an academic or nonacademic nature, but academic meetings must address tangible social issues and aim to have real-world impact. An important consideration in screening applicants is whether or not the proposed project was initiated by the Sylff fellow. Past SLI activities are described in “Awardees & Reports” (http://www.tokyofoundation.org/sylff/support_programs/sli/awardees-reports).

The Sylff Philosophy

Issues of pressing concern today are becoming more and more intertwined with other complex, global-scale problems, and no one country can resolve them alone. The parties affected by the problems may not all have the same values and interests or share economic or political orientations. Underlying the Sylff philosophy is the desire to support “leaders” with the passion and ability to serve the common interests of humanity, transcending narrow national, religious, ethnic, and other differences to undertake socially constructive leadership initiatives and act in an inclusive manner, respecting diversity in cultures and values.

2. Eligibility

- (1) Applications must be submitted by one or more current/graduated Sylff fellows.
- (2) The proposed project must be initiated by a Sylff fellow
- (3) The project must be geared toward making a contribution to society, targeting global and/or local issues, such as those relating to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- (4) The proposal must be for a (1) social action project or a (2) forum-type event.

IMPORTANT: The award covers projects that will be implemented during the Tokyo Foundation’s fiscal year (April 2025 to March 2026). At least part of the project (including preparatory activities like arranging flights or reserving the venue) must begin by [March 31, 2026](#), to be eligible.

(Note)

In addition to the above eligibility requirements, the following should also be considered:

- SLI does not finance pure research.
- SLI does not finance projects that were initiated by a non-fellow.

- SLI grants may be used to finance ongoing projects originally conceived outside the SLI framework, but such projects must be in line with the aims of SLI.
- Projects should be at the implementation stage, ready to create significant social impact with the help of an SLI grant. SLI does not support projects at the foundation-building stage, where work is still needed to develop an impactful framework.
- Priority will be given to creative and innovative approaches that can be expected to generate or catalyze significant social change.

3. Application

(1) Application Procedures

Application procedures consist of the following two stages. Applicants must submit their application documents by email to [sylff\[a\]tkfd.or.jp](mailto:sylff[a]tkfd.or.jp) (replace [a] with @) during the application period listed in "5. Schedule." Please note that submissions outside the application period or without required documents will not be considered.

a. Preliminary Application (Concept Paper) 450 words

Applicants must first submit a concept paper ([prescribed form downloadable as Word file](#)). In the concept paper, applicants should concisely explain the issue they wish to address, the project's goals, the approaches to be taken, and anticipated social impact.

The concept paper will be reviewed by the Sylff Association secretariat, and successful applicants will be invited to proceed to the formal application stage.

b. Formal Application

Applicants whose concept papers have been approved will be invited to submit a formal application consisting of the following:

- Application form ([prescribed form downloadable as Word file](#))
- Detailed proposal (Word file, 2,000 words maximum)
The detailed proposal should address the following:
 - Issue: What is the key issue you wish to address and why are you addressing it?
 - Activities and approaches: What do you hope to do and how will you do it?
 - Objectives and goals: What are your objectives and goals?
 - Initiative: How are you proposing, organizing, and leading the project?
 - Relevance and significance: Why is the project relevant and significant? For whom?
 - Feasibility: Provide arguments for the feasibility of the proposed project.
 - Number: Indicate the number of project participants and their respective roles.
 - Expected outcomes: Outline expected outcomes in both short and mid-long terms.
 - Supplementary information: Describe other aspects to help reviewers judge the proposed project.
- Budget (sample downloadable as Excel file)

- Schedule
- Bios
Submit a brief biographical sketch (100 words maximum) for each applicant and other project members, including their background, current position or occupation, academic or professional interests, and role in the proposed project. If the applicant has any prior experience relevant to the project, or any additional information which he/she believes to be important for the screening, it should be showcased here.
- Reference
A letter of recommendation should be submitted. It should be written by a referee who endorses the project and is familiar with your academic achievements and/or social engagement activities.

(2) Screening

Formal applications will be evaluated by (1) a peer review panel consisting of selected Sylff fellows and (2) a panel consisting of members of the Sylff Association secretariat. The two panels will review the applications, based on the criteria listed below in "4. Selection Criteria."

4. Selection Criteria

Applications will be evaluated from the following five perspectives:

1. The applicant's commitment to the social issue being addressed and the importance of his/her role in the project
2. Prospects for positive change in the conditions faced by the issue's stakeholders
3. The originality of the project and the extent to which the proposal reflects the applicant's knowledge, experience, insight, or network
4. The likelihood that the project will serve as a model or foundation for subsequent, larger-scale initiatives
5. The feasibility of the budget, schedule, and partners in advancing the project

Improving Your Chances of Winning an Award

Many applications for socially worthwhile projects are submitted but wind up getting rejected because they lack specifics. Proposals for concrete, well-planned action that can be expected to have tangible impact will have a much better chance of winning an SLI award. To improve your chances, please look over the list below. Based on the proposals we have received to date, successful applications:

- Contain explanations of the issues being addressed that are concise and can be readily understood by those without specialized knowledge or outside a specific demographic.
- Address issues that are within the scope of the proposed action.
- Propose projects designed to provide a direct solution to identified issues, with a feasible budget and implementation plan.
- Showcase how the applicant has initiated and will actively lead the project.

- Illustrate how the applicant's experience, knowledge, and expertise will make a unique contribution.
- Clearly define the change that the projects aim to achieve or inspire among the participants and stakeholders.

5. Schedule

- Announcement of a Call for Applications: April 4, 2025
- Preliminary registration: May 14, 2025, to May 28, 2025, 11:59 p.m. JST
- Eligibility notification: July 2, 2025
- Application submission: July 2 to July 16, 2025, 11:59 p.m. JST
- Notification of selection outcomes: September 17, 2025 (successful applicants may start their proposed research after receiving this notification)
- Disbursement of funds: End of November 2025

IMPORTANT

- An agreement shall be signed between the awardee and the Tokyo Foundation (Sylff Association secretariat) for award disbursement.
- In principle, the full amount will be paid in one installment.
- The award will be remitted by the Tokyo Foundation to the bank account designated by the awardee and can accommodate foreign transfers in US dollars.
- The awardee is responsible for clearing any legal requirements in receiving the award and for covering any associated costs.
- The award will NOT be remitted for any reason to a third party, such as a research assistant, family member, outsourcing company, etc. The award may be cancelled if it cannot be remitted to the awardee's account for technical reasons.

6. Awards

1. The maximum award per project is \$10,000.
2. An SLI award may be used to cover the following expenses:

International travel, domestic transportation, accommodations, honoraria for experts,* meeting room/hall rental, refreshments served at meetings, acquisition of resource materials, printing and copying of documents, consumables, supplies, communication costs, etc. It may NOT be used for the following:

- Personnel costs for outsourced logistics, record-keeping, event planning, and/or other project-related services
 - Purchases of property or other assets
 - Other items as determined by the secretariat
3. Awards may be combined with other funds or financial resources.

* The award covers honoraria only to those whose expertise is vital to the success of the project. If you are uncertain whether a person qualifies, please consult the Sylff Association secretariat.

7. Others

1. A project report, including a narrative description of the results, and a financial report shall be submitted by all applicants. The financial report must be accompanied by receipts. Should actual expenditures turn out to be significantly less than the amount disbursed, the Foundation will request a refund of the unexpended funds.
2. SLI awardees will be requested to share the outcome of their projects with the Sylff Association in a variety of formats, including articles on the Sylff website.
3. Recipients are highly encouraged to register with the Nippon Foundation Scholars Association (TNFSA), an interactive, online platform for all fellows in the Nippon Foundation Group, including the Sylff Association, and post the progress and outcomes of their SLI project.
4. Members of the Sylff Association (secretariat staff and Sylff fellows not associated with the project) may visit and observe awarded projects.
5. The names of the peer review panel members will remain confidential both during and after the application period.
6. All application documents and communication must be written in English.

Please be sure to read this page in the original language (English), not just as a translation using the site's "Translate" function. The Sylff Association secretariat does not guarantee the accuracy or appropriateness of the translation, which is offered through Google Translate for reference purposes only.

* * *

Inquiries and applications should be directed to:

Sylff Association Secretariat
Email: sylff[a]tkfd.or.jp (replace [a] with @).