



Sylff Leadership Initiatives (SLI)

Call for Applications for FY2026

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.

The Call for Applications (Updated April 2026) is available in PDF and text formats (below).

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” (https://www.sylff.org/support_programs/sli/).

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

Applications must be submitted by one or more current/graduated Sylff fellows. (Those who are being screened for a fellowship but have not received official notification of their status from their respective universities or the Tokyo Foundation are not yet considered a “current fellow” and are therefore not eligible.)

- (1) The proposed project must be initiated by a Sylff fellow.
- (2) The project must address clearly defined social challenges at the local, national, regional, or global level and align with the Sylff mission.
- (3) The proposal must be for a (1) social action project or a (2) forum-type event.
- (4) The award covers projects that will be implemented during the period between October 1, 2026, and September 30, 2027. At least part of the project (including preparatory activities like arranging flights or reserving the venue) must begin by **March 31, 2027**, 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 planning stage, where work is still needed to develop an impactful framework.
- SLI funding is limited to a maximum of two awards per project. While there is no limit on the number of times a Sylff fellow may apply for and receive SLI funding, any subsequent application after a project has received funding twice must be for a proposal that is qualitatively different or at a substantially more advanced stage of development than those previously funded.
- Priority will be given to creative and innovative approaches that can be expected to generate or catalyze significant social change.

3. Awards

1. The maximum award per project is \$10,000.
2. An SLI award may be used to cover the following expenses:
 - Category A: Transportation
 - Category B: Accommodation
 - Category C: Materials and supplies
 - Category D: Conference-related items
 - Category E: Communication
 - Category F: Others

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. Up to 15% of the total budget (10% for the applicant and 5% for all other members) may be allocated as honoraria for project implementation members. Honoraria for external experts will be evaluated separately based on the services provided and their relevance to the project.
 4. Awards may be combined with other funds or financial resources.

4. Application

(1) Application Procedures

Applications must be submitted via the online system, which is accessible only during the application period. Please be sure to submit all required information by the respective deadlines, which are indicated in Japan Standard Time (JST). Applications sent by email, as well as those that are incomplete,

late, or not in the prescribed format, will not be considered. Only one submission is allowed per step. If the online forms are submitted multiple times, the first submission will be treated as final.

There are **two steps** in completing the application process.

a. Preliminary Application

Applicants should provide basic information about himself/herself and their proposed project via the online form. Applicants should concisely explain the issue they wish to address, the project's goals, the approaches to be taken, and anticipated social impact. The form can be accessed from the SLI page between **May 13, 2026, and 11:59 p.m. JST, May 27, 2026.**

The preliminary application 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 preliminary applications have been approved will be informed of a web link enabling them to proceed to the second step to submit their formal applications.

The Sylff Association secretariat strongly encourages applicants to prepare a draft of their application and recommendation letter in advance. Access to the system will be limited to the period between **July 1, 2026, and 11:59 p.m. JST, July 15, 2026.**

NOTE: To ensure anonymous peer review, please do not include the names of applicants or project members in any section of the application form other than Section 1, "Basic Information about the Applicant." Instead, please refer to individuals only by their roles, such as "project lead" or "counselor."

Applicants must submit the following:

I. Online Form

1. Basic Information about the Applicant

- (1) SLI reference number
- (2) Given and middle name
- (3) Surname
- (4) Email address
- (5) Date of birth
- (6) Home address
- (7) Current affiliation
- (8) Home Sylff institution

2. Detailed Project Proposal

- (1) Project title
- (2) Project type (select either 1. social action project or 2. forum, conference, seminar or workshop)
- (3) Objective and goals: What are your objectives and goals? (150 words)
- (4) Issue: What is the key issue you wish to address and why are you addressing it? (200 words)
- (5) Activities and approaches: What do you hope to do and how will you do it? (400 words)
- (6) Initiative: How are you proposing, organizing, and leading the project? (150 words)
- (7) Expected outcomes: What social impact do you intend to catalyze in both the short and longer term? (200 words)

(8) Project members: Provide a brief biographical sketch of each member and their roles in the project (300 words)

3. Budget Proposal

Submit a breakdown of the expenses for which you plan to use the SLI award (see “6. Awards” for the list of eligible expenses). For each expense, make sure to include details such as location, number of people, etc.

4. Schedule

Include a brief schedule of the project period, including preparatory and any post-implementation activities.

II. Reference

Submit a letter of recommendation written by a referee who endorses the project and is familiar with your academic achievements and/or social engagement activities. The letter should be scanned and uploaded to the online form in PDF or JPEG format and include the digital or physical signature of the referee.

(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.”

5. 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.

6. Schedule

1. Announcement of a Call for Applications: April 2, 2026
2. Preliminary application: May 13 to 11:59 p.m. JST, May 27, 2026
3. Eligibility notification: July 1, 2026
4. Formal application: July 1 to 11:59 p.m. JST, July 15, 2026
5. Notification of selection outcomes: September 16, 2026
6. Disbursement of funds: End of November 2026

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; the account must be able to 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.

7. Others

1. A project report, including a narrative description of the results, and a financial report must be submitted by all awardees within 30 days after the completion of the project. 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), rather than relying solely on the site's "Translate" function. The Sylff Association secretariat does not guarantee the accuracy or appropriateness of such translations, which are offered through Google Translate for reference purposes only.

Inquiries:

Please send an email with [SLI] in the subject line to:
sylff[a]tkfd.or.jp (replace [a] with @)