



# Firebird Foundation for Anthropological Research

## Research Grants for the Documentation of Oral Literature and Traditional Ecological Knowledge

### General overview

The unique oral literature and traditional ecological knowledge of indigenous people are rapidly being lost through modernization and the increasing deaths of elders and traditional practitioners. The Firebird Foundation is offering Supplemental Research Grants for the Documentation of Oral Literature and Traditional Ecological Knowledge to encourage the collection of these rapidly disappearing art forms and body of scientific knowledge.

Oral literature may include ritual texts, curative chants, epic poems, musical genres, folk tales, songs, myths, legends, historical accounts, life history narratives, word games, as well as traditional ecological knowledge including agricultural, hunting knowledge, information regarding animal migration and astronomy, etc.

These research grants are available to anthropologists, linguists, other scholars, as well as to individuals or teams of community researchers in indigenous societies who are dedicated to preserving their oral traditions and their knowledge of the natural world.

The Firebird Foundation will provide funds of up to \$10,000 to applicants for the purchase of recording equipment and the expenses of collecting this material. Applicants are encouraged, where possible, to foster the development of local teams of collectors to continue the work of recording these materials after the researcher has left the field site.

Inquiries should be addressed to:

The Firebird Foundation via email: [firebird@firebirdfoundation.org](mailto:firebird@firebirdfoundation.org)

Applications are accepted for review twice annually:

January 1

June 1

*Research grants are awarded without discrimination of ethnic group, national origin, residence, religious affiliation, sex, or gender. Level of education is not a consideration. The Firebird Foundation gives preference to community-based and long-term projects which train community members to continue the recording or oral literature after the research project has been completed.*

## Firebird Foundation Oral Literature Research Grants Cover Page

\_\_\_\_\_ Date of application

\_\_\_\_\_ Amount requested

1. Name of primary researcher \_\_\_\_\_
2. Additional research team members \_\_\_\_\_
3. Name of research project \_\_\_\_\_
4. Location (include ethnic/linguistic group, village name, region, country)  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Name of institutional or community affiliation \_\_\_\_\_
6. Anticipated date of research \_\_\_\_\_
7. Anticipated date of completion \_\_\_\_\_
8. Anticipated date of final report submission \_\_\_\_\_

### Application Checklist

\_\_\_ Cover Page

\_\_\_ Detailed descriptive narrative explaining type(s) of oral literature to be collected, methodology, urgency of this specific project, your relationship to the community.

\_\_\_ 1<sup>st</sup> letter of reference (please have referrer send these directly to the Firebird)

\_\_\_ 2<sup>nd</sup> letter of reference (please have referrer send these directly to the Firebird)

\_\_\_ Curriculum Vitae or Resume

\_\_\_ Timeline of work and final report submission

\_\_\_ Detailed Budget

***Please include cover page with your application.***

## **Application guidelines and instructions:**

1. Please list primary researcher's name. This person will be the person who receives the funds and will be responsible for their appropriate use. If the grant money is sent to a bank in the US, the primary researcher will receive a 1099 form for US tax purposes. (\*\*Please note, the Firebird Foundation does not provide any accounting or tax advice other than the form itself.)
2. Please list all members of the research project.
3. Please include the name of your research project.
4. Please describe the location of your fieldwork, specificity is appreciated.
5. If you are associated with a university, institution, or are a member of a community, please list. (\*\*Please note, the Firebird Foundation grants provide for direct research costs and does not fund indirect costs.)
6. Please submit the date you expect to begin your research.
7. Please submit the date you expect to end your research. (\*\*Please note, you will receive follow-up emails from the Firebird Foundation three months after the end of your research regarding your final report and budget submission.)
8. Please indicate when you anticipate submitting your final report and financial statement.
9. Please include a COVID plan and how you plan to protect yourself and the community.

## **Application checklist**

**Narrative:** Provide a detailed narrative of your research project 3-5 pages in length. Explain in detail the significance of the specific type of oral literature and/or traditional ecological knowledge you will be recording to the community from which it originates. Include your methodology, the urgency of this specific project, and your relationship with the community.

**Letters of reference:** The review committee will accept letters of reference from academic advisors and/or community elders attesting to the applicant's commitment to oral literature and/or traditional ecological knowledge, or to the particular community.

**Curriculum Vitae or Resume:** Please submit a CV or resume illustrating your background. If you do not have a formal resume or CV, please include a letter outlining your experience and interest.

**Timeline of work and final report submission:** While research plans are always subject to change, please give us as detailed a timeline as you can imagine at this time.

**Detailed Budget:** Please send us a detailed budget of how you will spend the grant money. Apply in US currency. We appreciate specific line by line descriptions (for example, 2 Zoom Recorders and one Canon PowerShot G7 camera instead of "recording equipment"). If you are unable to provide specifics, please provide an explanation as to why.

## **Further information for applying:**

### 1.0 Firebird Research Grants

#### 1.1. General Research Grants

General grants are supplemental grants for up to US\$10,000.

## 1.2. Laura W.R. Appell and George N. Appell Research Grants

LWRA and GNA Research grants are for up to US\$40,000.

\*\*Please note, these are not simply larger grants. The LWRA and GNA grants are for people who share philosophic values with the founders of the Firebird Foundation and have a long-term commitment to a community. Do not apply without these qualifications. Please contact the Firebird Foundation directly if you would like to be considered for this grant and how to apply.

The Laura W. R. Appell Research Grants were established in 2015 to honor Laura W. R. Appell and her work among the Rungus Momogun of Sabah, Malaysia. On the death of her husband, George, N. Appell in 2020, these Research Grants were renamed to honor both members of the Appell husband and wife research team and the body of work that arose from their continued commitment to the Rungus Momogun community. Their work began in 1959 and continued for over 50 years. Their work included the establishment of the Sabah Oral Literature Project, their documentation and analysis of Rungus religion and society, and the Rungus Cultural Dictionary.

The Laura W. R. Appell and George N. Appell Research Grants are given in recognition of their long-term commitment to the Rungus Momogun community and in honor of their Rungus friends, especially Itulina, Marajun, Minobidong and Sovoli, their primary sources for Rungus religion and culture. The recipients of this research grant are expected to have a long-term commitment to a community and to collaborate with the community's members to preserve and protect their oral literature and traditional ecological knowledge.

Each of these Research Grants can include up to US\$40,000 for the expenses required to establish a long-term community-based project. The project must explicitly adhere to the values, ethics and methodology established by the Sabah Oral Literature Project. The grant recipient will work closely with the Firebird Foundation to ensure that the Sabah Oral Literature Project Guidelines are both adhered to and adapted appropriately to the individual community.

## 2.0. Purpose of Research Grants

2.1. The primary purpose of the Firebird Research Grants is to supplement other sources of funding, i.e., larger research grants to enable and ensure that researchers prioritize oral literature and traditional ecological collection with a wide variety of research types. The Foundation encourages researchers to live in a community for at least 9 months to a year to collect a wide variety of oral literature in the community, not just the obvious, more public types of oral literature.

These research grants are intended to cover the costs of the collection of oral literature and/or the costs of processing the material with the community.

2.2. To support the initiative of indigenous communities to organize the collection of their own oral literature and traditional ecological knowledge. We encourage indigenous societies to apply for Research Grants to begin the documentation of their cultures. Consideration will be given for applications that reflect community organizations.

2.3. To support a return to the source community to collect specific material or to complete a collection. Research grant applications can cover the costs of returning to a community

where original work was done to continue documenting oral literature and traditional ecological knowledge.

### 3.0. Submission of application

3.1. You can submit an application by email in a legible font as either a .doc or .pdf file, or you can submit a hard copy by mail. Applications are considered for all nationalities, but the application must be submitted in English.

3.2. Applications must be submitted by January 1 or June 1. Late submissions will be applied to the next application cycle.

3.3. Rolling decisions will be made within three months of the submission date and a letter of agreement will be sent to the applicant. Please do not contact us prior to March 31 or August 31 when the review cycle will be complete.

### 4.0. Successful proposals for Research Grants may include:

- Applicant plans to live in source community for 9-12 months.
- Applicant is a member of the ethnic group and speaks the language.
- Applicant intends to train local members of the source community so that the collection of oral literature can continue after the research concludes.
- Applicant can speak the local language and/or has the skills to prepare a phonemic orthography of the language, if one is not available, and or the applicant is working with a linguist.
- An attempt is made to collect several versions of the major texts. This is important for comparative purposes and will contribute to understanding the processes of learning and remembering and provide a genealogy of sources for the text.
- Collected texts are not corrected or distilled.
- Copies of original recordings and final report are also to be stored in the community.
- Applicant shows sensitivity to the fact that not all oral literature collected should be made public automatically. Please see section on this website, "Ethical Dilemmas of Public Access to Oral Literature Documents".
- Documentation or oral histories included life histories of significant people, the individual's experience with major historical events, and personal narratives.
- Budget is specific and synchronized with timeline.
- Applicant provides information on how the collected material will be transcribed and translated even if it does not fall within the timeline of this grant.
- Applicant shows a long-standing dedication to oral literature.
- Applicant shows a long-standing relationship to the community.

### 5.0. Use of funds

5.1. Funds are to be used for the direct costs associated with the oral literature research.

5.2. Please do not ask for funds for incidental expenses, postage, or personal needs. We do not provide funds for tuition, travel to conferences, or institutional support. An applicant can ask for a review of these policies, with a valid explanation, but it is rarely given.

5.3. Funds will be disbursed in the following manner. 90% will be disbursed after a letter of acceptance has been sent and the successful applicant has provided the Firebird Foundation with banking details. 10% will be held until the final report and financial statement are sent to the Firebird.

#### 6.0. Responsibilities of a Research Grant recipient.

- Applicant will provide an accurate narrative of their intended research.
- Applicant is responsible for obtaining permission from the community to conduct their research, well in advance of the application.
- Applicant will communicate the intentions of their work, what is expected of the individuals they are working with, etc. well in advance of their application.
- Individuals and community members will be allowed to decide what culturally or personally sensitive material remains private.
- Successful applicants will sign a letter of agreement with the Firebird Foundation. Funds will not be released until the letter of agreement has been returned.
- If your research plans are altered dramatically, the Firebird Foundation expects to be notified of the circumstances that have led to the change and how you plan to address the changes in your research plan.
- If a successful applicant is unable to complete their research, it is expected that the unused portion of the grant will be returned.
- Successful applicants will provide a final report and an accounting of how the grant was spent three months following the completion of their research (according to the timeline they submit in their application).
- Ownership of research materials remains with the researcher however the Firebird Foundation would be pleased to house copies of any material the researcher wishes to include in their final report. Please label all materials with your name and project title. Please also send the Firebird any articles or publications that arise stemming from your research.

#### 7.0. Ethical Dilemma for Consideration

7.1. Cultural material and oral literature are potentially potent in certain political climates now and in the future. Please keep in mind your sources now and in the future and remember that individuals have historically been arrested, tortured, and killed for materials like these. Do everything you can to protect the materials you collect from damage and loss and protect the people who are sharing their linguistic, and cultural materials with you from over exposure or compromise of any kind.

7.2. Please be mindful that while open access is important for the dissemination of information and providing access, it can also have deleterious consequences. In societies where people live using their cultural material, dissemination can undermine the value of their practice. In some societies, cultural material is guarded by certain members and open access causes a cultural breach or violation of what is allowed, requiring a consequence to those who view the private material. Poverty, sickness, violence, and death are documented consequences of providing irresponsible open access. Please consult with the community to make appropriate choices.