SSN Election Protection & Enhancement Program
Strengthening Local Elections through the SSN Network

After a successful first year pilot of the Election Protection and Enhancement Program, the Scholars Strategy Network seeks proposals for the second year of this competitive program for projects that aim to bolster the decentralized U.S. election system.

To allow our federated network to take on a variety of locally-responsive activities, a limited number of grants will be awarded to chapters or teams of members willing to organize local groups of academics **to implement known best practices that improve, increase participation in, and build trust in elections**. Participating researchers will familiarize themselves with current and changing rules for running elections, build collaborative relationships with election administrators and university and community-based groups working on these issues, and help advocate for improvements to and greater trust in election systems.

Grant Timeline

Activities and projects funded by the Election Protection and Enhancement Program must take place between **September 2023 - November 2024**, with final reporting on activities and lessons learned due in December 2024.

Application Process

All proposals must be emailed to Britah Odondi (britah@scholars.org) by **August 18, 2023**. Proposals should be no shorter than three (3) pages, and must include the following elements:

Project Leaders
Proposals must name one to three scholars as project leaders. Project leaders can be existing SSN chapter leaders or members who wish to take this on as an additional chapter project, or in-process members who have completed the SSN scholar profile form by the proposal due-date of **August 18, 2023** and whose team contains at least one full member or chapter leader. Groups of scholars in locations where there is no current SSN chapter are also welcome and encouraged to apply. We highly recommend that at least one of the project leaders be a scholar with demonstrated expertise in voting and/or election research.

Project Budget

Proposals must include project budgets. Budgets can include project leader honoraria, stipends for part-time project fellows, and other project costs up to **$20,000**, which should be broken down as much as possible.

Budget Template: Please download a copy of the SSN Building Trust in Elections Budget Template linked here, to fill out and submit alongside your proposal. This template includes a sample budget on the second tab, for your reference.

Budget Guidelines: Please review SSN's existing chapter budget guidelines for an understanding of acceptable and unacceptable budget expenditures. While some expenditures for this initiative may differ from general chapter expenditures, these guidelines provide useful insights into the types of expenditures that will be considered. We also recommend you review SSN's existing chapter fellow guidelines for advice on how to budget for and best leverage fellow stipends.

A few notes on project leader honoraria:
- Project budgets should outline how honoraria is to be divided amongst project leaders.
- In the event that a project leader also happens to be an existing SSN chapter leader, they may receive up to $5,000 total (including their chapter leader honoraria) for their work on this project.
- Honoraria for project leaders will be awarded at the completion of the grant period and are dependent on demonstrable good-faith efforts to achieve the outcomes described in the proposed scope of work and complete interim and final reporting requirements.

Project Description and Timeline

We welcome proposals with a wide variety of locally-responsive efforts to mobilize academics under the broad theme of improving, increasing participation in, and building trust in elections. We are particularly interested in proposals that build on existing relationships with non-academic partners, demonstrate existing interest from a non-academic partner, or that outline goals for building relationships with specific non-academic partners. Notably, SSN does not fund grants for research. That said, for the purposes of this program, projects that can fairly be described as performing applied analysis, where one or a small group of scholars perform basic research at the request of, or in partnership with a local practitioner, are allowed and encouraged.

We will prioritize projects that propose to implement one or several evidence-based best practices that encourage participation and trust in elections. You can find examples of evidence-based best practices around student voting [here](#), but we do not limit implementation proposals to student voting initiatives.

The program will be structured in four phases to encourage planning, implementation, and iteration.

- **Phase 1** (Fall 2023): In the fall, project leaders will work with EPEP staff and cohort members to assess and refine their implementation plan, outcomes, and deliverables. Looking ahead towards the implementation phase, they will also begin building necessary relationships with partners to make their project successful.
- **Phase 2** (Spring 2024): Project leaders will use the spring to implement their plans, collect data, and make progress towards achieving project outcomes and deliverables.
- **Phase 3** (Summer 2024): In the summer, project leaders will evaluate the implementation of their plan and collaborate with EPEP staff and cohort members to address challenges and share learnings. Project leaders will be required to submit a brief interim report of progress made towards outcomes and deliverables, including a description of responsive changes to the project plan based on evaluation results.
- **Phase 4** (Fall 2024): In the final autumn of the project, leaders will do a second round of implementation based on lessons learned in previous phases and conduct a final comparative evaluation.

Proposals must include **detailed descriptions** and a **timeline** of the activities to be performed during the 15-month grant period. We encourage you to frame project goals and activities in ways that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.

Outcomes/Deliverables

Proposals must include specific outcomes and deliverables that are reasonably expected to occur as a result of the activities proposed. As above, we encourage you to frame outcomes in ways that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.

Below are examples of how some of these outcomes and deliverables might be framed. This is by no means meant to be an exhaustive list.

- XX partnerships between scholars and election administrators to bolster efforts to run secure, effective, and trustworthy elections (e.g., by enlisting and training XX

students to serve as local poll workers, or establishing a research-practice collaboration to address and provide solutions to existing local voting and elections challenges).
- XX research-based, jargon-free OpEds strategically placed in local outlets to explain the nuances of, and build trust in local election systems.
- XX number of briefings (in 1:1 format or otherwise) with journalists, policymakers, or practitioners to share research-based insights

Other Program Components

SSN Building Trust in Elections Seminar Series
Throughout the grant period, cohort members will participate in an SSN-coordinated seminar series on public involvement in and the administration of elections, and receive feedback from election administration experts and fellow participants on their individual projects.

Cohort Meetings
An introductory cohort meeting will be held at the start of the program to lay out expectations (date TBD). Throughout the grant period, participating project teams will get the opportunity to meet regularly with each other to share best practices from their various efforts, workshop challenges, and make useful connections. Cohort participants will also receive support from SSN that may include identifying civic partners, feedback on written materials, help with communication and media, and general dissemination planning.