The Toyota Foundation International Grant Program
Main Questions and Answers in the Past Briefing Sessions

Questions

1. Selection of grant projects

Q1. What are the important evaluation points in the selection process?

Q2. Is there any priority among the four keywords of the International Grant Program?

Q3. What does the "novelty" in the "Conclusion" of "2023 Comments by Selection Committee Chair" mean?

Q4. It seems more academic projects have been selected than the practical activities. What are the criteria in the selection process?

Q5. Are English and Japanese applications reviewed by the same selection members?

Q6. How many people are in the selection committee and what areas of expertise are they specialize in?

2. Project Representative

Q7. Is it better to have an academic researcher serve as the representative? For example, a curator or a member of the Board of Education would be better to serve as the representative?

Q8. We are considering a project that is conducted in multiple local governments in Japan and overseas. It is difficult for any one local government to be the representative.

Q9. Can a foreigner who owns a sole proprietor become a representative if s/he has an address in Japan?

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Answers

1. Selection of grant projects

Q1: What are the important evaluation points in the selection process?

A1. Selection will be conducted by an external selection committee. The selection process will not be made public, but it will be based on the consistency with the Toyota Foundation's "Guiding Principles for Grants" as well as the purpose of the program stated in the program application guideline.

Q2. Is there any priority among the four keywords of the International Grant Program?

A2. No. It will be comprehensively considered in light of the project's objectives.

Q3. What does the "novelty" in the "Conclusion" of "2023 Comments by Selection Committee Chair" mean?

(https://www.toyotafound.or.jp/english/grant/international/2023comment.html)

A3. As mentioned in the comment, there is often a trade-off between novelty and feasibility. The feasibility of the project is of course important, but there was the shared impression among committee that there were not many projects that looked visionary in the way they set and tackled issues, nor novel in their thinking.

Q4. It seems more academic projects have been selected than the practical activities. What are the criteria in the selection process?

A4. Selection will be conducted by an external selection committee, and the selection process is not made public. The minimum requirement is that the applicants must meet the objectives and requirements stated in the project guidelines.

Q5. Are English and Japanese applications reviewed by the same selection members?

A5. Yes. Both Japanese and English applications are reviewed equally by the same selection committee.

Q6. How many people are in the selection committee and what areas of expertise are they specialize in?

A6. The chairman of the selection committee is Ms. Mari Suzuki, Vice President and Executive Secretary of the Asian Community Center 21 (ACC21). Other members are not disclosed.

2. Project Representative

Q7. Is it better to have an academic researcher serve as the representative? For example, a curator or a member of the Board of Education would be better to serve as the representative?

A7. There is no requirement as to the affiliation of the representative.

Q8. We are considering a project that is conducted in multiple local governments in Japan and overseas. It is difficult for any one local government to be the representative.

A8. Please designate one person as the representative. Multiple individuals or organizations cannot be the representative. The representative should be a person who has a contact address in Japan and who is able to grasp the overall project and responsibly carry out the project.

Q9. Can a foreigner who owns a sole proprietor become a representative if s/he has an address in Japan?

A9. Yes. As long as s/he has a contact address in Japan, any nationality, affiliation, or qualification is acceptable. Sole proprietorships (freelance) are also acceptable.

Q10. One of the requirements for application says "the project representative must have a contact address in Japan". Whether is it the representative of the project or the organization's representative office to which the project members belong?

A10. If the project representative (individual) has an address in Japan, s/he is eligible to apply.

Q11. Can an independent researcher apply?

A11. Yes. If selected, a memorandum of understanding will be signed between the Toyota Foundation and the representative (individual). Please note that the project must be implemented by a team consisting of members from multiple countries and sectors.

Q12. Is there an age limit for the representative?

A12. No.

Q13. Do the project representative and the contact person need to be different?

A13. No. It can be the same person.

Q14. Can someone belong to a private high school apply as a representative?

A14. Yes, a person affiliated with a private high school can apply as a representative.

Q15. Does the representative have to be a specialist in a related field?

A15. Not necessarily, but s/he must have the necessary knowledge and experience to implement the project. Also, it is desirable to involve people with expertise in the target area as project members.

Q16. What are the requirements for Japan-based researchers for international grant program?

A16. Anyone, not limited to researchers, can apply as long as s/he has a contact address in Japan. The representatives are expected to be fully responsible for the management of the project and the grant fund, as well as reporting to the Foundation. The Toyota Foundation will sign a memorandum of understanding with the representative.

3. Project Members

Q17. What types of organizations are expected as collaborators in partner countries; universities, research institutes, civil society organizations, companies, etc.?

A17. There is no requirement for the partners of mutual exchange. It is important to get the partners appropriate for the requirements of the grant and achieving the project goal, such as whether there will be appropriate learning opportunities for the content of the project, and whether a variety of sectors will be involved. For example, we will not support exchanges between single sectors; researchers only, NPOs only, or other.

Q18. Can you introduce me to a project partner in Japan?

A18. No. We do not introduce partners.

Q19. At the stage of submitting an application, is it necessary to have a formal written agreement with each of the agencies involved in the project?

A19. No. It is not necessary to have an official agreement in writing at the time of application, however, please communicate well with the relevant organizations and agree on the content of the project. In the selection process, questions may be asked to the relevant organizations through the representative. In some cases, letters of agreement from the parties involved was requested as a condition of grant adoption.

Q20. Should I make a contract with local collaborators for implementing the project?

A20. The Toyota Foundation does not require to make a contract between the representative and the project members.

Q21. Do we have to establish an organization or group in order to receive a grant? Or can a community of volunteers with diverse expertise apply?

A21: No, it is not necessary to establish an organization or group.

Q22. Regarding the requirement "The applicant (representative and project members) must have practical experience in research, activities, creative works, policy proposals, etc. related to the subject area in multiple target countries/regions," if NPO A is the representative in Japan and Organization B is a project member in another country and has practical experience in own country, is it eligible to apply?

A22. Yes, as long as the team as a whole has the knowledge and experience necessary to implement the project, it is eligible

Q23. Can we decide the participants (e.g., students, citizens, etc.) for the mutual learning sessions through an open application process? Also, is it possible to pay travel expenses for participants who are selected from the open application process?

A23: Yes, it is fine to call for participants by open application process. Please include those name who participate in the learning together in the list of members as far as you know at the application. If the names of individuals have not yet been determined, you may indicate the organization or position they belong to, and how many people with what attributes you plan to recruit.

Q24. Should I include the names of the various parties involved in the application?

A24. Yes, please be as specific as possible. If you do not decide up to the names of individuals, please enter "CBD" in the "Name" column and "Organization name, XX person in charge" in the "Affiliation/title" column. Please also refer to the answer to No. 23 above.

Q25. In the project member list of the "Affiliation, Title, etc." column, the title is so long that it is difficult to fit in the space. Even in this case, should I not change the size of the frame?

A25. Please try to keep long titles brief in the "2. Project Participants" list and provide details in the "3. Career and Achievements" section.

Q26. In addition to Asian participants, are participants from Europe and the U.S. also acceptable?

A26. Yes. As long as the project targets at least two countries from East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia, any nationality of members is acceptable.

Q27. Is there a requirement for minimum number of people for a mutual visit? It seems difficult to have a large number of people due to budgetary constraints.

A27. There is no particular rule. Not only the number of people, but also the composition and diversity of the members is important.

Q28. Is it acceptable to include minors as members of the mutual learning participants? Are there any considerations regarding the travel of minors?

A28: The Foundation does not prohibit minors from traveling. It is desirable for the proposal to show that necessary considerations have been made for minors to travel in light of the culture, laws, etc. of the country concerned.

Q29. I would like to conduct international research. For example, is there any problem if the project is a collaboration between social practitioners from an American NGO and an Indian NGO, rather than researchers affiliated with a university?

A29. No problem. However, projects that are solely for the purpose of research are not eligible. Also, the team should include members from multiple sectors, not just researchers or NGOs. It is possible to include the U.S. in the project after targeting at least two countries from East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia.

4．Languages for Application

Q30. Does the proposal have to be written in Japanese? Or can I write in a mixture of Japanese, English, and other languages?

A30. We accept proposals either in Japanese or English. Please decide which language you would like to apply before starting the application. Mixture of Japanese and English will not be accepted. The languages other than Japanese and English will also not be accepted.

Q31. In the "3. Background and Achievements" section of the proposal, can I attach a URL in the local language (ex. Vietnamese) as a reference? Or should I list only Japanese and English information?

A31. Please give priority to Japanese or English information. URLs in other languages are also acceptable, but they may not be understood during the selection process since the selection will be conducted in either Japanese or English.

Q32. If we submit the proposal in Japanese, the report must be also submitted in Japanese? Or can I make the report in English?

A32. Even if the proposal is in Japanese, it is possible to submit the progress report, etc. in English. Please note that some information, such as information posted on the website, should be reported in both English and Japanese.

5. Project Periods

Q33. Is the only difference between a one-year grant and a two-year grant the length of the grant, or is there a rule that the content of the two-year grant must be a step up from the first year?

A33. There are no specific rules. Please apply for a grant for the period deemed necessary for your activities. The maximum grant amount is 5 million yen for a one-year grant and 10 million yen for a two-year grant.

6. Target Areas

Q34. Is a project involving Japanese diaspora (in Latin America) could be considered too?

A34. There are no restrictions on the topics to be addressed as long as they are common issues in Asia, but Latin America is not included in the target countries for this grant program. It is possible to include Latin America in addition to at least two target countries listed in the application guidelines.

Q35. Do you have any conditions for research conducting in violent fields?

A35. There are no specific restrictions set for any particular area, however, implementation feasibility will be given high priority in the selection process.

Q36. Is a project with activities in Tokyo, Bangalore, and Berlin eligible?

A37. It is eligible since two countries (Japan and India) among the target countries are included.

Q37. We are considering common issues in Asia, but is there any problem with participation by people from Africa and the EU in Addition to at least two of the target countries?

A37. No problem.

7. Project Activities

Q38. Can we includes research and study as a part of the project?

A38. Yes.

Q39. We are thinking of an international conference. Is it possible to consider the research conducted by each presenter (researcher) at the international conference as the research in the first stage of the project?

A39. There is no problem in holding an international conference as a part pf the project activities. However, if the primary objective of the project is to hold an international conference and researchers conduct their own research in their own countries to make presentation in the conference, it may be considered that the project does not fit the objectives of the program. If the research is for studying about the common issue in Asia in two or more countries and learn from each other by mutual exchange on an equal basis, it will be eligible.

Q40. Do you need multiple gatherings/visits? For example, should multiple visits be planned at multiple locations?

A40. Yes, since the basic requirement is mutual visits and learning from each other in two or more target countries, this will necessarily include multiple gatherings at multiple locations.

Q41. For example, if we conduct activities in Japan, Thailand, and Laos, are we required to reciprocate all visits to Japan, Thailand, and Laos?

A41. Yes. In principle, Japan must be visited by Laos and Thailand, Laos by Japan and Thailand, and Thailand by Japan and Laos.

Q42. Regarding mutual visit, for example if we target country A and country B, is it acceptable to have a difference in the number of visitors, e.g., 10 from country A to country B, 6 from country B to country A, etc.?

A42. Not all mutual visits need to have the same number of participants and the same members, as long as it is appropriate in light of the project's objectives to achieve equal mutual learning.

Q43. Is it possible to identify a good practice through online exchange and then visit and learn from that good practice?

A43. There is no problem combining online interactions with in-person visits, but the feasibility of the project may be questioned if there are no ideas at all for potential sites for in-person visits. If you have any candidate sites, please mention them in your proposal and explain how you would determine the site, to make the plan more persuasive.

Q44. Will mutual visits be required for all stages of the project: early, mid, and late phases?

A44. Mutual visits should take place at least once in each country at appropriate timing during the project period.

Q45. Is it eligible for the grant if Japan and Country A conduct a mutual visit and then conduct a research in Country B as a common research target? Members from both Japan and the Country A will be visiting Country B together.

A45. Yes. In addition to mutual exchange and learning between the two targeted countries, there is no problem to visit a third country as a reference country in relation to similar issues. However, if the main activity of the project is visiting Country B, it may be considered that it does not fit the purpose of the grant program.

Q46. Even if a project is implemented in four countries, is it acceptable to conduct mutual visits only between two countries? Or is it mandatory to visit all four countries?

A46. Mutual visits to all targeted countries are a requirement, so in this case, the project targets the two countries that will be the main focus of the learning exchange or mutual visit. It is possible to have participants from other countries as well, but the significance of their participation should be clearly stated in the proposal.

Q47. Is acceptable that the participants from the target countries gather and learn from each other just in one place, instead of visiting each other?

A47: No. The requirement is that all of the target countries visit each other.

Q48. Is the project that conduct online exchange only (no in-person visit) among the

target countries eligible for the grant?

A48. No.

Q49. We are considering research on the cultural characteristics of different regions in India. In this case, the Japanese side will learn about India, but the Indian side will not learn from Japan. Is it eligible?

A49: If Japan only learns from India, it would not be eligible.

Q50. From the UK, we would like to properly disseminate traditional craft techniques in Japan.

A50: This would not be in line with the purpose of this grant program, which is to promote mutual learning.

Q51. What are the project/funding implications if one or two of the target countries decide to withdraw from the project?

A51. If it becomes difficult to continue the project as planned, please contact the Foundation and receive the guidance. The Foundation may terminate the grant if the anticipated results of the project cannot be expected.

Q52. Looking at the past grant projects, it seems that there have been a variety of formats for deliverables, such as research papers, documentary films, short clips, and even recipe books. Are there any priority areas or themes for submissions?

A52. The Toyota Foundation has not set any priority areas or formats for deliverables. Please propose a form that you think is appropriate for the deliverables according to the content of your project.

Q53. Is it preferable to organize events in Japan?

A53. No, it does not matter whether the event is held in or outside of Japan. Not only events, but the results of the project should be disseminated in an appropriate manner in light of the aims of the project.

Q54: We received a grant from the Toyota Foundation in the past. Is it possible for us to apply for a new project to share the knowledge and training in the target country by further disseminating the findings and manuals produced in the previous project? Also, is it acceptable for the applicant organization to change in this case? It means the roles of the applicant and partner organizations will be switched.

A54. No problem, as long as the content is appropriate in light of the program objectives. It

would be better if the proposal clearly states that this is the next development utilizing the results of past grants.

8. Cost and budget

Q55. Is it acceptable to combine other funds and grants for project management?

A55. Yes. For example, regarding travel expenses for mutual visits, a grant from the Toyota Foundation could be used for the transportation of the local community, while the researchers would pay from their own research funds, and those from companies could use their own funds. If you are considering fund from other sources, please indicate that in a section that are asking about external funding in the budget page of the proposal so that we can see your proposed funding plan for the entire project. If other grants are obtained after you are selected, you may adjust your expenditure plan. However, the sum of personnel expenses and honorarium still has to be under 30%, and administrative cost to be under 10% of the total grant by the Toyota Foundation.

Q56. Can we include up to 10% of the total amount for administrative expenses, plus up to 30% of the total amount for the personal expenses and the honorarium in the project budget? Also, what expenses are included in the administrative fee?

A56. Yes, that is correct. We assume that the administrative expenses include the operation expenses of the main management organization that is responsible for the project's secretariat. It is acceptable for multiple organizations to share the costs.

Q57. What kind of documents do we have to submit as a reference for the basis of the personnel expenses?

A57. You do not need to attach any reference documents (you cannot submit other than a proposal in the prescribed format).

Please enter the basis for the estimate of the budget in the proposal such as unit price x number of people x number of days, etc. There is no upper limit on the unit price.

Q58: If the project representatives and project members take on roles related to the activity, such as arranging a venue for mutual learning, is it acceptable to pay from the grant?

A58: Yes, the grant funds can be used if the project representatives and project members play a role in the implementation of the project. For example, the grant may pay for the production of a video by a project member as the deliverable, or pay an honorarium for a representative to serve as an interpreter in the meetings.

Q59. Can we pay for equipment necessary for project implementation, such as PCs

and communication cost for online meetings?

A59. Yes. For equipment more than 200,000 yen/unit, it is requested to submit "Report of Purchased Equipment" (where the equipment will be donated to) at the end of the grant period.

Q60. Is it possible to apply the grant from the Toyota Foundation to the practical part of micro-grants (small grants)? We would like to examine and disseminate the significance of micro-grants (small funds and micro-loans) as a small venture philanthropic activity originating from individuals in a certain Asian country.
We envision a practice of verifying the wellbeing of the people involved in these micro-grants, learning from each other, and verifying the contribution to the wellbeing of all involved, including the donors.

A60. Yes, it is possible to allocate grant funds for verification activities. Please specify the importance of the verification activities in your proposal. However, we believe that using the Toyota Foundation grant as a source of investment or donation is not in line with the purpose of this grant program. In addition, if the proposal is considered a feasibility study for a start-up business, it may be given a lower priority for selection.

Q61. Is there a set date for exchange rate calculation for the budget proposal on page 10?

A61. No, we do not set a particular date.

Q62. Will the amount requested in the proposal be the grant amount? Is there any possibility of reduction during the screening process?

A62. Yes. We may offer a reduced amount based on such as the content of the project, the balance of the application, etc.

9. Accounting

Q63. I understand that it is not necessary to establish an organization or group in order to receive a grant, but do we need to have a group/organizational account (not an individual) ? Is an existing account not acceptable?

A63. Basically, we ask to open an account in the name of the project, but in cases where it is difficult, we accept an account in the name of an individual or an existing account. Even in such cases, we recommend that the account be exclusively dedicated to this grant in order to avoid confusion with other funds.

Q64. If a university researcher is the representative, will the university be in charge of accounting?

A64. The university can be in charge of accounting if necessary.

Q65. Can we outsource the accounting work to outside accountant?
A65. Yes.

Q66. Does the bank account have to be in Japan?
A66. No. An overseas bank account is also acceptable. The Toyota Foundation will remit funds to the account (only one) you specify, regardless of whether it is in Japan or overseas.

Q67. If a team is formed in two countries (Japan and one Asian country), will the grant be distributed to Japan and the partner country?
A67. The Toyota Foundation will remit the grant amount to the only one designated account at the amount and timing determined in the memorandum of understanding (MOU) that is agreed on prior to the grant period. We leave it up to the grant recipient how to manage and distribute the funds.

Q68. Does the grant have to be managed by the representative's organization (in Japan)? Or can it be managed by the participating partners?
A68. The Toyota Foundation will deposit the grant funds into the account (only one account) you designate. The bank account can be in Japan or overseas. Accounting and reporting will be done using our web-based accounting system, which also allows project members to enter their own information. We do not specify who will be responsible for the management and reporting, but the Foundation will contact the representative, contact person and the project accountant if there are any matters to be confirmed.

Q69. Is the timing of grant remittance fixed at twice a year (every six months)? Also, is the remittance amount per payment simply the total amount of the grant divided by the number of remittances?
A69. The remittance period is fixed, and the amount per remittance will be agreed in the memorandum based on an expenditure plan in accordance with the implementation schedule of the grant project. The timing and amount of the grant to be sent cannot be changed during the grant period.

10. Prior Consultation

Q70. Is the prior consultation conducted by e-mail?
A70. It can be done either by e-mail, online (Zoom), or in person. If you wish to meet in person, please contact us early so that we can arrange a meeting at our office.

Q71. Even if I wish to have a preliminary consultation via Zoom, do I have to submit the concept note by May 20?

A71. Yes. However, as it get to the final date for consultation and the meeting time slot is fully reserved, meeting may be scheduled after May 20.

Q72. Is there a format for the concept note for consultation?

A72. There is no specific format, but please submit the required information (title, purpose and theme of the project, main activities, main project members and budget plan) in no more than two pages via e-mail.

Q73. Can we have a prior consultation in English?

A73. Yes.

Q74. Regarding the preliminary consultation based on the concept note, is it possible to communicate more than once?

A74. Basically, only one round of consultation is possible. We will either talk with you online or sed our comments by email. After the consultation if you have additional questions you may email them to us, but it may take sometime before we response, as priority is given to first-timers.

11. Application Forms

Q75. Does the application form have to be submitted by the representative of the project? Or can it be submitted by another participant in the project (e.g., country/region representative)?

A75. Applications must be submitted through the application system. It must be submitted by the person who made the entry. The person who entry does not have to be the same as the representative listed on the application form, but we consider the representative has full understanding and approvals about the content of the project. The results of the selection process will also be sent to the e-mail address registered at the time of entry. For communication during the selection process, etc., we will contact the email addresses of the representative and the contact person on the project proposal.

Q76. What is the font size of the proposal? Should images or data be attached separately?

A76. The font size is indicated in the proposal (black 10.5 or 11). Images can be included, but they should be kept within the proposal format, not as a separate attachment, and should not exceed the specified size or number of pages.

12. Past Granted Projects

Q77. Where can I see past grant projects?

A77. Past grant projects can be accessed from each grant program year page ("List of Grant Projects" in the middle). You can also search the list.

Free word search: https://toyotafound.my.salesforce-sites.com/psearch/Search

13. Others

Q78. Is it possible for one organization to apply for more than one project?

A78. It is possible, but it is unlikely that both projects will be selected, and their viability may be questioned during the selection process. We recommend that you prioritize your proposals through prior consultation.

Q79. May I apply for both the International Grant Program and the Research Grant Program?

A79. Yes, but please read the application guidelines carefully as the purpose and requirements of each program are different.

Q80. If the project is selected, is the representative obliged to attend the Kick-off workshop? If the date and time are not set, there may be cases when the representative is not available on that date.

A80. In principle, we ask the representative to attend the Kick-off workshop, but if for some reason s/he is unable to attend, we ask a substitute (someone familiar with the project) to attend on behalf of the representative.

Q81. Can we submit the interim and final reports in English?

A81. Yes. Please submit your report in either English or Japanese. However, we may ask you to submit the project outline, implementation outline, and other content in both English and Japanese.

Q82. Is it acceptable to use AI for application preparation?

A82. Yes. Any means of preparation is acceptable, but the application form should be prepared in accordance with the objectives and contents of the program guidelines, with the full responsibility of the project representative. If the proposal contains obvious factual errors or falsehoods, it will not be eligible for selection.