CLEARER THINKING

Micro Grants Application Guide 2023

Terms, conditions, and more.

Welcome to the third installment of our annual **Micro Grants program**! Through this program, we award small grants to people like you who collaborate with us to create short, interactive learning tools for ClearerThinking.org. The previous years' tools have been such a huge success (resulting in 21 great new tools) that we've decided to do it again! Plus, **the application process is so easy!** All you have to do is describe your idea for a beneficial learning tool in around 150 to 400 words. When you're ready to apply, you can do so here.

Why You Should Participate

The benefits you may get out of participating in the Micro Grants program include:

- **Helping other people improve their lives** by creating your own fun, educational tool that can be used by anyone, anywhere in the world (all they need is the ability to speak English and internet access).
- **Gaining experience** developing an idea into a complete, high-quality, interactive learning tool with help from experienced professionals.
- **Receiving a monetary prize** for each stage of the program you advance to (as long as you're successful in the first stage).
- **The possibility of having your work published** on ClearerThinking.org, a site used by thousands of people every week, and the possibility of having your work shared with our mailing list of 200,000+ people.

Click here to submit an idea now!

Deadline: September 1st, 9am EST

Briefly, How It Works

We'll be awarding the grants in four stages (note the deadlines shown to the right of each step):


Stage 1: Short proposals
~150-400 words brief description
Deadline:
Sept 1st, 9am EST
Up to 40 selected and awarded $50 each
Sept 18th, 5pm EST
Stage 2: Detailed outline
1-3 pages detailing structure & teaching aims
Deadline:
Oct 9th, 9am EST
Up to 30 selected and awarded a further $100 each
Nov 9th
Stage 3: First draft
Developed using our browser-based software. No experience necessary!
Deadline:
Dec 11th
Up to 25 selected and awarded a further $200 each
March 31st, 2024
Stage 4: Final version
Implementing feedback from Clearer Thinking team members and anonymous users.
Deadline:
Apr 30th, 2024
Up to 25 selected and awarded a further $245 each
~Apr 30th

These four stages are explained in more detail below, in the section titled The Four Stages in More Detail.

Success in the first, second, or third stage does not commit you to completing any of the following stages of the process. If you are invited to the next stage of the application but cannot or do not want to complete it, that's not a problem (in that case, you'll just get paid for the stages you've won so far).

Note: Deadlines may be subject to extensions.

It is up to our judges' discretion what submissions will be accepted at each stage. Here are some of the criteria our judges will consider.

Application Criteria

There are no criteria that you personally need to satisfy. These grants are open to anyone, anywhere, of any age, with any educational background. However, your proposal, outline, first draft, and final interactive tool should:

- Align with ClearerThinking's mission.
- Tackle one of the topics suggested below (in the List of Potential Topics section), and not be overly similar to a tool already made by ClearerThinking (see an organized spreadsheet of our existing tools here).
- Add value to the user's life in a way that they find engaging and appealing - we want people to be motivated to actually use these learning tools!
- Take users **between 5 and 10 minutes** to complete (although longer tools may be accepted). Based on our existing tools of 5-10 minute length, that means it will probably contain between 500 and 2000 words of text content.
- Only contain accurate information, and not make exaggerated claims.
- Only contain your own words and content except where clear attribution is given. It must not plagiarize or violate the copyrights of others. You must have the right to use all materials that you include.
- Be accessible to a lay audience who aren't familiar with any of the relevant concepts or jargon. Our tools are intended to be helpful for as many people as possible.
- Be written in the English language.
- (If you make it to Stage 3) Be built using GuidedTrack, our free browser-based software for building interactive online tools. All of ClearerThinking tools are built on GuidedTrack, so you will be able to use any functionality that you see in our existing tools in your own design.

List of Potential Topics

For inspiration, you may want to look at this spreadsheet of our existing tools. Our tools typically take an evidence-based or research-guided approach to covering one or more of the following topics:

- **Useful concepts from psychology or social science** that people can usefully apply to make their everyday lives better.
- **Applied rationality, critical thinking, or philosophy concepts** not yet covered on our site that most people would find it valuable to know.
- **Effective altruism (EA) or existential risk related concepts** not yet covered on our site that most people would find it valuable to know.
- **Self-improvement techniques** that are likely to be helpful to the majority of people (e.g., techniques drawn from ACT, DBT, Interpersonal Therapy, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, CBT, etc.)
- Behavior change techniques that can help people act more in line with the ways the ideal version of themselves would act
- Concepts from mathematics, probability, statistics, computer science, economics or science more broadly that can be usefully applied to everyday life.
- Techniques for improving self-esteem, increasing self-compassion, gaining self-understanding, reducing negative self-talk, improving helpful reflection, or helping people accurately assess their personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Techniques for better understanding or effectively engaging with or shifting one's own emotions, or for improving resilience.
- Techniques for developing or maintaining good relationships with others, or for preventing unhelpful conflict or navigating disagreement - including with colleagues, friends, family, or romantic partners.
- Techniques for prioritizing between goals or managing multiple goals.
- Techniques for improving decision-making.
- Techniques for helping people improve their predictions.

However, we are also interested in proposals outside of these topics, as long as they fall within the scope of our mission, which is:



For example, you could propose a tool to help with financial literacy, time management, or ethical decision-making. Or maybe techniques for improving focus and concentration, or techniques for ethical persuasive communication. The list of potentially great topics is nearly endless!

Note: ClearerThinking's sister organizations, UpLift and Mind Ease, already provide interactive content for depression and anxiety.

Note: We're ***not interested*** in tools that take a stance on any political questions - our goal is to teach people *how* to think, not *what* to think.

Advice for a Successful Application

Your application is more likely to be successful if you complete the following optional steps:

- Take a look at our website, our mission, and one or two of previous years' winning micro grant tools in more detail to learn what kind of content we aim to provide on our site.
- Read the descriptions of the four stages of the grant process and the application criteria (described in full detail below).
- Check out some examples of our tools. Here are some of our most popular tools:
    - How Rational Are You, Really?
    - The Value-Of-Your-Time Calculator
    - Learn Your Philosophical Beliefs
    - Life Changing Questions
    - The Artificial Intelligence Quiz

  Note that these examples are longer than the 5-10 minute tool we would like you to propose, and they are not representative of the full range of kinds of tools that we're interested in funding.
- Read the List of Potential Topics (see above), or come up with your own, remembering to make sure you're not proposing something too similar to a tool we already provide (see this spreadsheet of our existing tools here).

Your Rights and Ours

Both Clearer Thinking **and** the original author (i.e., you and your team, if you have a team) retain the rights to all commissioned work submitted as part of this program, including the right to edit, publish and promote the work as they see fit. That means that by making a submission to us at any of the stages, you are agreeing to grant us unlimited rights in perpetuity to use the content that you submit for any and all purposes, and to modify, publish, and display it.

However, **you will also have the right to use your tool for whatever purposes you choose**. Authors will be credited for their work in all cases (e.g., if we launch a tool you create on our website). In order to receive payment as part of this program, you will be asked to sign a document granting us permission to use your work, in accordance with the terms mentioned above.

The Four Stages in More Detail

STAGE 1: PROPOSE - up to 40 successful grants awarded $50 each

Submit a very brief proposal (~150 to 400 words) for a learning tool that meets the criteria listed below. The proposal should succinctly explain:

1. The format of the tool, e.g. a quiz, interactive lesson, tool, or framework for providing an answer to a specific dilemma.
2. A description of the concepts, principles, or techniques the tool will teach.
3. Why the tool will be valuable for a general audience (i.e., how will it benefit the user to learn this material?).

The best proposals (up to a maximum of 40), as determined by our judges, will all be awarded $50 each (paid via Paypal) and may then be invited to submit a tool outline for the second stage. The judges will evaluate each proposal based on how well they believe it would work as an interactive learning tool, and on how valuable they think that such a tool would be to ClearerThinking's users.

Note that **you can submit more than one proposal**, but we will only award one $50 grant per applicant (however, submitting more than one proposal may increase your chances of being successful at the first stage). We are also **happy to accept proposals submitted by teams** of people, but any grants you are awarded will be split between you.

Click here to submit an idea now!

Deadline: September 1st, 9am EST

STAGE 2: OUTLINE - up to 30 successful grants awarded $100 each

Of the proceeding winners, up to 30 of the most promising proposals will be invited to Stage 2. If you are invited to Stage 2 based on your initial proposal, and you choose to accept the invitation, you will be asked to provide a detailed 1-3 page outline of the tool you proposed in

Stage 1 and a brief explanation of why building this tool would be valuable to the people that use it. The outline should explain your ideas and break down the structure of the proposed material, including:

1. What specific ideas the tool will teach, and in what order.
2. How the tool will teach the information and/or test the user's knowledge of the information (e.g., what examples will it use to illustrate the content?)
3. When and how the user will interact with the tool in each section, taking into account that your tool - like all the tools on all our site - will have to be built in GuidedTrack (no prior experience with this is needed). Examples of interactions include: quiz questions (often resulting in a final score, presented to the user), optional content the user can choose to skip or not, content that depends on prior responses, and more.
4. What questions the tool will ask the user, how they will be presented (e.g., multiple choice, yes/no, open ended paragraphs, etc.), and what happens for each answer.
5. Any evidence you have that these ideas are valuable to teach. If you don't have evidence, give your best argument for why you think this material is worth teaching.

We expect this stage to take 5 to 9 hours. If you are invited to participate in Stage 2, and you submit a detailed outline that meets the requirements above and criteria below, then you will be awarded $100 regardless of whether we invite you to participate in Stage 3. Of these Stage 2 submissions, we will invite some subset to Stage 3 (this size of this subset is at our discretion and will depend on the submissions we receive).

STAGE 3: DRAFT - up to 25 successful grants awarded $200 each

If you are invited to participate in the third stage and accept the invitation, you will submit a first draft of your interactive tool based on the outline detailed in Stage 2. We ask that you perform a quick search for relevant research papers (including meta-analyses, systematic reviews, or randomized controlled trials) to help ensure that you create the most effective and accurate version of your tool, and we expect that this might result in some deviation from your original outline. We'll provide guidance on how to perform this search for applicants who reach this stage.

We also require that you build your tool using GuidedTrack, the free browser-based software we created specifically for making interactive tools like this (we use it for all the tools on ClearerThinking.org). You can get a sense of what can be achieved in GuidedTrack by using any of the interactive tools on our site. This software is designed to be used by individuals with no coding experience, though you should expect to spend at least a few hours learning it. To help you learn, you will find a powerful toolbar of features, sample tools preloaded in your account, a full GuidedTrack manual, and a Facebook group for user questions and discussions. You can also reach out to us with any questions - we're happy to help you through any difficulties you have and provide access to further sample tools to learn from. In previous micro

grant programs, a number of participants reported that using GuidedTrack was one of the highlights of the program.

ClearerThinking's tools include several common features like privacy statements and feedback surveys, which we do **not** expect your tool to include. These additions will be made by the Clearer Thinking team if your tool is published on our site. Many of our tools also feature comparative data analysis of user responses - this is something that we're happy to help you include in your tool if we choose to launch it on our site.

We expect Stage 3 to take between 10 and 20 hours to complete, after which you will receive a $200 grant (as long as your tool appropriately reflects your outline from Stage 2 (some deviation is expected) and runs without any serious errors).

STAGE 4: REALIZE - up to 25 successful grants awarded $245 each

If we choose to proceed with your learning tool to the final stage of this program, at least two of our team members will provide comments and feedback on your first draft. In addition to sharing our comments with you, we'll also run a qualitative Positly study with standardized feedback questions on your tool and send the data to you, so you can see what real users think about this draft (and their suggestions for improving it). In order to complete Stage 4, you will need to incorporate this feedback, where realistic and helpful, into your tool.

We expect Stage 4 to take around 10 hours to complete, after which you will receive the final $245 grant (as long as your tool accurately takes into account the revisions we have asked for and the most helpful anonymous feedback you received).

We may then choose to put your tool (which may feature additional edits that we make to it) on the clearerthinking.org site, and send it out as a newsletter to our 200,000+ newsletter subscribers (giving you credit, of course). This decision is at our discretion and we may decide not to put the tool on our website, or not send it out to our newsletter, despite awarding you the final $245.

Feel free to contact us at info@clearerthinking.org if you have any questions about the grants or the application process.