

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

I. SUMMARY

The Society of Philosophers in America (SOPHIA) calls for applications for seed grant to sponsor the creation of local or online SOPHIA chapters, understood as communities of philosophical conversation pursuing SOPHIA's mission, embodying our values, and following some general guidelines outlined here. Our seed grants may provide up to \$600 of support for plans to be implemented over the course of a year from the time of the award. Seed grants are not required for groups who wish to create a chapter. Seed grant applications will be accepted via electronic submission through **October 15th, 2017**.

II. SOPHIA'S HISTORY, MISSION, & VISION

The Society of Philosophers in America (SOPHIA) was founded in 1983 in response to the ways in which professionally institutionalized philosophy had isolated itself from the public and from other fields of the academy. As an organization, SOPHIA has long sought to cultivate a culture of philosophical engagement through open dialogue between the public and its philosophers.

In 2015, SOPHIA's national leadership revised its organizational mission statement to focus on community-building as a way of achieving its goals. These revisions reflect the recognition that trust and community are essential ingredients to the task of public philosophical engagement.

MISSION: The mission of SOPHIA is to use the tools of philosophical inquiry to improve people's lives and enrich the profession of philosophy through conversation and community building.

VALUES: (a) Building philosophical community and engagement -- *Philosophy is for everyone*, (b) Philosophical inclusiveness -- *Philosophers learn from others*, (c) Respectful communication -- *Everyone has a voice*, and (d) Professional excellence and public relevance -- *Philosophy goes beyond the realm of academia*.

GOALS: (1) To create publicly-engaged SOPHIA chapters that are locally-focused, (2) to build a collection of thematic materials and meeting guidelines, (3) to use technology effectively, (4) to engage with the profession on public philosophy and digital humanities.

SOPHIA's vision is to support local chapters especially, and some online chapters as well, which meet regularly to talk about current and publicly relevant issues in philosophical ways. We want to extend philosophy beyond the academy and are actively recruiting chapter leaders and members. We are looking for energetic people who understand that these are our first efforts to create chapters. This is an experiment and so early chapters and chapter leaders will offer the national organization invaluable feedback about their needs and opportunities for growth and development of communities of philosophical conversation.

II. GRANT INFORMATION & QUALIFICATIONS

The **Chapter Seed Grant** is one mechanism by which we hope to encourage members of existing communities to create local and online chapters. It is our hope that these chapters will hold regular but

Chapter Seed Grant Application Packet



informal meetings for their communities, reach out to existing local or relevant groups to develop collaborations which enrich philosophical conversations, and become a contributing force in the development of vibrant philosophical community. SOPHIA chapters should hold regular conversational meetings in order to cultivate strong bonds of solidarity among people seeking to *think deeply* together on a wide range of topics. The frequency of meetings will vary from group to group.

We are currently seeking applications for seed grants requesting anywhere from \$200 - \$600 each, to be used for starting a SOPHIA chapter. To be considered, applicants must complete the application form below and return it by email to: philosophersinamerica@gmail.com.

To qualify for such a grant, **applicants must be willing and able to meet the chapter expectations outlined in the next section of this packet and meet the following criteria:**

- 1) Applications must be submitted by groups of at least three individuals who are seeking to create a SOPHIA chapter.
- 2) At least one of the applicants must be a member in good standing of SOPHIA. This requires the proper payment of dues. Note: part of the seed grant can be used to pay for the initial membership of other members as outlined in the Chapter expectations section below, to address constraints on financial accessibility.
- 3) At least one of the three applicants must be trained in or show evidence of competency in philosophical studies. This could be a well-read individual, a professional philosopher, or something equivalent. [Note: the person who meets requirement 2 and 3 could be the same individual].
- 4) Submit a completed application to the email address above and provide any further information or documentation as requested by the selection committee during the application evaluation process.

Please note, that chapters are ***not required*** to be housed in the university or college environment. Nor are chapters limited to the United States or to the Americas, despite the words “in America” in SOPHIA’s name, a matter of origin, not mission. With respect to environments, we are seeking applications from groups with access to public spaces that include, but are not limited to: public libraries, high schools, local book clubs, athletics clubs, coffee shops, sports clubs, and so on.

III. CHAPTER EXPECTATIONS

Chapters have the authority to determine most of their organizational practices. There are, however, several core expectations that a chapter is to meet in order to maintain a relationship with the national organization and to have access its resources.

1. Chapter members and leadership teams share in SOPHIA’s core values (see page 1).
2. Each chapter should have a President, a Membership officer, and an Operations Officer, though in the startup phase one person can hold these roles temporarily. Additional offices may be created at the discretion of each chapter.
 - a) The President should organize regular meetings and provide leadership to the chapter and its members. This person will create and maintain partnerships with local organizations and groups and hold regular meetings with other officers.
 - b) The Membership officer should focus on inviting potential chapter members to regular meetings and recruit dues-paying members into SOPHIA. This person will coordinate

social events with chapter members and members of the larger community. This person will also monitor the dues-paying status of chapter members to ensure that at least three people per chapter are dues-paying members of SOPHIA.

- c) The Operations officer should focus on communication and fiscal operations. This includes the promotion of chapter meetings and SOPHIA events, management of the SOPHIA chapter's Facebook page and email list, regular updates sent to the national organization of the chapter's upcoming activities, and management of fiscal operations.

NOTE: These officer positions are customizable. It will be incumbent upon each chapter to fully inform new or prospective officers about any matters special to their local chapter. SOPHIA invites information about best practices developed.

3. At least three members must maintain their status as dues-paying members of SOPHIA.
4. Hold at least 4 meetings per year, including basic, philosophical conversations, organizational meetings, social and informational gatherings to introduce people to the chapter, as well as planning meetings for conversational SOPHIA events. Chapters are welcome to meet more often as desired.
5. Take attendance for each event, with names and contact information (a sign-in sheet), which can be valuable for future grant-writing.
6. Make continuous efforts to cultivate relationships with local organizations and groups in order to support the development of a larger philosophical community.
7. Create a SOPHIA Chapter Facebook group & link it to the national organization's page (have the group "like" and "follow" the national organization's FB page: [fb.me/PhilosophersInAmerica](https://www.facebook.com/groups/sophiamembers/) – and spread the word about our Twitter page as well: [@SOPHIAchirp](https://twitter.com/SOPHIAchirp)), and encourage each member to join the "SOPHIA Members" FB group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/sophiamembers/>).
8. Take photos from time to time at your chapter's gatherings and share them with SOPHIA, to help build community.
9. Inform the national organization of challenges, needs, and potential for development of chapters and of SOPHIA, as insights arise through our initial experiments creating chapters.

IV. GRANT REPORTING EXPECTATIONS

If awarded a grant, recipients are expected to submit two reports which document their progress. These reports should include the following information and will be essential in the evaluation of your progress by SOPHIA's national leadership. They will also serve as a way to identify successful practices which could be adopted by other chapters and as a way for SOPHIA's national leadership to reach out to local chapters which might be struggling to meet their goals. These reports are intended to ensure the success of local efforts rather than to audit local chapters.

Midterm Report: This report should be submitted about 6 months after receiving notification that you have been awarded a grant. The exact date will be determined by the selection committee and will be included in your award letter. This report should include:

- 1) **Fiscal Records:** A record of your expenses to date and a projection of your remaining, expected expenses for the award year.
- 2) **Attendance Records:** An attendance report including total numbers for events/meetings and some evidence to support those numbers (i.e. pictures, sign-in sheets, or something equivalent).

3) **Progress Report:**

- a. A written summary (up to 250 words) of your efforts to grow your chapter. This is a short summary of your experiences and efforts for SOPHIA's national leadership.
- b. A written summary (up to 250 words), with original documentation where applicable (i.e. surveys and so on), of your attempts to evaluate your progress.

4) **Action Plan:** A written analysis (250 words) of your progress which highlights those things that seem to be working well and those things that are not working well. This should include a short description of how you plan on adapting your process, methods, and topics to improve your chapter.

End-of-Year Report: This report should be submitted about 12 months after receiving the grant. The exact date will be determined by the selection committee and will be included in your award letter. This report should include:

1) **Fiscal Records:** A final record of your expenses.

2) **Attendance Records:** A final attendance report including total numbers for events/meetings and some evidence to support those numbers (i.e. pictures, sign-in sheets, or something equivalent).

3) **Progress Report:**

- a. A reflective summary (up to 500 words) of your past year's efforts to grow your chapter. This should include, with original documentation where applicable (i.e. surveys and so on), a summary of your attempts to evaluate your progress and a written analysis of your progress which highlights those things that seem to be working well and those things that are not working well.

4) **Action Plan:** A short description (up to 250 words) of how you plan on adapting your process, methods and topics to improve your chapter and a statement about what you plan on doing to continue your efforts to further your chapter in the future.

V. IDEAS FOR USE OF FUNDING

We welcome a wide range of ideas regarding how to use seed grant funding. Funds are first and foremost meant to support the creation of chapters & development of community. Among other options, proposals might seek support to fund memberships, awareness raising & advertising initiatives (including ads on social media & printed materials), an internship position to support chapter operations, gas cards for people who need assistance to get to meetings, food for gatherings, photocopies, reusable name badges, or small honoraria for a sponsored guest.

VI. HOW TO APPLY

To apply, fill in the application below from and submit it via email, addressed to:

philosophersinamerica@gmail.com. If you can, submitting in Adobe PDF format is preferred, but not required. You may attach additional pages as needed to the PDF file, such as with any letters of support or commitment from local or relevant organizations.

For simplicity, you can download an [MS Word](#) or an [Adobe PDF](#) version of the following pages.

Chapter Seed Grant Application Packet



APPLICATION

I. APPLICANTS

Primary Applicant

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Professional/Institutional Affiliations (if applicable):

Second Applicant

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Professional/Institutional Affiliations (if applicable):

Third Applicant

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Professional/Institutional Affiliations (if applicable):

Proposed name for the chapter: _____

Please note which of your applicants meet the following qualifications bellow:

- Member(s) in good standing of SOPHIA: _____
- Has some background in Philosophy: _____

Details about this background: _____

Fiscal agent: _____

Chapter Seed Grant Application Packet



II. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Your Interest and Experience with SOPHIA: Please briefly tell us how you came to hear of SOPHIA. Why is it that you are applying for this grant? What interest do you have in SOPHIA, public philosophy, and why do you wish to start a chapter?

2. Initial Assessment of Need and Community: Briefly tell us why you believe your community could benefit from the creation of a SOPHIA chapter. Describe your community in such a way that we can understand the relationships, members, values, and happenings therein. What is it about your community, about its groups, that motivates you to create a SOPHIA chapter?

Chapter Seed Grant Application Packet



3. Your Action Plan: If awarded this grant, what is your plan to create or grow a SOPHIA chapter in your local community? What specific, concrete, and achievable plans of action do you hope to take and how will this grant help you accomplish those tasks? What timetable do you expect is reasonable to achieve those plans? How will you structure your meetings? How will you involve your community in determining themes or topics for your meetings? How will you evaluate your plan and adapt to the information you gain from those evaluations? What roles will the leadership team (i.e. the chapter officers) play in this plan?

4. Amount Requested and Why: How much is your request? What do you expect the grant to be used for, given your action plan?

Chapter Seed Grant Application Packet



5. Outreach and Communication Strategies: Who will attend your meetings? How will you reach members of your community not already involved in your chapter? What communication and outreach strategies will you use to involve people who might not typically have access to philosophical discussions? With whom and with what organizations might you partner for outreach and communication?

6. SOPHIA's National Leadership: How can SOPHIA's national leadership continue to support and aid your group create a strong chapter? How can we help you strengthen your leadership team and help you overcome potential disadvantages and challenges?

7. Long Term Goals: What are your long-term goals for your Chapter? Where would you like your chapter to be in four years in terms of membership, meetings, and larger event plans?

(Optional) **8. If there's anything else you'd like to add, you may attach pages to your application, such as for letters of support or any other useful documentation.**