

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Intergenerational Mobility in the United States: Mechanisms and Policy Impacts

The Russell Sage Foundation (RSF), the principal American foundation devoted exclusively to research in the social sciences, seeks applications for research projects that deepen our understanding of intergenerational mobility in the U.S. by using recently released statistics on mobility from the [Equality of Opportunity Project](#). In this call we specifically encourage proposals that provide new evidence on the mechanisms explaining geographic variation in economic mobility or the impacts of policies on economic mobility.

Using Internal Revenue Service (IRS) administrative tax records on earnings for more than 40 million children and their parents, Chetty, Hendren, Kline, and Saez (2014) and Chetty and Hendren (2015) have made available new public use statistics on intergenerational mobility in the U.S., and the causal impacts of exposure to each county in the U.S. Examples of the available statistics include:

1. Panel Data on child outcomes as a function of parents' earnings percentile by county and commuting zone. Estimates are available by gender and for a range of outcomes:
 - a. College Attendance (1981 – 1988 cohorts)
 - b. Teen employment (1980 – 1993 cohorts)
 - c. Teen birth (1980 – 1988 cohorts)
 - d. Child income rank at age 26 (1980-86 cohorts)
 - e. Quintile transition matrices of parent and child income (age 26) by commuting zone (1980-1986 cohorts)
2. Causal estimates of the impact of exposure to each county in the U.S. on income at age 26 (individual and family income), college attendance, and marriage. Estimates are available separately by gender. These estimate represent the causal impact of an additional year of exposure to a given county on the child's outcomes in adulthood.

In addition, we encourage applicants to continue to reference www.equality-of-opportunity.org/data for additional data releases expected in the coming months.

Applicants from all of the social sciences are encouraged to submit proposals utilizing this new data resource (possibly in combination with other data sources). Examples of the types of research topics of interest include, but are not limited to, the following:

Impacts of policy changes on mobility using panel variation

The availability of panel data on intergenerational mobility makes it feasible to utilize a difference-in-difference design to potentially identify the causal effects of policies on intergenerational mobility. Is there a policy that was enacted in the sample frame that potentially had an impact on mobility (e.g. school policy, housing policy, etc.)? In work funded in the last call for proposals, [Sharkey and Torrats-Espinosa \(2016\)](#) utilized variation in federal grants administered through the Community Oriented Policing (COPS) office that was established as part of the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act to identify the impact of police and crime on upward mobility. Proposals in this spirit that identify a policy change that differentially affected some areas during the sample window are strongly encouraged to apply. We also welcome proposals studying policies that affected only portions of the income distribution (e.g. those targeting the bottom of the distribution) and utilizing mobility outcomes for affluent families as either a placebo test or control group.

To facilitate a successful review of the plausibility of the research design, applications should clearly outline how the policy differentially affected areas throughout the sample frame (cohorts 1980-1993) or income distribution.

Local Shocks

Other plausibly exogenous local shocks may also allow for causal inferences about how local conditions affect economic mobility, and these types of analyses are also encouraged. Examples might include changes in economic conditions that may be specific to a particular city or region's labor market, plant closings concentrated in a single county, changes in pollution levels in particular commuting zones, or even sharp changes in the political party in power within a particular state.

Historical Analysis

Evidence suggests that the spatial variation in mobility has remained relatively stable over the past 25-50 years, suggesting the forces determining mobility have historical components. We welcome applications seeking to relate mobility today to historical institutions and factors. We also welcome applications exploiting geographic variation that may be explained through historical context. For example, why is mobility significantly better on the Arkansas side of the Mississippi River? Successful applications will not simply explore anecdotes, but will develop a research design to identify the impact of the historical institutions and occurrences on mobility today.

Other Strategies to identify the impacts of policies on intergenerational mobility

We welcome any other proposal with a plausible research design to identify the impact of a policy change on intergenerational mobility. Applications should make clear how they plan to deal with the selection problems inherent in cross-sectional (and even panel) regressions, and

will be judged on their likelihood of informing our understanding of the mechanisms that promote upward mobility.

Eligibility

Applicants can be doctoral students, postdoctoral fellows or faculty who received their Ph.D. or other doctorate on or after August 31, 2009.

Funding

Accepted proposals will receive up to \$20,000 in funding for a faculty project and up to \$7,000 for a graduate student project. Applications may be submitted by teams of researchers. The maximum funding for a faculty (or faculty-graduate student team) project will be \$20,000. If a graduate student project has multiple students, we will consider funding up to \$14,000.

All awards will be for a 1-year project period, starting June 1, 2017. Grantees are expected to present findings at the foundation in the spring of 2018 (see *Research Conference* section). The foundation expects to fund 5-7 proposals.

Funding can be used for partial summer salary support/stipend and research assistance, among other budget categories. In accordance with the foundation's policy, funds will not be provided for travel for collaboration purposes or dissemination/presentation of findings (conference travel) or for student tuition. No overhead or indirect costs will be provided on these small grants. Please refer to the [RSF Budget Guidelines](#) and the [FAQs](#) for more information.

Application Deadline and Guidelines

Complete applications must be emailed to intergenmobility@rsage.org. **Applications will be accepted through Wednesday, March 1, 2017, at 11am Pacific Time (PT).**

Applicants must submit (as separate files in one email):

- a concise (4 pages max., excluding references) single-spaced proposal describing their proposed work;
- a detailed budget (using the RSF template) and budget justification;
- up-to-date abbreviated CVs (5 pages max. per CV);
- a fiscal agent letter - a letter from the applicant's institution stating that it will act as the fiscal agent (manage the funds and provide financial reports to the foundation) for the project should an award be made;
- students must also submit a letter of recommendation from their faculty advisor. Letters may be submitted by the applicant or sent separately by the faculty advisory.

Applicants are encouraged to explore in detail the available data at <http://www.equality-of-opportunity.org/index.php/data> and to be specific in the proposed analysis, including which tables from the project they plan to use and any additional sources of data that will be required.

Research Conference

Research from accepted proposals will be presented at a one-day academic conference at the Russell Sage Foundation in the spring of 2018. The aim of the conference will be to focus on improving the quality of the research and also foster collaboration amongst young researchers interested in intergenerational mobility. Grantees will be free to publish their research in their preferred outlet. The foundation will reimburse participants for reasonable travel expenses to attend the RSF conference; this expense should not be included in the project budget.