

Susilo Institute for Ethics in the Global Economy

Call for Proposals

“Organizing for Impact: Institutions, Incentives, and the Pursuit of Social Change”

The Susilo Institute for Ethics in the Global Economy, in partnership with the Mehrotra Institute, invites proposals for a new research initiative on how organizations can be structured and governed to drive meaningful and sustainable social change. It will prioritize interdisciplinary initiatives that:

- Complement the Mehrotra Institute’s work on the role of business and markets in society by examining the *internal mechanics* of impact.
- Add depth to the theme of corporate governance by focusing not just on shareholders, but on institutional *structures, managerial practices, and norms* that integrate a broader set of internal and external stakeholders to enable sustainable and just outcomes.
- Complement initiatives on capitalism, short-termism, value creation, and purpose by grounding them in organizational practice and design.

Core Research Themes

To align with faculty expertise and advance the mission of the Susilo Institute, proposals should address one or more of the following core themes:

1. Institutions, Governance, and Organizational Purpose

- How do formal and informal institutions shape the capacity of organizations to generate social impact? How can organizations influence these institutional ecosystems to support more just and sustainable outcomes?
- How can organizations build and maintain legitimacy of purpose in politically contested, high-stakes, or socially sensitive environments?
- How do organizations build and sustain trust with internal and external stakeholders while navigating complex or conflicting expectations?
- How do identity, culture, narratives, and algorithms shape how value creation and purpose are understood, enacted, or contested within organizations?

- What distinguishes managerial excellence across sectors and cultural, economic, or political contexts?

2. Scaling Impact, Adaptation, and Organizational Learning

- What governance models, financial structures, measurement and reporting frameworks, incentive systems, or strategic adaptations allow organizations to grow or scale their activities while preserving their core mission, values, and commitments to key stakeholders?
- What practices help organizations learn and adapt in ways that preserve alignment between their definitions of value and purpose during periods of growth or environmental change?
- How can organizations manage collaboration and conflict across internal or external boundaries, including political, professional, or community-based differences?
- What role do algorithms and AI systems play in amplifying, undermining, or reshaping organizational purpose as organizations grow or adapt?
- How do organizational members' beliefs, identities, emotions, and cognitions influence their acceptance, resistance, or reinterpretation of organizational purpose?

3. Applied Methods: Designing and Leveraging Organizational Experiments

- Use design-based and participatory approaches to test institutional innovations.
- Use collaborations with government agencies, NGOs, and businesses to prototype and study organizational reforms.
- Leverage collaborations with think tanks and other research initiatives to scale impact.
- Develop action-research methods that preserve academic rigor while driving meaningful real impact.
- Develop case studies on failures and successes to better guide scaling socially transformative interventions.

Selection Criteria

This award is open to all Boston University faculty. The Susilo Institute seeks to seed new, interdisciplinary collaborations with the potential to grow into long-term research partnerships or programs. The selection committee, which will include a balanced

number of faculty and practitioners, will thus evaluate proposals according to three broad priorities:

- a. Seed **new** initiatives that would have difficulty getting off the ground otherwise.
- b. Combine our disciplines and capabilities in novel and meaningful ways.
- c. Have high option value to potentially and meaningfully impact practice, including by continuing to grow and develop into more ambitious initiatives.

Funding

Funding will be commensurate with the scope of the project, with awards anticipated in the range of \$10,000 to \$100,000. Uses of funds might include:

- Graduate student or postdoctoral researcher support
- Activities in direct support of research such as data purchases, equipment, or incentives
- Publication/dissemination costs
- Conference or research travel
- Faculty salary and related fringe

Proposal Requirements

In a proposal of at most two (2) pages in length (not including references), please include:

- Project Title and investigators (PI, Co-PI's)
- Societal Importance: Why does this project matter? (2-3 sentences)
- Interdisciplinary contribution: Which disciplines does it combine and why?
- Overview: 3-5 sentences describing the project aims and approach.
- Duration: Of up to 2 years.
- Stage and scaling potential: e.g. small pilot that may turn into a larger field experiment.
- Description: Readiness, dependencies, expected outcomes and deliverables, and potential future extramural funding sources.
- Budget: Requested amounts and justification.

- Please upload your proposal narrative and budget by February 20 using this google form:

<https://forms.gle/EHSL4wtnnKPZDpbi9>

- If you have any questions about your submission, contact Sandy Keldsen at zarotney@bu.edu . For budget specific questions, contact Sophie Zschirnt at sophie@bu.edu

Deliverables and Activities

Successful projects will contribute to one or more of the following ongoing activities of the Institute:

- **Flagship Research Projects:** Longitudinal and comparative case studies, field experiments, data partnerships, and qualitative research in business and in sectors such as education, criminal justice, and economic development.
- **Organizational Design Lab:** A cross-sector partnership platform where organizations co-design and test new institutional models.
- **Fellowship Program:** Postdocs and practitioner fellows embedded in organizations to conduct action-oriented research.
- **Annual Conference:** Present your research at our next annual conference --Bringing together scholars, policymakers, business leaders, and NGOs on “Organizing for Impact.”
- **Policy White Papers & Toolkits:** Translating research into actionable tools for institutional leaders.

Proposals are due by February 20, 2025. Please submit your narrative and budget via this form:

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For questions about submissions, contact Sandy Keldsen (zarotney@bu.edu); for budget-related inquiries, contact Sophie Zschirnt (sophie@bu.edu).