



Brinson Prize Fellowship Program
Policy and Budget Guidelines 2026

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Introduction

Brinson Prize Fellowships are awarded to early-career observational cosmologists who are committed to chasing bold ideas with creative, nimble, and innovative research. In 2023, The Brinson Foundation began collaborating with the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) to broaden community access to the Brinson Prize Fellowship Program. Fellowship conditions are set by The Brinson Foundation, which administers the program, and STScI provides logistical assistance. The Brinson Prize Fellowship Program is comparable to the NASA Hubble Fellowship Program, as well as other research fellowships and similar limited-term postdoctoral level appointments at universities. Fellowship appointments are not permanent, professional career positions.

Fellows, faculty contacts, and administrative personnel should familiarize themselves with the Brinson Prize Fellowship Program Policy and Budget Information. This document outlines policies and procedures for new and continuing Fellows who are establishing or renewing their Fellowships and the associated arrangements with Host Institutions and Faculty Contacts. It also includes procedures for submitting budget proposals to The Brinson Foundation (hereafter, “the Foundation”).

These policies are used in conjunction with the grant agreement among the Foundation, Fellow, and Host Institution.

Brinson Prize Fellowship Program Contacts

Contact The Brinson Foundation office for all inquiries.	
<i>Senior Program Officer</i>	<i>Grants Manager</i>
Jamie Bender jamie.bender@brinsonfoundation.org 312.799.4504	Maricruz Gallardo maricruz.gallardo@brinsonfoundation.org 312.799.4502

Additional information including important dates related to The Brinson Prize Fellowship Program opportunity can be found at: stsci.edu/stsci-research/fellowships/brinson-prize-fellowship-program

Section 1: Role Descriptions

The Brinson Prize Fellow (hereafter, the “Fellow”) leads the science for their research program and is considered the Science Principal Investigator.

Each Fellow must have a faculty member, located at the same Host Institution, who will serve as their Faculty Contact. The role of the Faculty Contact is to ensure that Brinson Prize Fellowship funding is dedicated to helping the Fellow achieve the proposed science goals of their project. The Faculty Contact also serves as the Administrative Principal Investigator (also referred to as, the “Admin PI”) for the Brinson Prize Fellowship grant and approves budget submissions. The Faculty Contact may not receive funding from the grant.

Section 2: Host Institution Employment Policy

All approved Host Institutions must provide their Brinson Prize Fellow status as an employee. Employee status must at the minimum afford the Fellow the same leave, vacation, retirement, and health benefits given by their Host Institution to their postdoctoral fellows hired on grants or contracts as employees.

Section 3: Commencement of New Fellows

A. Ph.D. Requirements

Fellows must receive their Ph.D. prior to the commencement of the Fellowship. Fellows who have not met all the requirements for their Ph.D. degree at the time of application must provide proof of completion to The Brinson Foundation before beginning their appointment. A certificate or a brief letter from an authorized individual at the graduating institution, stating that the Fellow has completed all of the requirements (including a successful defense) for the degree is acceptable. All documentation must be on institutional letterhead and in English.

B. Start Date

The Fellow, the Host Institution, and the Foundation negotiate the start date. The typical start date is September 1. The earliest and latest start dates are August 1 and December 31, respectively.

C. Length of Fellowship

The Fellowship is a 3-year appointment, subject to an annual review and approval for renewal. Brinson Prize Fellowship grants support the individual Fellow's research program. Fellows must work full-time on their Brinson Prize Fellowship research program and be in residence as employees at the Host Institution during the entire period of the Fellowship appointment.

D. Taxes

The Host Institution and the Fellow are responsible for complying with all regulations related to state, federal, and local taxes. In directly employing the Fellow, the Host Institution (not the Foundation) will process all compensation and benefits so as to effect all required tax withholding and reporting. The Foundation recommends the Fellow consult with a tax accountant regarding questions related to taxes and their individual situation.

Section 4: Funding and Support

A. Funding

Funding for the Brinson Prize Fellowship Program is contingent upon the availability of funds from The Brinson Foundation and approval from the Foundation's Board of Directors.

The Foundation funds each Fellowship through a grant awarded to the Host Institution, with the Faculty Contact serving as the Admin PI. Funding is awarded annually, up to a maximum of three years (36 months). Each year, the Foundation will notify the Faculty Contact, the Fellow, and the Host Institution that a new budget will be required for the subsequent year.

As stated in the grant agreement, funding will be allocated annually to the Host Institution following successful submission of renewal documents and the subsequent approval of the Foundation's Board of Directors.

B. Fellowship Support

Travel grant funds are provided solely for the support of the Fellow to conduct the research program and must not support expenditures for any other purpose or any other individual, except as described in 8.B. below. Support for travel related to the Fellow's professional development in the areas of science communication and data visualization training is allowable.

Fellows cannot hold any other fellowship or use any other honorific fellowship title in conjunction with the Brinson Prize Fellowship Program. Fellows cannot accept additional stipend, salary, or remuneration of any other kind from any other fellowship, grant, or appointment (including a teaching appointment) throughout the duration of the Fellowship. Under unique situations, the Fellow may request that the Foundation make an exception to this policy. In all circumstances, however, Fellows are restricted to only the salary received from the Fellowship.

Fellows cannot directly accept payments as a supplemental benefit from the Host Institution. For example, a supplement to salary, paid directly to the Fellow and intended for retirement, is unallowable. Funds deposited by the Host Institution directly into a qualifying retirement fund account are allowable.

Section 5: Pre-Award Costs

Costs incurred before execution of a fellowship grant agreement among the Foundation, Host Institution, and Fellow are incurred at the Host Institution's own risk and the Foundation is under no obligation to reimburse such costs if the Host Institution does not receive an award, or an award is made for a lesser amount than the Host Institution anticipated.

Section 6: Budget Submission

Budgets are due for each year of the Fellowship no later than April 1.

If there are extenuating circumstances, an extension may be considered, subject to approval by the Foundation. Please contact the Foundation should the need for an extension arise.

Prior to the award of funds for the program year, a budget and supporting narrative must be submitted to the Foundation, along with a prior year financial report indicating actuals. The Faculty Contact and the Fellow should work jointly to prepare the budget.

The budget narrative must explain the basis for calculating fringe benefits for the Fellow and all other cost items (e.g., relocation, direct costs, travel, professional development).

Continuing Fellows: See Section 17 regarding unexpended funds.

Section 7: Current and Pending Support

If at the time the Fellowship is awarded the Fellow already has current or pending support from another source, that information must be communicated to the Foundation and the Host Institution prior to acceptance of the Fellowship award. In addition, any current and pending support must be included in the Fellow's intake form. A description of such funding must include the following:

- Funding Source
- Amount Awarded
- Number of months of PI Salary
- Project Period
- Project Title

Section 8: Allowable Costs

A. Salary (*Restricted Budget Category*)

Fellows will receive an annual salary equal to the amount shown in Section 16.

The Host Institution may not apply Indirect Cost Rates or other fees to the salary. Refer to Section 8.E. Indirect Costs for additional information.

B. Research Funds (*Restricted Budget Category; Subject to Approval by the Foundation*)

Research Funds are broken down into the following subcategories: travel, equipment, supplies, materials, and professional development training.

1. Travel

Travel costs include transportation, lodging, subsistence, and related items incurred by the Fellow for the benefit of the Fellowship research effort. Such costs must be approved by the Host Institution and be in accordance with the written travel policies of the Host Institution. All expenses incurred for personal days while travelling are the sole responsibility of the traveler.

Travel within the United States and its territories is considered domestic travel. All other locations are considered foreign.

Airfare costs in excess of the customary standard commercial airfare (coach or equivalent) or the lowest commercial discount airfare are unallowable except when such accommodations would:

- Require circuitous routing
- Require travel during unreasonable hours
- Excessively prolong travel
- Result in additional costs that would offset the transportation savings

Fellowship funding is intended to support research-related travel relevant to the Fellow's Brinson Prize Fellowship project.

Support for individuals other than the Fellow, including students and collaborators, may be covered by Brinson Prize Fellowship grant funds subject to the following limitations:

Students:

Registration fees and travel expenses, including transportation, lodging, and meals and incidental expenses (M&IE) may be funded by the Brinson Prize Fellowship grant, for undergraduate and graduate students, when the purpose of the travel is for the student to obtain or present results in support of the Fellow's research program. In cases where the presence of the Fellow alongside the student is particularly important (such as the first observing trip by a student), funds may be used to support travel for both the student and the Fellow. Host Institution approval is required.

Collaborators:

Registration fees and travel expenses including transportation, lodging, and M&IE may be funded by the Brinson Prize Fellowship grant for a collaborator other than a student. This will be considered only if there are extenuating circumstances, such as the health of the Fellow, and/or family care responsibilities that preclude the Fellow from traveling. Host Institution approval is required.

The budget justification submitted to the Foundation must contain the following information (to the extent known) for each domestic and foreign travel request: Purpose of the trip, Destination, Dates of travel, Number of days on travel, and the Total cost for travel.

2. Equipment

Equipment is defined as tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year with a per-unit acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more.

Title to equipment purchased with Brinson Prize Fellowship grant funds will vest with the Host Institution.

- a. All equipment purchases must be approved in advance by the Faculty Contact.
- b. Equipment expenditures are unallowable during the final six (6) months of the Fellowship. Limited exceptions may be made in extraordinary circumstances and require prior approval in advance by the Faculty Contact and the Foundation.

All approved equipment purchased with Brinson Prize Fellowship funds must be reported to the Foundation.

3. Supplies and Materials

Computing devices are defined as machines, such as laptops and tablets, used to acquire, store, analyze, process, and publish data and other information electronically, as well as accessories (or “peripherals”) used for printing, transmitting, and receiving, or storing electronic information, if purchased at the same time.

- a. Computing devices with a unit cost of less than \$5,000 are considered supplies. These purchases are allowable provided the computing device is essential to the performance of the award.
- b. The budget justification must include a description of the item(s) to be purchased, including a list of required software and peripherals, and how the item(s) will be used in the conduct of the research. Prior approval must be requested for any computing device not specified in the approved budget.
- c. Computing device expenditures are unallowable during the final six (6) months of the Fellowship. Limited exceptions may be made in extraordinary circumstances and require prior approval by the Faculty Contact and the Foundation.

Supplies are defined as all tangible personal property. Prior approval is not required for supplies with a unit cost of less than \$250. Examples: laptop charger, power adapter, or headphones.

Brinson Prize Fellowship funds will not support costs for personal electronic devices such as cell phones, tablets, etc., or the monthly charges for data and/or talk plans.

4. Professional Development Training

Research Funds can be used to cover expenses related to partaking in science communication or data visualization professional development training.

C. Relocation (*Restricted Budget Category*)

Relocation expenses are unallowable if the Fellow is not changing institutions.

First year Fellows may request up to \$5,000 for relocation costs. Relocation costs should be in accordance with the Standard Policies and Practices of the Host Institution for postdocs. The budget narrative for relocation costs must include the originating location.

Pursuant to IRS regulations, expenses associated with relocation must be treated as taxable income. Your institution is required to make tax withholdings on relocation payments whether they are made directly to you or to a third party on your behalf. Contact your Host Institution Human Resources department for information and guidance related to moving expenses and tax withholdings.

D. Fringe Benefits (*Restricted Budget Category*)

The Host Institution must provide full health insurance coverage (e.g., medical, dental, and vision) for the Fellow and their eligible dependents during the term of the Fellowship. It is the responsibility of each Fellow to become familiar with the health insurance and policies of their Host Institution.

Through their employee status, Brinson Prize Fellows will be given the opportunity to enjoy the benefits that full-time employees receive. Employee fellows are, as the name suggests, employees of their Host Institutions and receive the full employee benefit package of their Host Institution.

Indirect Cost Rates or other types of fees applied to health insurance or other fringe benefits are unallowable.

The federally approved fringe benefit rate should be included in the budget proposal.

The Fellow will not be reimbursed for the employee portion of the premium; out of pocket expenses including deductibles or co-payments; or individual medical, dental, or prescription costs, etc. not covered under the health insurance policy.

Providing the Fellow benefits such as retirement and parental leave as part of their fringe benefits is encouraged. At the minimum, the method of applying Fringe Benefits must be in accordance with the Host Institution's Standard Policies and Practices for Postdocs.

E. Indirect Costs

Indirect Cost Rates or other types of fees applied to salary, health insurance, or fringe benefits are unallowable.

Indirect Costs (IDC) includes the terms Facilities and Administration (F&A), Overhead, and General Administrative (GA) rates.

Section 9: Continuing Fellows

The Foundation conducts an annual assessment based primarily on the Fellow's level of scientific activity and achievement (as reflected in the items listed below).

Each year of the Fellowship, the following reports are required to be submitted no later than April 1:

REPORT:	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE:	SUBMISSION:	DESCRIPTION:
Self-Performance Report	Fellow	Foundation via Faculty Contact	The Fellow must describe scientific research aims, progress towards aims, key findings, activities from the start of the Fellowship, including a publications list, and goals for the next grant period.
Faculty Contact Assessment	Faculty Contact	Foundation via Faculty Contact	The Faculty Contact must assess the Fellow's research performance during the year and affirm their support to renew the subsequent year.
Financial Report	Faculty Contact	Foundation via Faculty Contact	The Faculty Contact must detail all expenditures during the period covered by the report and compare actual expenses to budgeted expenses for the period and since the start of the Fellowship.

Upon review and approval of the documents, the Foundation will notify continuing Fellows of their renewal. In the event the Fellow's scientific activity is determined to be inadequate, the Fellowship will be subject to termination at the end of the current year.

Section 10: Changes in Host Institution

Each Fellow must be in residence at the Host Institution throughout the full 36-month Fellowship term. Under special circumstances, a Fellow may request relocation to another Participating Institution other than the original Host Institution. A written request and justification for a transfer must be submitted to the Foundation. Any transfer shall be in the sole discretion of the Foundation and subject to the terms of a new written agreement among the Fellow, the Foundation, and the new Host Institution.

If a request is approved, the current Host Institution must submit all final reports. Once all reporting requirements are met, the grant at the current Host Institution will be closed and remaining funds will be subsequently awarded to the new Host Institution.

Generally, the Foundation will not approve a transfer request if the new Host Institution has already accepted two Brinson Prize Fellows for the current year.

Section 11: Early Termination of the Fellowship

A Fellowship can be terminated early in accordance with the terms of the grant agreement (e.g., if the Fellow resigns or is terminated, if the Fellow's research is not progressing satisfactorily, if the Fellow or Host Institution violate the Code of Conduct, or if the Fellow or Host Institution breach the agreement).

In the event of resignation by the Fellow, the Faculty Contact should submit to the Foundation the Fellow's letter of resignation at the Host Institution. The letter must include a reason for the resignation, the effective date, and the name and address of the new institution or employer.

The Foundation will modify the end date of the Fellowship grant, effective the day of resignation, and will provide a list of final reports required to close the grant. No further payments by the Foundation will be granted.

Section 12: Closeout

All expenditures, including equipment and technology, must be incurred prior to the end date of the Fellowship. Any request for carryforward or a no-cost extension should be made prior to the end of the grant. All unexpended funds must be returned to the Foundation by September 15 of the final year of the Fellowship, or as otherwise agreed upon in writing with the Foundation.

At the end of the Fellowship, the following final reports are required to be submitted by September 15:

REPORT:	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE:	SUBMISSION LOCATION:	DESCRIPTION:
Final Self-Performance Report	Fellow	Foundation via Faculty Contact	The Fellow must describe scientific research aims, key findings, and activities during the 3-year term, including a publications list.
Final Faculty Contact Assessment	Faculty Contact	Foundation via Faculty Contact	The Faculty Contact must assess the Fellow's research performance throughout the 3- year term.
Final Financial Report	Faculty Contact	Foundation via Faculty Contact	The Faculty Contact must provide the Budget versus Actuals for the 3-year term.

Disposition of Equipment and Computing Devices/Supplies

Title to equipment vests with the Host Institution. Contact the Foundation with any questions or for directions related to the disposition or transfer of equipment and/or computing devices.

Section 13: Publications and Other Research Accomplishments

The Foundation anticipates that the Fellow will publish their research results in refereed literature. Each publication must include the following acknowledgments:

- A. Support for this work was provided by The Brinson Foundation through a Brinson Prize Fellowship grant.
- B. Brinson Prize Fellows must identify themselves, as such, in a footnote attached to their names on the title page of each publication.
- C. Fellows should use the Foundation's official logo on public presentations. Any other use of the Foundation's logo shall be subject to the prior written approval of the Foundation.

In addition, Fellows must keep the Foundation informed of their research projects, special discoveries, awards, or other significant developments, as they occur.

Section 14: No-Cost Extension

A no-cost extension may be requested to allow payment of page charges for papers that were submitted to a journal prior to the end of the Fellowship.

Section 15: Family and Medical Leave and Other Leaves of Absence

If leave is required for situations such as a serious health condition and/or the birth/adoption of a child during the 36-month Fellowship term, the Fellow will follow their Host Institution's policies. In such cases, the Foundation will approve an extension to the Fellowship grant period of performance by the amount of time of the approved leave; however, the Foundation will not provide additional funds for salary, health insurance, benefits, etc. The Foundation must be notified of and approve requests for all leaves of absence not guaranteed by law or by the Host Institution's policies. In such cases, the Foundation requires that the Fellow provide information regarding their planned activities during their absence, and approval of any such non-medical leave is subject to the Foundation's approval.

Section 16: Budget Table

The following table outlines allowable budget items and the maximum amounts per cost category. Year 1 Fellows must indicate the requested start date for the grant in their submitted budget. The narrative must explain the basis for calculating all costs (e.g., travel, supplies, relocation). This should include the Host Institution’s published, or anticipated, fringe rate.

2026 – 2027 Academic Year	
1. Fellowship Salary – established annually by the Foundation and cannot be adjusted or modified.	
<i>1st Year Fellow</i>	\$ 87,000
<i>2nd Year Fellow</i>	\$ 88,000
<i>3rd Year Fellow</i>	\$ 89,000
2. Research Funds and other Direct Costs - professional travel, supplies & materials, computer services, equipment, publication costs, professional development training, etc.	
<i>1st Year Fellow</i>	\$18,000
<i>2nd Year Fellow</i>	\$18,000
<i>3rd Year Fellow</i>	\$18,000
3. Relocation Costs (<i>1st Year Fellows only</i>)	<i>up to \$5,000</i>
4. Fringe Benefits**	
<i>1st Year Fellow</i>	Between \$15,000 and \$20,000*
<i>2nd Year Fellow</i>	\$ 15,000
<i>3rd Year Fellow</i>	\$ 15,000
5. Indirect Costs (IDCs cannot be covered by the Fellowship grant)	

* 1st Year Fellow Fringe Benefit amount is reduced to the extent of any relocation costs.

** Fringe benefit costs not covered by the Fellowship grant award are the responsibility of the Host Institution.

Section 17: Budget Revisions and Unexpended Funds

The following budget categories are restricted: Salary, Research Funds, Fringe Benefits (e.g., Health Insurance), and Relocation. Funds in a restricted budget category cannot be budgeted to any other category.

Salary, research funds, and relocation costs must be covered to the full extent shown above by the Fellowship grant before any grant amounts are applied to fringe benefits, including health insurance. Any grant funds remaining after providing for salary, research funds, and relocation expenses (if any), may be applied toward fringe benefit costs, **with the Host Institution responsible for the cost of all such fringe benefits not financed in full by the Foundation's grant.**

Unexpended funds from the above budget categories may carry over into subsequent years, with the Foundation's approval. These funds would be in addition to the new allocation of direct costs. Indirect costs cannot be covered using Brinson Prize Fellowship grant funds.

All unexpended funds must be returned to the Foundation by September 15 of the final year of the Fellowship, or as otherwise agreed upon in writing with the Foundation.

Section 18: Code of Conduct

The Brinson Foundation is committed to the conduct of science in an environment that conforms to the highest ethical, professional, and legal standards.

Accordingly, in connection with a grant from The Brinson Foundation, a Host Institution must maintain an environment that complies with the law, professional codes of conduct, its own policies and procedures, and those of The Brinson Foundation.

All Host Institutions are expected to implement and adhere to policies and procedures that:

1. Foster an environment free of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation
2. Actively promote professional codes of conduct
3. Ensure employees understand and are fully aware of applicable laws, policies, and codes of conduct

4. Provide an accessible and effective process to report Prohibited Conduct (as defined below), with protection from retaliation
5. Respond promptly to reports of Prohibited Conduct, investigate all reports thoroughly, and impose Administrative Action (as defined below) where appropriate

Personnel (as defined below) must comply with applicable federal, state, or local anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, or anti-retaliation law; criminal law, including those with respect to physical assault; institutional policies and procedures relating to anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, or anti-retaliation, including without limitation this Code of Conduct; and professional codes of conduct. Personnel should report any Prohibited Conduct to the designated person(s) at their Host Institution.

By way of example, this Code of Conduct applies to behavior exhibited by the Faculty Contact, the Fellow, or any other Personnel, to any colleague, including any undergraduate and graduate students.

For purposes of this Grant Code of Conduct, the following definitions apply:

Administrative Action: Any disciplinary or corrective action, including termination or suspension, taken with respect to Personnel, and/or any complaint, claim, charge, grievance, or suit alleging Prohibited Conduct by Personnel or impacting Personnel.

Determination: The final disposition of a matter involving Prohibited Conduct.

Personnel: The Fellow, Faculty Contact, and all other members of the team working on a project funded by a grant from The Brinson Foundation, including but not limited to, any undergraduate and graduate students.

Prohibited Conduct: Any violation of applicable: federal, state, or local anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, or anti-retaliation law; criminal law, including those with respect to physical assault; institutional policies and procedures relating to anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, or anti-retaliation, including without limitation this Code of Conduct; and professional codes of conduct.

Review of Grant

Should The Brinson Foundation become aware of any Administrative Action or Determination involving Personnel relating to Prohibited Conduct, The Brinson Foundation reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to consider the impact on performance of the grant and to suspend or terminate any grant.