

Guidance for Godfrey Hewitt Mobility Award (GHMA) applicants

Updated on 21 October 2025

We (the GHMA committee) are writing this guidance to give applicants advice and insights into how GHM awards are evaluated. In particular, we want to help applicants avoid some common pitfalls that can cause potentially successful proposals to fail to obtain funding. Please read the guidelines in conjunction with information on the [ESEB website](#) and the call text (usually published each autumn).

Scope and Eligibility: As with any funding opportunity, first decide if your project is a good fit, and ensure that you are eligible to apply. Please don't be discouraged if your project is not a *perfect* fit, and if you're not sure about either fit or eligibility, you can ask the committee before preparing your application. Note that only visits or fieldwork are funded, not reagents; that lab visits should be to a new lab not previously visited; and that there should be some connection to evolutionary biology, broadly defined.

Key criteria for evaluation: These criteria are how we judge your proposal (<https://eseb.org/prizes-funding/godfrey-hewitt-mobility-award/>). Take note of them before writing your proposal, and make it clear how you meet them. Especially note that we want to make a big impact on an early career researcher with a little money, so independence and drive are really important, as is impact on your future career.

Independence. Your GHMA project should be your own, not part of your main project. Note that we don't expect it to be completely unconnected to your PhD or postdoc project, but we do want it to be motivated by you. Some examples are below, but these are not the only ways independence can be demonstrated.

- Addressing similar biological questions as in your PhD, but in a new biological system, and therefore visiting a lab using that system.
- Pursuing a side project that arose during your PhD work, but that requires a new technique or approach unavailable in your current lab— e.g., modelling, microscopy, etc.-- and visiting a lab where you can learn the required skills/have access to the necessary equipment.
- Addressing a new question in your current biological system, and visiting a lab where that question is the main focus.
- Acquiring new samples via fieldwork or museum visits, which allow you to move your research in a new direction or test a hypothesis you couldn't address before.

Outputs and impact: There should be something that you obtain from the fieldwork or visit— samples analysed, skills acquired, and publications are some examples.

Need: We want to fund work that wouldn't be accomplished without the mobility award. For example, you might need access to expertise, equipment, or samples that you can't acquire without a visit.

EXAMPLE OF CALL INSTRUCTIONS FROM ESEB: "Your application should be sent as a single PDF file to Ute Friedrich at the ESEB office, office@eseb.org. It should include your name, current status and institution, your PhD start date, your ESEB membership number, a description of the work to be carried out (maximum 500 words), an outline budget with brief justification (maximum 100 words) and a signed statement from your PhD supervisor or postdoctoral adviser (maximum 100 words)

explaining why the work cannot be funded from your home institution or your proposed host institution.”

Note that these instructions are an example from the 2024 call, and if there is any inconsistency with current instructions, please follow the new instructions.

For **“description of the work to be carried out”** and **“outline budget”**, please see below for a suggested format.

For **“signed statement from your PhD supervisor or postdoctoral adviser”**, your current supervisor should provide a justification explaining why the work cannot be funded from either your home institution or your proposed host institution. The supervisor’s statement should address specifically the funding for your independent proposal, rather than the general situation for PhD/postdoctoral funding in your home institution or country.

Suggested format for “description of the work to be carried out” and “outline budget”. This suggestion is based on previous successful proposals, roughly 1 paragraph for each of the points below (about 5 paragraphs in total). Adapt this format to your needs, by all means, but do consider how you can address each of the points in the key criteria. Not all points are necessarily addressed in successful proposals, but typically several of them are.

Some rough (sometimes silly) examples are given for each point, in order to give a more concrete idea of what is meant.

- Introduction to the general topic area and your current research.
 - “I work on sexual selection, using salamanders as a model”
 - “I use experimental evolution to understand bacterial adaptation to...”
 - “My PhD work is on urban ecology of birds, understanding how the human-built environment affects...”
- Explain how the project diverges from your current research. How did the new research idea develop, and what does it add?
 - “I realised that the unicorn toad system offers a powerful test of my hypotheses of xxx”
 - “I met Professor X at a conference, and we discussed how a new technique developed in their lab could be applied to my system, allowing me to ...”
 - “By collecting data from Taxon X, native to Australia, I would be able to test for convergence in the effect of the urban environment on XXX.”
- Explain what exactly you plan to accomplish in your visit. Be specific, include rough numbers if you can. – e.g., analyse 30 samples, acquire data from 200 specimens, build a model to analyse your system. Demonstrate that you have a plan, though it can be rough. Show that it is plausible to carry out this work in the time frame of your project.
 - “I expect to be able to measure horn length in 50 wild-caught unicorn toads in a week of field work, based on past experience trapping 10/day from XX lab.”

- “I will learn to use the flux capacitor for my system, and acquire measurements for 200 bacterial species, which the host lab estimates will take 20 hrs of machine time and two weeks of sample preparation”
 - “I will acquire and analyse 600 recordings from Australian bird species from taxon X... adding to my existing collection of 300 recordings”
 - Explain how the GHMA project will allow you to develop an independent line of research, and impact your future career development. Planned publications and new directions for research are good examples. Be as specific and sincere as you can be here, though it is of course difficult to predict the future. Do explain why the GHMA work will be important here.
 - By acquiring expertise in the unicorn toad model, I will set my research apart from that of my PhD supervisor, and will allow me to address questions in sexual selection and morphology that are underexplored in any system.
 - Upon completing this visit, I will be one of only a few researchers with expertise in flux capacitation of bacteria. With this technique, I can address new questions in XXX, and build collaborations... As Professor X’s lab is the only place currently applying this technique, a lab visit will allow me to acquire hands-on experience available nowhere else.
 - The data set acquired from field work in Australia will provide the basis for a first-author publication in the Journal of Evolutionary Biology.
 - A list of budgeted items, up to 2000€ in total. Ask for what you need, but try not to pad the budget, and provide some minimal evidence for expensive line items– e.g., prices from web searches for flights and accommodation. Including ineligible or unrealistic costs won’t necessarily hurt your chances of being funded, but we will cut them ruthlessly, as if we cut enough we can fund additional proposals.
 - Eligible costs vary by project, but include travel and accommodation. The panel will be aware that sustenance costs may be necessary for some international mobility awards, due to unfavourable currency exchange rates, but does not ordinarily award these.
 - Any reagent costs must be strictly related to mobility– e.g., for transport of samples.
 - Visa costs can be awarded if necessary.
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