



• FELLOWSHIP AWARDS •

2026 CONCEPT NOTE SUBMISSION: OPENS MARCH 24, CLOSES APRIL 22



"Burning Questions Initiative" (BQI) Fellowships for Academic Researchers

**Two-step application process: 1. Concept Note submission *open to everybody* (March 24 – April 22).
2. Full Application submission *only for those that are invited*.**

KEY INFORMATION AT-A-GLANCE:

- Fellowship recipients prepare reports that provide succinct information and actionable insights on topics of their own choosing that are directly relevant to **these** "burning questions". These questions are asked by issue experts (leaders of advocacy organizations, frontline campaigners, academics collaborating with these organizations) experienced with addressing negative impacts of industrial animal agriculture in low- and middle-income countries.
- 2. Disseminate the reports to non-academics.
- Fellowship funds are provided to **individuals** working/studying at universities or are independent scholars.
- Applicants must hold, or be close to completion of, PhD degree. There are in general no restrictions as to applicants' place of residence or citizenship.
- Two categories of awards:
 - Category 1: **US\$60,000** (for a single individual **PhD-holder** or a team of up to four individuals with a PhD-holder as the lead/PI).
 - Category 2: **US\$45,000** (for a single individual **PhD student** close to completion of PhD or a team of up to four individuals with a PhD student as the lead/PI).
- Award period is **nine months**. Recipients must choose a start date August 26 – November 20, 2026.

Stage 1 (5 months): Research and prepare report

- The report should address and bring deeper understanding to issues raised in the "burning questions", have practical applications, and include guidance for those interested in taking action. It is possible for recipients to do additional research that provides materials for their own academic work.
- Main deliverable: A "Guidance Memo". This is a 8,000–10,000 words report written in plain language. Examples: [One](#), [Two](#), [Three](#), [Four](#).

Stage 2 (4 months): Disseminate report

- Disseminate Guidance Memo to non-academics. It is important to reach those persons, organizations, stakeholders most impacted by the issues addressed and/or interested in using the content of the Guidance Memo in their efforts to tackle industrial animal agriculture in LMICs.
- Main deliverable: Three distinct dissemination activities (e.g. a webinar for civil society organizations and follow-ups to help participants learn more; a talk open to the public hosted by a university; a meeting of stakeholders to discuss working collaboratively on the recommended steps in the Guidance Memo).

I. Overview of Fellowships. List of "burning questions"

The Burning Questions Initiative (BQI) Fellowships

- These fellowships are offered by Tiny Beam Fund, a small US-based charitable foundation.
- Tiny Beam Fund's flagship Burning Questions Initiative (BQI) was launched as a response to a specific need – the need for a much deeper understanding of the complex negative impacts associated with industrial animal agriculture, especially concerning low- and middle-income countries, and the need to translate the understanding into practical steps to address these impacts.
- Issue experts with experience in addressing these negative impacts are invited to contribute pressing, under-researched, practical questions on industrial food animal production that they consider of most urgency and salience to their work, and where new evidence could most meaningfully inform advocacy, policy, and practice that can address the negative impacts.
- Fellowships are then offered to academic researchers to prepare reports with succinct information and actionable insights directly relevant to these questions. They also disseminate these reports.
- Why academic researchers? Their training and skill set is well-suited to investigating these thorny questions. Academics are also increasingly interested in studying industrial animal agriculture's impacts in developing countries for their own scholarly purposes.

Current (2026) list of "burning questions"

- **LINK to the current (2026) list of 19 "burning questions" in six categories**, spanning economic, environmental, political, cultural, and equity dimensions: Corporate structure & power (3 ques.) Economics & livelihoods (5 ques.) Global finance, trade & institutions (2 ques.) Production systems and impacts (3 ques.) Consumption & culture (4 ques.). Advocacy & narratives (2 ques.)
- These questions are written and compiled by Tiny Beam Fund in 2026 after a consultation process involving almost 20 issue experts (leaders of advocacy organizations, frontline campaigners, academics collaborating with these organizations).

II. Eligibility. Award Categories. Use of Award Funds

- Fellowship awards are given to **individuals**. They can be affiliated with academic institutions or independent researchers. Early career as well as senior academics are equally welcome to apply.
- Applicants must hold, or be close to completion of and being awarded, a PhD (or equivalent degree).
- There are in general no restrictions as to applicants' place of residence or citizenship. But we cannot provide funds to those prohibited by U.S. government's sanction and other rules.
- Award period is **nine months**. Recipients must choose a start date *August 26 – November 20, 2026*.
- There are two award categories.
 - Category 1: **US\$60,000** (for a single individual **PhD-holder** or a team of up to four individuals with a PhD-holder as the lead/PI). Note: For teams, the entire amount of award funds is provided to the *lead person/PI only*. There is no eligibility requirement for the rest of the team.
 - Category 2: **US\$45,000** (for a single individual **PhD student** close to the completion of and being awarded a PhD, or a team of up to four individuals with a PhD student as the lead/PI). Note: For teams, the entire amount of award funds is provided to the *lead person/PI only*. There is no eligibility requirement for the rest of the team.
- The U.S. government defines a fellowship as an amount that is paid or allowed to an individual to aid that individual in the pursuit of personal research or scholarship, and there may be further conditions imposed on fellowship recipients by the fellowship provider. Recipients of Tiny Beam Fund's BQI fellowships are allowed to use the award funds for purposes that include but not limited to:
 - travel expenses
 - purchasing supplies and equipments
 - obtaining research assistance (e.g. translation)
 - modest living and essential personal expenses (e.g. housing, food, taxes, healthcare, child care)
 - securing teaching buyout and release time to concentrate on fellowship work

III. Obligations and Deliverables Expected from Fellowship Recipients

Stage 1: Research and Prepare Report (Guidance Memo) - 5 months

This stage is focused on researching and preparing a report (called Guidance Memo) that provides succinct information and actionable insights on the topic chosen by the fellowship recipient. It also includes contacting persons most impacted by and/or interested in issues raised in the Guidance Memo.

1.1. Research and Prepare Report (Guidance Memo) on Chosen Topic

- Do research on the topic stated in the application.
- Fellowship recipients have some flexibility with their research plan. They need not adhere to a fixed plan; adjustments can be made along the way, *subject to approval by Tiny Beam Fund*. And award funds can also be used to gather materials for recipients' own academic work and advance their own academic interests in addition to preparing the required deliverables. But all fellowship work should still be focused on the chosen topic.

1.2. Submit List of Contact Persons

- Contact persons who are most impacted by the issues raised and/or likely to use the material in the Guidance Memo. The aim is to better understand things that matter most to these persons so that the work to prepare the Guidance Memo can cover these things properly.
- *A list of persons to be contacted (including key reasons why they are chosen) should be submitted no later than two months after the award start date.*

1.3. Participate in Research & Report Preparation Check-in Conversation

- The conversation takes place via an online platform (e.g. Google Meet) *three months after the start date*.
- The purpose of the check-in is to discuss the progress of the research and report preparation work.

1.4. Submit Guidance Memo Draft

- *A draft of the Guidance Memo should be submitted four months after the start date.*
- After reviewing the draft, Tiny Beam Fund may require fellowship recipients to seek peer reviewers to provide feedback and suggestions to improve the draft.

1.5. Submit Guidance Memo and Annotated Bibliography

- *The Guidance Memo and accompanying Annotated Bibliography should be submitted five months after the start date.*
- Guidance Memo:
 - It should meet the requirements described in Section V Part B.
 - Tiny Beam Fund holds copyright to Guidance Memos. But their authors are strongly encouraged to use material in the Guidance Memos in academic and non-academic publications and settings.
 - Guidance Memos are placed in Issue Lab (an open access repository) and assigned DOI.
- Annotated Bibliography:
 - It should be a standalone document in PDF format with a minimum of seven and a maximum of fifteen publications that are highly relevant to the content in the Guidance Memo.
 - Different kinds of publications can be included (e.g. peer-reviewed academic papers, books, government reports, feature articles by investigative journalists).
 - In addition to standard bibliographic information, each item should carry an annotation (no more than 250 words) which highlights key parts of the publication that are of most relevance, their strengths and limitations, unique features, etc.
 - Tiny Beam Fund holds copyright to the Annotated Bibliography which will be available to the public from Tiny Beam Fund's website.

Stage 2: Disseminate Report (Guidance Memo) - 4 months

This stage involves communicating the Guidance Memo and research findings to *non-academics*. It is especially important to reach persons, organizations, stakeholders most impacted by the issues addressed and/or interested in using the findings in their own efforts to tackle large-scale/industrial animal agriculture in LMICs.

Target audience for dissemination include: Civil society groups and advocacy organizations. Staff members of "think tanks". Government and quasi-government officials, representatives, agents. Smallholder farmers. Commercial producers and retailers. Philanthropic funders.

2.1 Participate in Dissemination Check-in Conversation

- *The conversation takes place via an online platform (e.g. Google Meet) four months before the end date.*
- The purpose of the check-in is to approve dissemination activities before they begin and to discuss preparing a draft of the op-ed piece.

2.2. Undertake Three Distinct Dissemination Activities:

- *All three activities should be completed before the end of the award period.*
- The three activities must be sufficiently different from each other (for example, the same webinar content repeated three times is not considered as three activities).
- Examples of dissemination activities:
 - A webinar for NGOs and subsequent follow-ups with those participants who want to learn more.
 - Facilitate a meeting of stakeholders who don't normally engage with each other for the purpose of discussing how to work on the Guidance Memo's recommendations collaboratively.
 - A meeting with a small group of funders to help them understand the research findings so they can support projects that are aligned with the findings.
 - A talk open to the public hosted by a university.
- Activities must be pre-approved by Tiny Beam Fund during the dissemination check-in conversation to make sure that they qualify as deliverables before the activities commence.

2.3. Prepare a Draft of an Op-Ed Piece:

- *The op-ed draft should be submitted at the end of the award period unless its publication is counted as one of the three dissemination activities.*
- If the publication of the op-ed is one of the three dissemination activities, the draft should be submitted **BEFORE** the op-ed is sent to publishers.
- The draft of this op-ed piece should be good enough to be sent to publishers (even though efforts are not made to actually get it published before the end of the award period).
- The draft (in PDF) should be 550-750 words.
- The key topic(s) of the draft should be related to the Guidance Memo and research done in Stage 1.
- The draft should be directed at a particular audience or publisher.
- If the draft is not published before the end of the award period, it can be published by its author(s) later.
- Whether or not the piece is published during or after the fellowship period, its author(s) should allow Tiny Beam Fund to use the piece for dissemination purposes.

2.4. Submit Report of Dissemination Work

- *A report on the three dissemination activities should be submitted at the end of the award period.*
- The report (in PDF) can be written as a narrative or as a note with bullet points. There is no word limit.
- The report is solely for Tiny Beam Fund's own internal use.
- The report should cover each of the distinct dissemination activity. For EACH activity, explain its:
 - Aims and goals: (i) Why chose that dissemination activity? (ii) What did it aim to achieve?
 - Outcome: (i) To what extent have the activity's goals been achieved? (ii) How satisfied are you with the outcome? (iii) How easy or challenging was it to reach those goals? (iv) With hindsight, are there things that you wish you had done differently?
- The report should also address these two questions:
 - Future plan: (i) Will you stay in contact with those you engaged with? (ii) Do you plan to do more dissemination work after the fellowship has ended? If yes, briefly describe the work. If no, briefly explain why not.

Wrap up: Personal Narrative. Finance Account.

3.1. Submit Personal Narrative

- *A short personal narrative on the experience with the fellowship should be submitted at the end of the award period.*
- The report (in PDF) can be an essay or in any non-academic writing style. There is no word limit.

- The report is only for Tiny Beam Fund's own internal use.
- It should cover the following topics:
 - Lessons learned (e.g. What insights have you gained? What takeaways do you want to share?)
 - Challenges (e.g. Did you face challenges? Why or why not?)
 - Surprises (e.g. Did anything surprise you, big or small, pleasant or otherwise?)
 - Expectations (e.g. Does the work overall and/or are there particular things that far exceed or fall short of your own expectations?)
- Any other reflections are welcome.

3.2. Submit Finance Account

- *An accounting of how the award funds have been used, based on broad categories (e.g. travel expenses for fieldwork) should be submitted within thirty days after the expiration of the award period.*

Possible requirement to participate in communication training and coaching

- Tiny Beam Fund *may* require a fellowship recipient to participate in communication training and/or one-on-one coaching with a designated communication expert at any point of the fellowship period.
- Tiny Beam Fund will specify the expert and pay all costs charged by the expert.
- The training and coaching is to help with general enhancement of communication skills and/or specific situations (e.g. how to engage effectively with a particular group, how to hold an excellent webinar).

IV. Payment of Award Funds

- The fellowship award funds will be paid in three equal installments:
 - At the start of the award period.
 - Five months after the start of the award period upon the submission of a Guidance Memo and an Annotated Bibliography that Tiny Beam Fund considers to be satisfactory.
 - At the end of the award period when Tiny Beam Fund is satisfied that all requirements mentioned in the Letter of Agreement have been fulfilled.
- Award funds are sent in USD to fellowship recipients' *personal* bank accounts.
- It may be possible to send the funds to the university at which a recipient is employed, but only in highly exceptional cases when very stringent conditions imposed by Tiny Beam Fund are met. Universities outside the U.S. are unlikely to be approved as recipients of fellowship award funds.
 - A request to send award funds to a university should be made in the Concept Note.
- For recipients who do not have bank accounts in USD: Their banks may use their own conversion rates to turn the incoming USD funds into local currencies and charge fees for the conversion. Tiny Beam Fund is not responsible for the conversion rates and any associated bank charges.

V. What is a Guidance Memo?

A. Examples of Guidance Memos

- Raisa Pina: "Feeding inequality: The hidden costs of Brazil's meat industry monopoly" [HERE](#) (Portuguese version [HERE](#))
- Ioulia Fenton: "Changing chicken in Guatemala: Relevance of poultry to income generation, food security, health, and nutrition" [HERE](#)
- Melanie Sommerville and team: "Game On! Understanding the emerging game meat value chain in South Africa" [HERE](#)
- Divya Narain: "Climate course correction: Preventing greenhouse gas emission (GHG) lock-in from development finance driven industrialization of animal agriculture in low-income countries" [HERE](#)

B. Requirements that Guidance Memos must meet

1. Address issues raised in “burning questions”

- The Guidance Memo must address issues raised in at least part of a “burning question”.
 - For example, the Guidance Memo topic is: The ways in which the supply chains of industrial chicken production are organized in Bangladesh and how smallholder farmers participate in them. It addresses this “burning question”: ECON1: "How does corporate consolidation in the animal feed and processing sectors shape the contractual models (such as outgrower schemes or contract farming) through which smallholders are integrated into supply chains? Does this lead to genuine economic autonomy or eventual marginalization and displacement?"

2. Contain 8,000 – 10,000 words

- The Guidance Memo should be a PDF document with a minimum of 8,000 and a maximum of 10,000 words in the MAIN TEXT (not including charts, text boxes, footnotes, references, etc.) In addition, there should be an abstract of no more than 350 words.
- A Guidance Memo can be written in a language other than English. This is subject to approval on a case by case basis. Applicants must raise this issue when they submit their Concept Notes. And if awarded the fellowship, they must be involved in steps to arrange for translation of the original into English.

3. Written in plain language; presented with great clarity and succinctness

- Guidance Memos should not be filled with academic jargons.
- Clarity and succinctness in the Guidance Memo's wording, structure, and presentation style is paramount. For example, liberal use of bullet points and sub-headings is encouraged.
- Citations to scholarly and other kinds of publications are very important and should be given, but they should not clutter up the document.

4. Provide information and insights that deepen readers' understanding of the issues addressed

- The Guidance Memo should aim primarily at providing information and insights to persons, organizations, stakeholders impacted by the issues raised and/or interested in taking actions, and should address issues and concerns that matter most to these readers.
- For example:
 - Explain and unpack things that are not “the usual suspects”, things that are not obvious even to those with some understanding of a topic, that are often misconstrued or counter-intuitive.
 - Emphasize the huge importance of nuance and context.
 - Caution readers that certain seemingly great solutions are “not that simple”, that there may well be risks, trade-offs, and unintended consequences.
 - Suggest how to frame or communicate an issue in a new light.

5. Provide practical advice that is doable, makes a difference, and can be disseminated widely

- The practical advice should:
 - Be concrete, specific, doable, and achievable *by actual existing stakeholders* (NOT suggestions for changes that no one at present has the wherewithal to make them happen).
 - Improve and make a difference to the current situation (even though the measures recommended may look like "small steps").
 - Not be so esoteric and of such meager amount that it is of very limited interest and there is no point and value in disseminating it widely.



Instructions for submitting Concept Note

Answer all 8 questions below. There is no word limit. Send a single PDF to angela@tinybeamfund.org

1. Name, contact information, PhD status, academic affiliation.

- What is your name and e-mail address?
- Are you a PhD holder? If yes: (i) From which institution? (ii) In which field or discipline (e.g. economics)?
- If you are *not* a PhD holder, how close are you to (i) completing your PhD studies, (ii) actually being awarded the PhD? In which field or discipline?
- What is your CURRENT academic affiliation (e.g. university, research institution) and position (e.g. Lecturer, PhD candidate)?
 - If no affiliation, write "*independent researcher*" and add any optional information (e.g. recently retired Professor from University ABC).
- For a team:
 - Answer applicable questions for every person on the team.
 - *Indicate clearly the lead individual/PI designated to receive the award funds* if awarded the fellowship.

2. What provisional title do you give to your Guidance Memo?

- Provide a title that is descriptive and informative. (This can be changed later.)
 - Avoid vague titles such as "Solving the cattle mystery in Brazil."

3. What research topic(s) will you focus on during your fellowship?

- Outline your key research topic(s) briefly and clearly, and be as specific as possible. *DO NOT describe and explain in detail.* A sentence or two for each topic will suffice.
- Example of a topic that is well-defined:
 - "The recent restructuring of the Chinese dairy industry that has forced out small dairy farmers in favor of large vertically coordinated producers."

4. Which "burning question(s)" is/are relevant to your chosen topic(s)?

- Refer to the current list of "burning questions" [HERE](#).
- *Indicate the ID number(s) of "burning question(s)" that are relevant to your topic(s)* (e.g. ECON1).
 - Even if a topic addresses a small part of a "burning question", state the ID number of that question. If your topic addresses one part of a "burning question" and one part of another "burning question", state the ID numbers of both questions.

5. Why do you think your Guidance Memo will be of practical use to those outside academe?

- Explain why and how your Guidance Memo will deepen non-academic readers' understanding of the issues it addresses, help them to take action, solve problems, make better decisions.
- Try to use less than 200 words.
- Here's a well-written explanation:

"My Guidance Memo on reducing serious negative impacts of large-scale aquaculture in the Asia-Pacific region will be very useful to NGOs in this region because the Guidance Memo will include a blueprint that local NGOs can use to plan projects in partnerships with local governments.

These projects focus on training personnel needed for implementing existing policies and regulations aimed at curbing harmful impacts caused by large aquaculture operations in places such as Thailand.

The Guidance Memo will explain how to tailor the blueprint for different countries in the region, and why these projects are feasible (e.g not cost prohibitive). In addition, the Guidance Memo will provide steps and timelines for NGOs to follow. It will also include a list of the best ways to engage with local government officials.

These projects will have great practical significance. The main reason for the current delay in potentially impactful government regulations taking effect is the governments' lack of skilled personnel to implement them. The projects will clear this major bottleneck."

6. What are three dissemination activities for non-academics that you plan to undertake?

- Describe briefly three possible activities. (These can be changed later.)
- Examples: A webinar for NGOs. Host a meeting of those interested in working collaboratively on a new project based on the Guidance Memo.

7. Finish this sentence in 50 words or less: "In a nutshell, I am/we are interested in this fellowship because..."

8. Answer "YES", or "NO", or "SOMEWHAT" to each of the following three questions:

1. Are you knowledgeable about the topics you plan to focus on during the award period?
2. Do you have any experience explaining complex topics concisely and decisively to non-academics?
3. Do you have any experience with making use of academic research to help improve real-life situations?

Note: It is perfectly fine to answer "No". If you answer "Yes" or "Somewhat", you will be asked to back up your answers with evidence if you are invited to submit a full application.



Send All Inquiries and Concept Note Submissions to: angela@tinybeamfund.org

Those with questions are urged to contact us as early as possible to allow enough time for us to respond.

KEY DATES IN APPLICATION PROCESS:

- Concept Note submission (*open to everybody*): **March 24, 2026** [0800 EDT] – **April 22, 2026** [1800 EDT].
- Tiny Beam Fund will send acknowledgment of receipt promptly to all those who submit Concept Notes.
- Senders of Concept Notes should regard their application as *unsuccessful* if they *do not* receive an invitation to submit Full Applications on **April 29, 2026** [before 1800 EDT].
- *Tiny Beam Fund will NOT send notifications of result to UNSUCCESSFUL applicants or respond to their inquiries.*
- Those invited to submit Full Applications will receive a new set of instructions on **April 29, 2026**.
- Full Application submission (*only for those invited*): **May 6, 2026** [0800 EDT] – **May 27, 2026** [1800 EDT].
- Notification of result of Full Application submission: **July 8, 2026**.



Burning Questions Initiative