Algorand Centres of Excellence (ACE) Programme

Request for Proposals

Algorand Foundation invites proposals for the Algorand Centres of Excellence (ACE) programme to build and run multidisciplinary centres which advance research and support applied education in the blockchain and cryptocurrency space. With the launch of this initiative, Algorand Foundation will help raise and nurture diverse, courageous generations of blockchain natives who can create, build, manage and innovate across all geographies. Proposals for three to five years are accepted from Higher Education institutions and non-profit research organisations.

Important Dates:

Letters of Intent are due on
Friday, November 12, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. EST

Proposals are due on
Friday, January 14, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. EST

Decisions will be announced in early March 2022

The ACE programme starts on April 1, 2022

Contents

Programme Description	2
Objectives	3
Reports and Payment Schedule	4
Payment Schedule	5
One-off costs	6
Award Information	6
Type of Award	6
Estimated number of awards	6
Anticipated funding amount	6
Eligibility information:	6
Proposals may only be submitted by the following:	6
Who may serve as PI:	6
Limit of Number of Proposals per organisation:	7
Limit of Proposals per PI or Co-PI: 1	7
Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions	7
Proposal Preparation and Instructions	7
Letter of Intent	7
Full Proposal Preparation Instructions	7
Budgetary Information	9
Due Dates	9
Submittable	9
Proposal Review Information	9
Review principles and criteria	9
Review and Selection Process	10
Selection Criteria	10
Review process	10
Award Administration Information	10
Notification of the Award	10
Award Conditions	10
Reporting Requirements	11
Contact Information	11
Privacy Statement	11

Programme Description

Background:

Algorand Foundation is dedicated to fulfilling the global promise of blockchain technology by leveraging the Algorand protocol and open source software, which was initially designed by Turing Award winner Silvio Micali and a team of leading scientists. With core beliefs in the establishment of an open, public and permissionless blockchain, Algorand Foundation has a vision for an inclusive ecosystem that provides an opportunity for everyone to harness the potential of an equitable and truly borderless economy. Algorand Foundation is launching the Algorand Centres of Excellence (ACE) programme as a holistic, research, education and community driven endeavour to

- Advance and disseminate multi-disciplinary research in the blockchain and cryptocurrency space
- Design educational programmes for a new generation of blockchain natives, including blockchain courses and student projects, hackathons and accelerators, and grassroot student involvement via student-led activities (e.g., blockchain clubs, etc.)
- Support applied research and education leading to the development of innovative real-world mechanisms, applications and use cases
- Foster an inclusive and diverse community of blockchain enthusiasts centred around student and campus initiatives
- Promote sustainable social impact projects based on blockchain with measurable metrics
- Enhance the capabilities of the Algorand platform, grow its community and ecosystem, and bring us closer to fulfilling the vision of an equitable, inclusive, borderless economy

Research in this programme is intended to be interdisciplinary, covering the myriad aspects related to blockchains and their applications, including the fields of computer science, economics, finance, law, applicable social sciences, arts and more.

In addition to research, the ACE programme focuses on education in all its aspects from theoretical to hands-on learning, preparing a generation of blockchain designers, builders, and entrepreneurs to guide real-world deployments.

Diversity and inclusion are central themes in the ACE programme. Algorand Foundation is committed to include students and researchers with a variety of experiences and backgrounds. Our goal is to be a positive force that sparks scientific curiosity, embraces innovation, and builds courage among an inclusive community. We strongly believe that a borderless economy can only become a sustainable reality with a strong, diverse workforce behind it.

While the ACE programme is not Algorand-specific in its objectives and support, proposers' activities (including research, education and community expansion) that address the Algorand ecosystem and sustain Algorand Foundation's vision and principles, will be considered favourably.

The ACE programme is being launched as an initiative that strives to make a long-lasting, positive impact in the blockchain and cryptocurrency space. As a commitment to Algorand Foundation's mission, the ACE programme is being launched with a budget of a total value of 100,000,000 ALGO token for the next ten years. Selected centres may differ by scope, duration, performers and number of institutions involved. The intended funding aims to cover the cost of the set-up and operations of a centre for three to five years. Please see the "Award Information" section below.

Objectives

The goal of the ACE programme is to establish a global network of centres of excellence for research and education in blockchain and cryptocurrency technology that advances collaborative, multidisciplinary, and cutting-edge knowledge in the field in general and the Algorand ecosystem in particular.

The programme has the following key objectives:

- **Research:** The ACE programme's mission is to advance interdisciplinary science and technology in the blockchain and cryptocurrency space[1]. Subjects can range from the theoretical understanding of blockchains and cryptocurrency, to new applications and use cases, to topics specific to the Algorand protocol and tools. The ACE programme is looking for research proposals on the forefront of knowledge and committed to scholarly excellence.

- **Development and Implementation:** The ACE programme encourages applied research and education leading to the development of experimental and novel blockchain applications to advance interoperability and standards in the space, accelerate innovation and create sustainable, positive impact.

- **Education:** Algorand Foundation values inclusive education and diverse community engagement. Successful proposals will show a strong focus on curriculum development at all levels of instruction (from undergraduate to postgraduate, professional and executive education, etc.). Curriculum development for in-person, online, hybrid and self-study offerings may focus on any aspect of the blockchain and cryptocurrency space such as software and application development, protocol design, economics, social impact, regulatory or public sector policy, and more. This proposal component should address how the curriculum will be reflected in teaching materials and other learning opportunities, for example:

  - Courses at all levels of instruction
  - Conferences, workshops, seminars
  - Continuing education programmes
  - Educational video series
  - Entrepreneurial initiatives
  - Student-led live events, webinars, and other activities
  - Idea "pitch" contests
  - Content creation challenges
  - Hackathons, accelerators, and dApp competitions
  - Hands-on learning via developer workshops and research projects

- **Ecosystem and community building:** As part of the proposal, details should be provided in relation to a plan to build, nourish and advocate for a community that is engaged with blockchain and cryptocurrency innovation, and invested in driving the technology for the general good. Designation of physical space for the Algorand Centre of Excellence is strongly preferred.

- **Social Impact:** Successful proposals will address concrete scientific, economic and societal challenges and find actionable and sustainable solutions in line with the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs) and Algorand Foundation's vision for a thriving, global borderless economy.

[1] Please note that we include the broader sense of digital assets in blockchain applications and all that is implied by this term in the notion of "cryptocurrency".

- **Diversity and inclusion:** ACE project teams represent the organisation's community with its diverse backgrounds and experiences. Collaborative proposals from more than one organisation or department are encouraged. Collaborations among diverse geographic and economic backgrounds are desirable (e.g., teaming up between universities in different geographies). Successful proposals will set forth a clearly defined collaboration plan and define commitments to build a diverse team, support an inclusive work environment and help create a workforce of professional blockchain innovators and implementers.

- **Algorand elements:** Proposals including a focus on the Algorand ecosystem and specific technology as part of their research, educational initiatives and outreach are strongly encouraged. Successful ACE proposals will include Algorand modules as part of course offerings and the use of the Algorand platform for training purposes (e.g. homework, student projects, collaborative design and engineering experiences) as well as innovation in the use of Algorand technology and its applications.

All outputs of the centre must be open-sourced as set forth in the Terms and Conditions. ACE proposals that do not satisfy these requirements will be rejected forthwith.

Reports and Payment Schedule

Selected ACEs are required to submit an annual report to the designated ACE Programme Manager in writing 30 days prior to the end of the funding year. Some awards may require submission of more frequent project reports. In addition, the PIs of the selected ACEs are expected to participate in an annual PI meeting. Annual meetings between PIs and the Algorand Foundation's ACE programme management team are currently planned to be virtual (via videoconference) on dates to be determined by the ACE Programme Manager. If this approach changes, separate funding will be provided as needed.

Every six months, ACEs will be required to submit a brief milestone summary of their recent activities which includes a short video recording (five to ten minutes). The milestone summaries (video and report) will be collated by the ACE Programme Manager and will be shared with the public at the sole discretion of Algorand Foundation.

We encourage the ACEs to share relevant updates for publication (e.g., publication links, tweets, student projects, event announcements, lecture recordings, blogs, press releases, etc.) regularly, enabling the sharing of the same by Algorand Foundation via its communication channels.

No later than 30 days following expiration of an ACE programme, the PI also is required to submit a final project report. Failure to provide the required annual or final project reports, or the milestone updates, will delay Algorand Foundation's review and processing of any future funding increments for all identified PIs and co-PIs on a given award and/or may, subject to the Terms and Conditions, lead to termination of the funding altogether.

Payment Schedule

The schedule shown is for five years. Payment schedules for shorter proposals will be adjusted accordingly with an earlier Final Report.

Project Period	Target, Milestone, or Reporting Deliverable	Report Due Date	Payment Date	Amount (percentage of awarded funding total)
N/A	Countersigned agreement	N/A	Within 30 days after receipt of counter-signed agreement.	50% of funding allocated for year 1
6 months from the start date	Milestone Summary	30 days prior to the end date of this project period	N/A	Remaining 50% funding allocated for year 1
12 months from the start date	Year End Report	30 days prior to the end date of this project period	Within 30 days of the confirmation that the Foundation is satisfied with the Year End Report	50% of funding allocated for year 2
6 months period from the day following the last Project Period (i.e. 18 months from the Start Date)	Milestone Summary	30 days prior to the end date of this project period	Within 30 days of the confirmation that the Foundation is satisfied with the Milestone Summary	Remaining 50% of funding allocated for year 2
24 months from the start date	Year End Report	30 days prior to the end date of this project period	Within 30 days of the confirmation that the Foundation is satisfied with the Year End Report	50% of funding allocated for year 3
30 months from the start date	Milestone Summary	30 days prior to the end date of this project period	Within 30 days of the confirmation that the Foundation is satisfied with the Milestone Summary	Remaining 50% of funding allocated for year 3
36 months from the start date	Year End Report	30 days prior to the end date of this project period	Within 30 days of the confirmation that the Foundation is satisfied with the Year End Report	50% of funding allocated for year 4
42 months from the start date	Milestone Summary	30 days prior to the end date of this project period	Within 30 days of the confirmation that the Foundation is satisfied with the Milestone Summary	Remaining 50% of funding allocated for year 4
48 months from the start date	Year End Report	30 days prior to the end date of this project period	Within 30 days of the confirmation that the Foundation is satisfied with the Year End Report	50% of funding allocated for year 5
54 months from the start date	Milestone Summary	30 days prior to the end date of this project period	Within 30 days of the confirmation that the Foundation is satisfied with the Milestone Summary	Remaining 50% of funding allocated for year 5
60 months from the start date	Final Report	Within 30 days of the end date of this project period	No payment	N/A

One-off costs

Requests for reimbursements can be made every three to six months if pre-approved one-off costs are incurred (e.g. for agreed special events, hardware purchases, etc). Please also see the "Reporting Requirements" section under "Award Administration Information".

Start dates: programmes can only start after relevant agreements have been signed and not before April 1, 2022.

Award Information

Type of Award

The award will be paid out in regular installments based on the successful completion of milestones and annual reports as specified in the payment schedule above. Non-submission of the reports may, subject to the Terms and Conditions, lead to termination of the award.

Estimated number of awards

10-15

Anticipated funding amount

To launch this initiative, the programme plans to support selected ACEs for three to five years with an annual budget allocation from US$500,000 to US$1,000,000 per year, depending on the size and the scope of the proposed programme. Departures from this range may be considered on a case-by-case basis (e.g. multi-institutional collaborations, added value based on geographic and social diversity, reduced scope proposals, etc.). The programme is expected to be expanded within the ten-year framework and its 100,000,000 ALGO token allocation. Estimated programme budget, number of awards and average award size/duration are subject to the availability of funds and may be modified, discontinued or terminated at any time in the Foundation's sole discretion for any reason, for example major devaluation of ALGO Token. Failure to meet project milestones and/or provide milestone summaries and annual reports may, subject to the Terms and Conditions, lead to discontinuation or termination of funding. Please refer to the Terms and Conditions for detailed information. Algorand Foundation is awarding the grant amount to carry out the project described in successful proposals in order to further the purpose. All applicants must review and consent to the Terms and Conditions as part of their submission of their proposal.

Eligibility information

Proposals may only be submitted by the following:

- Institutions of Higher Education
- Non-profit research organisations

Who may serve as PI:

As of the submission deadline, PIs or co-PIs must hold an appointment at an eligible Higher Education Institution or a non-profit research organisation. Education and community elements are central to the ACE programme. Therefore, proposals with lead PIs from Higher Education institutions are preferred. Proposals from non-profit organisations must include Higher Education partner institutions to cover the education and community aspects of the proposal.

PIs must have an advanced degree in their field or equivalent relevant experience. A proven track record in the form of publications, leadership engagements or similar is expected. The PI's CV must be included as part of the proposal submission. Individuals with primary appointments at for-profit research organisations are not eligible to be a PI or co-PI for an ACE programme grant, but can be collaborators. Collaborators are individuals who are part of the ACE project team, but not employed by the institution

which received the grant. The ACE programme welcomes *joint proposals* from Higher Education institutions and non-profit research organisations.

Limit of Number of Proposals per organisation:

Each organisation may only submit one proposal. In the event that two letters of intent are received from the same organisation, Algorand Foundation will accept the letter of intent that was received first and contact the relevant teams accordingly.

Limit of Proposals per PI or Co-PI: 1

Only one proposal per PI or Co-PI is permitted. Additional proposals after the first submissions by such PIs or Co-PIs will be rejected without review. No exceptions will be made.

Proposal Preparation and Submission Instructions

Proposal Preparation and Instructions

Letter of Intent

Submission of a Letter of Intent (LOI) **is required** to be eligible to submit a full ACE proposal. LOIs may not exceed two pages and must include:

- the names, titles, affiliations and email addresses of the core project team members;
- a short synopsis of the planned programme;
- name and email address of the Department Chair for the relevant PI department(s);
- an approximate budget total and
- an expected number of funding years required for the centre.

All LOI's are to be submitted via the Submittable platform designated by Algorand Foundation by Friday, November 12, 2021, 5:00 pm EST. **Failure to submit the required LOI will result in a full proposal being rejected without review.**

Submitting a LOI does not oblige potential proposers to submit a full ACE proposal. LOIs are not subject to a review, but rather are used for internal planning purposes. **Applicants will not receive any feedback on their LOI other than a message confirming receipt of the LOI.** If a PI (or a Co-PI) submits more than one LOI, the LOI first received (based on time received by Algorand Foundation) will be accepted. Additional proposals after the first submission received from the same PI (or a Co-PI) will be rejected without review. No exceptions will be made.

Full Proposal Preparation Instructions

Proposals need to be submitted via the Submittable platform designated by Algorand Foundation and include the following:

- Title page with
  - Proposal/Project Name (you choose it)
  - Date of proposal submission
  - PI's name, title and contact information
- Section 1: Executive Summary (up to 2 pages)

- Section 2: Project description (up to 10 pages)
  - Research elements (must address the multidisciplinary elements and other principles of the programme as mentioned above in the section “Programme Description”)
  - Educational elements (must address the principles of the programme as defined in the objective “Education” above; it should include proposals on how to fit Algorand in courses and other teaching mechanisms, e.g., course modules and student projects)
  - Algorand ecosystem/community supporting elements
  - Ideas for event-planning and outreach activities to build and develop community (e.g., hackathons, dev tutorials, workshops, monthly meet-ups, brown bag lunches, etc.). Events enabling affiliates from other ACEs to participate are encouraged.
  - Plan to have a dedicated ACE page on your website
  - Other initiatives (e.g., creation and development of online communities, social media channels, social impact initiatives, student project competitions, student clubs participation, industry interactions)
  - List of Algorand-specific elements contemplated for the project
  - Physical space (if such space is designated to the ACE; we will see this as a strongly preferred element)
- Section 3: Core Team (up to 2 pages)
  - Performers’ and institution(s) information, areas of expertise and responsibility of team members
  - Includes the project PI and co-PIs (at least one co-PI per institution) as well as other key team members.
  - Short biographies, including pointers to web presence (professional pages, links to publications including Google scholar, GitHub, LinkedIn, blogs, etc.)
- Section 4: Collaboration plan (up to 1 page)
  - How will the researchers/team members from different disciplines and possibly different organisations plan to collaborate and how will this collaboration be central to the programme? Please also address how the organisation will ensure a diverse team and an inclusive work environment.
- Section 5: Timeline (up to 2 pages)
  - Outline the timeline of the proposal with well-defined yearly milestones and half-year progress criteria (define stages of the project where significant sub-goals are achieved and metrics of evaluation criteria).
- Section 6: Budget Overview (up to 1 page)
  - Years of funding requested, and amount per year (detailed budget input below)
- Section 7: Reporting Obligations (up to 1 page)
  - The organisation submitting the proposal must acknowledge the obligation to provide progress and financial reports.
- Section 8: Comments (optional, up to 1 page)

Detailed budget, including equipment and computing resources, administration, team compensation (salaries, etc.), travel, and other expenses as well as budget detailing (can break up by tasks, deliverable or milestones, as appropriate) **must be uploaded separately**. Please also provide the name and email address of the person who created the budget, along with the organisation's research services or sponsored research office's email address and upload a letter of transmittal confirming the PI has the necessary approvals to submit the proposal. The letter of transmittal must come from the organisation's research services office.

Budgetary Information

Budgets must be submitted in Fiat. The default payment currency is ALGO token in ALGO equivalent amount unless the organisation receiving the award is not eligible to, able to or prefers not to receive funds in ALGO tokens. Please see the Terms and Conditions for details.

Clear association of the budget to the details of the proposal, timeline and milestones as well as to specific performers and institutions must be outlined. Proposers should allocate US$2,500 per person for up to six people per year for ACE-related travel to be determined by the ACE Programme Manager (e.g., for an ACE performers event).

Voluntary committed cost sharing is permissible as long as it is consistent with the ACE programme objectives, but requires prior consent from Algorand Foundation at any point during the funding period. Please note that Algorand Foundation's indirect cost policy favours low indirect cost and will not allow more than 20 percent of direct cost expenditures. The following expense categories need to be exempt from indirect charges: Participant support for workshop or conference attendees, tuition as well as any cost for activities related to research experience for undergraduates.

Due Dates

LOI due date (required; due by 5 p.m. EST): Friday, November 12, 2021.

Full Proposal deadline (due by 5 p.m. EST): Friday, January 14, 2022.

Submittable

Proposals and LOI must be submitted via the Submittable platform designated by Algorand Foundation. Each organisation must register for a Submittable account. Submittable terms and conditions can be found here.

Templates for both proposals and letters of intent can be found on the Algorand Foundation Submittable pages.

Proposal Review Information

Review principles and criteria

Reviewers designated by Algorand Foundation will be asked to:

- Evaluate the project scope and if it justifies the level of funding requested.
- Assess the proposal based on alignment with the ACE programme research, education and community building objectives. Comment on whether key project team members have allocated sufficient time for both their individual technical contributions and the leadership of collaborative activities.
- Evaluate adherence to the ACE programme principles, including an inclusive work environment, diverse structure across disciplines (and possibly across geographies and cultures), Algorand community and ecosystem expansion elements, and the potential for social impact outcomes.
- Review Algorand-specific elements across all aspects of the programme, including education, technological advances and use cases, ecosystem development, etc.

Review and Selection Process

Selection Criteria

Proposals need to meet the key objectives as outlined above. Successful applications will focus on

- **Research:** The reviewer committee will assess the proposal's focus in view of the ACE programme's mission to advance interdisciplinary science and technology in the blockchain and cryptocurrency space. Collaborative, multidisciplinary proposals will be preferred.
- **Education:** Successful ACE proposals will include inclusive education and diverse community engagement with a strong focus on course offerings and student-centric activities.
- **Technology and Application Development:** The reviewer committee will evaluate the inclusion of elements leading to novel application development on the blockchain as part of the submitted proposal.
- **Ecosystem, community building and outreach:** Successful ACE proposals present a well-organised plan for community engagement and ecosystem activities. A description of how physical space will be used to execute this plan is strongly encouraged.
- **Social Impact:** Successful proposals will address societal challenges in line with Algorand Foundation's vision for a thriving, global borderless economy.
- **Diversity and inclusion:** ACE project teams must represent a diverse community with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Collaborative proposals from more than one organisation or department across diverse geographies and economies will be considered favourably.
- **Algorand elements:** Desirable ACE proposals will include the Algorand ecosystem and specific technology as part of their curriculum creation, research, and application development. Algorand modules as part of course offerings or the application of the Algorand platform for training or research purposes are strongly encouraged.

Review process

Only complete proposals with prior LOI submission by November 12, 2021 will be reviewed. The designated review committee, consisting of external reviewers and internal Algorand Foundation representatives, will evaluate the proposals based on the review principles and criteria as listed above. Reviewers are selected based on their expertise in the field, along with their educational activities. To the extent possible, diverse representation within the review committee will be established. Reviewers' analyses and evaluation of the proposal shall form the basis for Algorand Foundation. Final determinations are the discretion of the Algorand Foundation.

Award Administration Information

Notification of the Award

Notification of the award will be made to the submitting organisation by the ACE Programme Manager either via the Submittable platform or via email.

Award Conditions

ACE award recipients will be announced on the Algorand Foundation website as well as through the Algorand communications channels. ACE agreements must be signed by the ACE award recipient and Algorand Foundation within 30 days of award announcement. The award recipients must acknowledge and credit the Foundation and "Algorand Centre of Excellence" in all publications in relation to the project and all other activities sponsored under the Algorand Centres of Excellence (ACE) programme.

Reporting Requirements

The Principal Investigator must submit a milestone update (short video and brief written summary) every six months and an annual report every 12 months. Reports will have segments to be shared with other ACE PIs as well as segments that will be shared with the Algorand Foundation only. The latter will include budget reporting. Participation in an annual PI meeting is required. The ACE programme manager may offer additional check-in meetings with representatives of the project team to provide support, general guidance, and foster community among grant recipients around the globe.

The Principal Investigator must also submit an annual financial report to the ACE Programme Manager one month before the end of the current budget period. Some awards may require submission of more frequent project reports. No later than 30 days following expiration of a grant, the PI also is required to submit a final project report.

Failure to provide the required annual or final project reports, or the milestone updates, will delay Algorand Foundation's review and processing of any future funding increments for all identified PIs and co-PIs on a given award or may, subject to the Terms and Conditions, lead to termination of the funding altogether.

Contact Information

ACE Program Lead Team:
Doro Unger-Lee (Programme Manager)
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Privacy Statement

Please review Algorand Foundation's privacy policies here: https://algorand.foundation/privacy-policies.

The Algorand Foundation will use British English spelling for all intents and purposes by the awardees. The use of "Algorand Center of Excellence" is also permitted.