Reinforcing the Capacity and Contribution of Young Researchers to the Silk Roads

“Silk Roads Youth Research Grant”

Applicant Guidelines

The Silk Roads

The Silk Roads encompass a vast region comprised of a network of maritime and land trade routes. They pass through South Asia and Southeast Asia, crossing the Central Asian subcontinent, the Russian steppes, the Iranian and Anatolian plateaus, and the Arabian Peninsula. They stretch across North Africa and North East Africa, from Tanzania to Morocco as well as extending through Eastern and Southern Europe, before linking France and Spain. These networks carried far more than just merchandise and precious commodities. The constant movement and mixing of populations brought about the widespread transmission of knowledge, ideas, cultures, and beliefs, which had a profound impact on the history and civilizations of the Eurasian peoples. Additionally, science, arts, literature, as well as crafts and technologies were shared and disseminated into societies along the lengths of these routes, and languages, religions, and cultures developed and influenced one another.

Since 1988, UNESCO has sought to better understand the rich history and shared legacy of the Silk Roads, and the ways in which cultures have mutually influenced each other. In light of their role in connecting civilizations, the UNESCO Silk Roads Programme revives and extends these historic networks, bringing people together in an ongoing dialogue and fostering a mutual understanding of the diverse and often inter-related cultures that have sprung up along them. Conceptualised in this way, the Silk Roads are about rendering an understanding of the past in all its complexity, with these routes facilitating interactions between different people, ethnic groups and societies, and shaping contemporary cultures and identities.

The Silk Roads Youth Research Grant

The Silk Roads Youth Research Grant is a new initiative aiming to mobilize young researchers for further study of the Silk Roads shared Heritage. Every year 12 research grants will be awarded to young women and men under 35 years of age, inviting them to address specific issues relating to the Silk Roads shared heritage and plural identities, as well as its internal diversity, and its potential in contemporary societies for creativity, intercultural dialogue, social cohesion, regional and international cooperation, and ultimately sustainable peace and development. Postgraduate researchers aged 35 and younger at the time of application are eligible to apply for the grant. The proposed research may be carried out by an individual researcher or may be part of a group or collaborative project.

Eligible Research Fields

A broad array of research fields, including multidisciplinary and multidimensional proposals not limited to one specific region or chronology, are eligible. Proposed research may cover any of a number of themes associated with the Silk Roads shared heritage including, but not limited to:

- Science and Technology
- Traditional Knowhow and Craftsmanship
- Religion and Spirituality
- Language and Literature
- Arts and Music
- Traditional Sports and Games
However, proposed research must focus on the results of cultural interactions and exchanges, and within a given field must showcase the concrete resulting elements, be they tangible or intangible, as identifiable in two or more cultures along the Silk Roads and beyond. Research may be interdisciplinary in approach, and where possible, provide dynamic and novel ideas on the processes of exchange and transformation along the Silk Roads and its meaning and value in contemporary societies.

For example, research topics and sources may therefore include, languages and scripts, maps and other historical documents, literature, poetry, music, dance, theatre, architecture, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, science and medicine, astronomy and navigation, sustainability, disaster and climate management, water resource management, trade and diplomacy, etc.

Applicants are required to submit a proposal by using the standard template provided here detailing their research, its methods, expected outcomes and contribution to existing scholarship. Proposals should be submitted in English.

The call for proposals will run from 18 January to 18 April 2021, with the grant awardees announced at the end of June 2021 following the evaluation process.

**Evaluation of Proposals**

Proposals will be evaluated, and grants awarded, based on the assessment of a scientific panel comprised of a group of 9 renowned international experts and academics from around the world, working in various fields relating to the study of the Silk Roads. The panel will award the 12 grants based on the strengths of the proposed research and its potential contribution to furthering understanding of the interactions and exchanges taking place across the Silk Roads and the concrete elements resulting from them.

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More information on the Silk Roads Youth Research Grant: https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/youthgrant

UNESCO Silk Roads Programme Website: https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/