

Herb Kohl Public Service Research Competition

Year 11 – December 2025

The Herb Kohl Public Service Research Competition's key goal is to fund innovative public policy research by La Follette School faculty to help solve society's most challenging problems. Its secondary goal is to make that research available to citizens and public decisionmakers through creative and effective outreach activities.

The competition is open to all La Follette School faculty members, including award winners from previous years and emeriti faculty members. The awards are intended to reflect the rich variety of work undertaken by La Follette faculty and can range from approximately **\$50,000-\$100,000**, depending on the project's ambition. A total of two to five projects will be awarded each year.

The competition funds five basic activities:

1. Collecting original data and/or analyzing existing data
2. Hiring La Follette students as project assistants
3. Planning and executing at least one outreach activity designed to further the impact of the research among a non-academic audience, including interested citizens and public decisionmakers/policymakers
4. Paying salary to faculty members who devote significant time in the summer toward the completion of their Kohl Competition research projects
5. Holding a small conference of external/internal scholars, such as a book conference. Such events do not satisfy the outreach activity requirement unless there is a substantive number of interested citizens and/or public decision-makers/policymakers in attendance

Outreach

Because these awards are intended to amplify the exposure and influence of La Follette faculty research, the selection committee considers the outreach portion of a Kohl Competition project to be essential. Applicants are encouraged to think creatively about the best way to communicate their research findings to a wide audience and are encouraged to brainstorm ideas with La Follette Outreach staff before proposal submission. Award winners will have the full support of the Outreach staff in developing their outreach activities, including translating research findings into a form that is useful for and interesting to a non-academic audience.

Target audiences include:

- Policymakers and/or agency representatives
- Community or advocacy groups
- The general public

Outreach activities could include:

- In-person panel discussions, presentations, or other speaking engagements
- Meetings with policymakers or agency representatives
- Badger Talks (in-person presentations, virtual presentations, or podcasts)
- Media interviews, appearances, or opinion columns
- Off-campus podcasts in your area of interest
- Social media or web campaigns

Outreach materials or assets could include:

- Reports
- Infographics or interactive data visualizations
- Explainer videos
- Webpage design

Selection

The selection committee typically includes the La Follette School Director, a past faculty member awardee, a Board of Visitors member, and an Outreach staff member (who serves as a non-voting member).

Applications will be judged by the selection committee on three criteria:

1. Originality and importance of the research
2. Impact of the outreach efforts related to the target audiences and alignment with the Wisconsin Idea
3. Previous Kohl awards: La Follette faculty who have not previously won research awards will be prioritized. However, past research award winners are encouraged to apply if they have successfully completed their research project and executed their outreach activities.

Additional Considerations

The selection committee will also consider the following (with the understanding that most projects will not meet all of them):

- Faculty members who are more active in La Follette's teaching, research, and service activities will be prioritized over faculty members who are less active at the School
- Applicability of the research to Wisconsin (Note: this does not mean research must take place in Wisconsin or be Wisconsin-specific. It may also refer to the research being transferable for statewide impact.)
- Opportunities for La Follette students to gain hands-on experience as project assistants

Application

Before completing your application, please contact Faculty Liaison Tommy Jaime (tjaime@lafollette.wisc.edu) and Anne Oyamada (oyamada@lafollette.wisc.edu) to discuss possible outreach projects and costs associated with your research proposal.

Applications must be submitted using our [online application form](#) and must include the following:

1. A description of how the proposed funding will help solve a problem related to public policy and influence the public-policy debate in Wisconsin and beyond. The description should also include an outreach timeline explaining when and how the outreach activity will be completed.
2. A completed budget worksheet to ensure accurate estimates of costs.

The selection committee may ask for additional information, hold in-person interviews with some applicants, and modify proposed budgets.

Applications are due on January 16, 2026. Award winners will be notified in February 2026 and funds will be available in spring 2026.

All awarded winners will report back to the selection committee on the success and impact of their research and outreach efforts.

Additional Notes

- Applications from research teams are encouraged, including teams consisting of La Follette faculty affiliates paired with a La Follette faculty member or emeriti faculty member.
- Funds cannot be used to pay internal or external faculty for services, buy out La Follette courses or support non-La Follette students.
- Faculty must submit their application using the budget template provided. Applications submitted without the budget template will be sent back to the faculty member to submit correctly.
- Awards are for approximately two years and ideally the funds will be spent during this timeframe. Exceptions can be made if there is a reasonable justification.
- Award winners who fail to complete the outreach portion of their Kohl Competition project will not be eligible for future Kohl Competition awards.