SECC Dissertation Research Funding Awards

The submission deadline for the 2026 Student and Early Career Council (SECC) Dissertation Research Funding Awards is **May 18, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET.**

Established in 2008 by SRCD and the Student and Early Career Council (SECC), these non-renewable awards in the amount of up to $2,000 USD are given to doctoral students for dissertation research proposals that merit special recognition and display strong potential to contribute to the field of child development. Submissions should be for dissertation research in the proposal stage (i.e., not completed), and money is to be used for research costs or professional development related to the proposed dissertation project.

SRCD SECC is committed to anti-racism and anti-bias efforts as informed by scientific evidence and diverse epistemologies. Projects that reflect this charge are encouraged.

SECC members and the Governing Council Representative to SECC evaluate all submissions. Evaluation criteria include the following:

- Quality and feasibility of research proposal (based on significance of the research question, theoretical rationale, methodological appropriateness, and innovation);
- Qualifications of the applicant (based on CV and letter of recommendation);
- Extent to which the award will contribute significantly to the applicant's professional development and productivity; and
- Extent to which the proposed work contributes to the field of child development.

2026 Call for Proposals

The deadline for the 2026 submissions is May 18, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET.

The Student and Early Career Council (SECC) of the Society for Research in Child Development is pleased to announce the 17th annual competition for graduate student dissertation research funding.

Eligibility:

1. Applicants must be SRCD student members at the time of application and membership must be maintained throughout the award period.
    - International members and members from underrepresented groups are strongly encouraged to apply.
    - Consistent with the SRCD initiative to improve multidisciplinary collaboration in the child development field, applications that reflect multidisciplinary research aims and/or are from non-traditional disciplines are encouraged to apply.
2. Applicants must be doctoral students in a field related to child development, in good standing with their university, and have their dissertation proposals approved by their advisor.
    - Students may apply for the award prior to dissertation committee approval, but funding will not be issued until the research project has been approved by the dissertation committee and the university's institutional Review Board.
3. Preference will be given to applicants whose project start date falls within the next year.
4. Proposed research must focus on child development, with study populations under age 18 (e.g., children, their parents, or K–12 teachers). Applications centered on young adult or college student populations will only be considered if they clearly justify their relevance to child development, such as through retrospective inquiry.

Submission Criteria:

- Submissions should be in the proposal stage (i.e., not completed).
- Award funds are to be used for research costs (e.g., participant incentives, standardized measures, research equipment) and/or methodological training (e.g., fees to attend a statistical workshop) needed to complete the dissertation.

- All expenses must be justified as needed for the completion of the dissertation.

Deadlines:

The deadline for the 2026 submissions is May 18, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Process:

1. SECC members and the SRCD Governing Council Representative to SECC will evaluate all submissions. Evaluation criteria include:
    - Quality and feasibility of research proposal (based on significance of the research question[s], theoretical rationale, methodological appropriateness, and innovation);
    - Qualifications of the applicant (based on CV and letter of recommendation);
    - The extent to which the award will contribute significantly to the applicant's professional development and productivity; and
    - The extent to which the proposed work contributes to the field of child development.
2. Application materials. Please use APA formatting guidelines (7th edition; 2020) and be prepared to include each of the following components as PDF files in the application site.
    - **Cover letter** (1 page maximum, double-spaced): Letter describing your research experience and interests, as well as your career goals.
    - **Project Abstract** (1 page maximum, double-spaced)
    - **Project Summary** (6 pages maximum, double-spaced): Summary of the research project, including background and rationale, an explanation of research design (methods, analyses, etc.), how the project fits your career goals and interests, and other important aspects of the study. Please note that references do not count towards the page limit, but tables and figures DO count towards the limit.
    - **Budget and Budget Justification** (1 page maximum, single-spaced): ***Must be signed by your dissertation advisor.*** Please provide (1) a list of each budget item with (2) an accompanying explanation about how the budget expense (item per item) will be used to help with the completion of the dissertation. Be sure to justify all expenses (no minimum, maximum $2,000). Also, please provide (3) a list of all other sources of funding for this project.

      Note regarding budget: The award must be used to support expenses that are directly needed for the completion of the dissertation (e.g., animal care, equipment, and participant incentives) or

indirectly (e.g., training workshop, consultant fees). A portion of the budget may go towards mentoring and training, if necessary, to carry out the research proposal (e.g., consultant fees, travel to trainings/seminars to acquire specialized research skills, and workshop registrations for these trainings/seminars). It may not be used for personal expenses (i.e., personal travel) or for travel to conferences to disseminate research findings (i.e., cannot be used to cover costs associated with travel to SRCD Biennial Meeting or other conferences). All expenses must be justified as needed for the completion of the dissertation. Failure to comply with this requirement may disqualify your application from further consideration.

****Please be aware that SRCD does not pay for indirect costs associated with institutions.****

- **Timeline** (1 page maximum, single-spaced): Timeline for completion of the project.
- **Curriculum Vitae**: Should include research experience, presentations, and scientific publications.

3. A letter of recommendation from your research advisor is also required. This letter should include a statement of support and approval, address the feasibility of the research study, the student's primary and major contributions to the research, and an explanation of why the research is worthy of the award. The advisor must comment on the student's academic standing as well as the student's current progress on the dissertation. Letters are requested through the application portal by the applicant and should be submitted by **May 18, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET.** Applicants may send the request for a letter of recommendation prior to submitting their application to give their recommender sufficient time to upload.
4. Award recipients will be contacted by October 2026. All applicants will be notified of funding decisions.
5. Award recipients must acknowledge the SECC Dissertation Research Funding Award from SRCD in any resulting publications from the dissertation project.
6. All application materials must be submitted online through the submission site. Incomplete applications and applications exceeding set page limits will not be reviewed. The deadline for submitting complete applications is May 18, 2026 at 11:59 p.m. ET.

Please send all inquiries regarding eligibility requirements, submission content, and technical assistance with the submission site to scholar@srcd.org.

SECC DFA Frequently Asked Questions

Can I apply if my dissertation proposal has not yet been approved?

Yes. Applicants may still apply if their dissertation proposal has not yet received final approval. Applicants should clearly explain their current stage in the dissertation process, provide a timeline for proposal approval, and ask their advisor to address the proposal's status and likelihood of approval in their recommendation letter.

Does having an approved dissertation proposal improve my chances of funding?

While proposal approval is not required at the time of application, applicants should demonstrate that their project is well developed and likely to move forward successfully. Advisor support and confidence in the project can strengthen the application.

Does research focused on teachers qualify under the child development requirement?

Yes. Research involving K–12 teachers is eligible, particularly when the project clearly connects teacher experiences or well-being to child development outcomes. Applicants should explicitly explain the implications of their work for children's and youth development.

Can award funds be used for open-access publication fees?

Open-access publication fees are generally not prioritized as allowable expenses because they are not essential to conducting the research itself. Many universities also provide institutional support or publisher agreements that help cover these costs.

What types of budget requests are prioritized by reviewers?

Reviewers prioritize direct research costs that are necessary to conduct the study, such as participant incentives, data collection expenses, research materials, or transcription services. Indirect or non-essential expenses are generally viewed less favorably.

Can we reimburse past expenses?

Technically, there is nothing prohibiting this, but it is strongly discouraged. Reimbursing past expenses suggests there may have been other ways to fund them, even if those options were not the most convenient. This award is intended to support dissertation projects that could not be completed without it. It must also be clear that any past expense was absolutely necessary for conducting dissertation-related research, and not for general graduate training or other related projects.

Are funds distributed to the applicant or their university?

Funds are disbursed directly to the student, not to the university.

Past SRCD SECC Dissertation Funding Award Winners:

- 2025 Awardees
- 2024 Awardees
- 2023 Awardees
- 2022 Awardees
- 2021 Awardees
- 2020 Awardees
- 2019 Awardees
- 2018 Awardees
- 2017 Awardees
- 2016 Awardees
- 2015 Awardees
- 2014 Awardees
- 2013 Awardees
- 2012 Awardees
- 2011 Awardees
- 2010 Awardees