

## ACSS Postdoctoral Program

### Cycle 3 (2016-2017)

## Frequently Asked Questions

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## **Eligibility**

### **I have not yet obtained my PhD degree. Can I still apply?**

No, applicants should have obtained their PhD by the time of application.

### **I have obtained my PhD more than 3 years ago. Am I still eligible to apply?**

In principle, no. This fellowship is targeted towards recent PhDs, who are keen to start their career in academia. In cases of *force majeure*, however, applicants who have completed their PhDs more than three years prior to the date of application will be considered. These will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The applicant is advised to contact the ACSS Secretariat (at [grants@theacss.org](mailto:grants@theacss.org)) prior to applying and submit a detailed statement explaining the circumstances surrounding his/her particular case and why is it a case of *force majeure*. Cases of *force majeure* include, but are not limited to:

- Prolonged illness
- Maternity/paternity leave
- War and/or humanitarian crisis
- Other special circumstances

Though such cases may be considered, applicants cannot have obtained their PhDs more than 7 years prior to the date of application.

### **Will the ACSS only fund applicants based in the region?**

Yes and no. The Postdoctoral Fellowships Program generally targets scholars based in the region. However, it also encourages Arab scholars based abroad/with foreign training to return to the region. Therefore, if you are based outside the region at the time of application, you are expected to return to the region for the period of your Postdoctoral Fellowship. Furthermore, we encourage mobility within the region and therefore for scholars based in the region, preference will be given to those intending to move to another location for the duration of the Fellowship. It is expected that fellows will at least move to an institution other than that they are based in at the time of application.

**Does the ACSS have any geographical restrictions or preferences as to where the applicant should be based within the Arab region?**

No. The ACSS funds applicants based anywhere in the region as well as those intending to commute between one or two countries in the region.<sup>1</sup>

**The Call for Applications specifically mentions the social sciences – will you consider proposals from researchers in the humanities?**

Yes, the ACSS employs a broad definition of the social sciences that includes the core social sciences such as anthropology, demography, economics, political science, psychology sociology. Furthermore “allied disciplines” such as art, architecture, geography, history, law, literature, linguistics, philosophy and public health and interdisciplinary fields such as gender studies, cultural studies, media studies, development studies and urban studies are also eligible for funding.

**What is the expected duration of research?**

The duration of the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship is 9 months . Once accepted, fellows will be expected to start their fellowships by September 1, 2016 (at the earliest).

Additional funding at an average of \$5000 per fellow will be available for a second phase (up to 9-months) based on a proposal in which the fellow requests to extend his/her work in new directions. This proposal would be due 2 months before the end of the fellowship at the earliest.

**Am I eligible to apply for the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship if I am from an Arab country but not “Arab”?**

Yes as long as you have citizenship in an Arab country (or residence in an Arab country in the case of ‘citizenless’ refugees)

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<sup>1</sup> By the ‘region’ we mean the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

**Am I eligible to apply for the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship if I am from an Arab country but do not hold the citizenship of an Arab country?**

No. For this fellowship program applicants are required to submit a proof of citizenship (or residence in an Arab country in the case of ‘citizenless’ refugees) with their application.

**Am I eligible to apply for the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship if I am a citizen of an Arab country but am living abroad, outside of the Arab region?**

Yes. However, you are expected to spend the whole period of your ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship within the Arab region. Furthermore, applicants who already have tenure-track/tenured positions *outside* the region are *not* eligible to apply.

**Am I eligible to apply for the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship if I am originally from an Arab country, or my parents/ancestors were from an Arab country but I no longer hold an Arab citizenship and am living outside of the Arab region?**

No. For this fellowship program citizenship to an Arab country or proof of residence in the case of ‘citizenless’ refugees in an Arab country is required.

**Am I eligible to apply for the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship if I am not from an Arab country however am a specialist interested and working on the Arab region?**

No. Unfortunately the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship is not open for this category of researchers.

## **Institutional Affiliation and Mentorship**

**Should I affiliate myself to a particular institution within the region during the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship?**

Yes. It is a must that you seek the formal approval for an affiliation with an institution in the region that would cover the duration of your Fellowship.

**Does the institution have to be located within the region?**

Yes.

**Does the institution have to be Arab?**

Yes and no. Though it is a must that the institution(s) in question be located in the Arab region, this can include foreign or international institutions based in the region. Depending on the reasoning given by the applicant on the importance for seeking a particular international or foreign institution over an Arab one each case will be evaluated separately by the ACSS. It should be noted that preference is still given to Arab institutions.

**Should it be a purely academic institution? What if I work on civil society and would like to affiliate myself to a civil society institution during my Postdoctoral Fellowship?**

Yes and no. Since the aim of the Postdoctoral Fellowship is to advance the academic career of the applicant, priority is given to academic institutions. Yet, in exceptional cases where the applicant clearly explains the importance of a non-academic affiliation, the request may be approved. In such cases, however, it is a must that the applicant has an external mentor affiliated with an academic institution within the same country where the applicant will be based for the majority of the time of his/her Postdoctoral Fellowship.

**I am currently affiliated and work at an academic institution in the region. Can I remain in my institution during the period of my Postdoctoral Fellowship?**

In principle, no. It is not encouraged for the Postdoctoral Fellow to remain within the same institution where he/she has been working prior to the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship. Applicants who have a tenure-track/tenured position *in* the region, however, may be considered provided that they take a leave for the period of the Fellowship and affiliate themselves elsewhere. In *very exceptional cases*, where the Postdoctoral Fellow holds a tenure-track/tenured position at a university in the region and cannot take leave (for reasons related to his/her rank and/or promotion), his/her application may be considered. Applicants in doubt in this regard are advised to contact the ACSS Secretariat (at [grants@theacss.org](mailto:grants@theacss.org)) prior to submitting their application.

### **Can I choose to affiliate myself to more than one institution for the period of my ACSS Fellowship?**

Yes. Mobility is generally encouraged for this type of Fellowship, particularly in the case of applicants moving to another country in the region other than their country of origin or habitual residence. The maximum affiliations that a Fellow may seek are two institutional affiliations. It goes without saying, however, that it should be clear in the applicant's research statement what would be the significant relevance and importance of each institution to their work.

### **What is the expected role of my mentor?**

The most important role of the mentor is to integrate the Postdoctoral Fellow in the academic community and network at the institution where the fellow will be affiliated during his/her Postdoctoral Fellowship. As such, it is expected that the mentor will be based in the primary institution of affiliation of the fellow. In the case that the Fellow will be dividing his/her time equally between two different institutions (especially if they were located in two different countries), it may be advised for the fellow to have two different mentors. Additionally, the mentor would be expected to provide academic advice, guidance and supervision to the Fellow and is expected to submit a review periodically on the progress of the Fellow to the ACSS Secretariat.

### **Where should the mentor be based?**

The mentor is expected to be based in the primary institution of affiliation of the Fellow. In case of more than one primary affiliation (i.e. the Fellow dividing his/her time between two different institutions), it may be advised for the Fellow to have two different mentors.

**Will the ACSS Secretariat be communicating directly with the mentor prior and during my ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship?**

Yes. Upon shortlisting, the ACSS will be contacting the mentor with the terms and conditions of their commitment. Upon selection, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will be signed with the mentor(s).

## **Application Process**

**How do I apply for the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship?**

Applicants must submit an online application. This will be available through the ACSS website (<http://www.theacss.org>) starting 21 March 2016.

**It is not possible for me to submit an online application due to technical difficulties. Does this mean I cannot apply for the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship?**

No. In extenuating circumstances the ACSS will accept an application sent via email or post. If you wish to discuss these options, you must contact ACSS Secretariat (at [grants@theacss.org](mailto:grants@theacss.org)) well in advance of the June 13, 2016 deadline to obtain additional instructions on how to submit an application via email or post.

**What are the attachments that I am expected to submit with my application?**

Applicants need to submit with their applications the following documents:

- 1. A detailed CV**
- 2. A cover Letter**
- 3. A project proposal (between 10-15 pages)**
- 4. A letter from a mentor based in a regional academic institution**
- 5. A detailed CV of the proposed mentor.**
- 6. A proof of nationality or residence in the Arab World**

The applicant should expect to be contacted by the ACSS Secretariat in case further details or information are needed with regards to the above documents. Applications missing any of the above documents may not be considered.

**When is the deadline for the Third Cycle of the Postdoctoral Fellowship?**

You must complete and submit your online application before 11:00 pm (Beirut Time) on 13 June 2016. In case you face any technical problem using the online application system, make sure to email all the requirements to [grants@theacss.org](mailto:grants@theacss.org) before the deadline.

**Do I need to complete the on-line application all at once?**

No. You may return to the on-line application as many times as necessary between March 21 and June 13. Be sure to save your work after you finish each section of the application – the online application will contain detailed instructions on how to do this. Once the application has been submitted, you will no longer be able to alter the information.

**Do I need to provide written references?**

No. Applicants need to provide names and contact details for at least one academic referee, but do not need to provide written reference letters at the application stage.

**How will I know that my application is complete?**

After you have successfully submitted your application, you will receive an automated confirmation email from the ACSS.

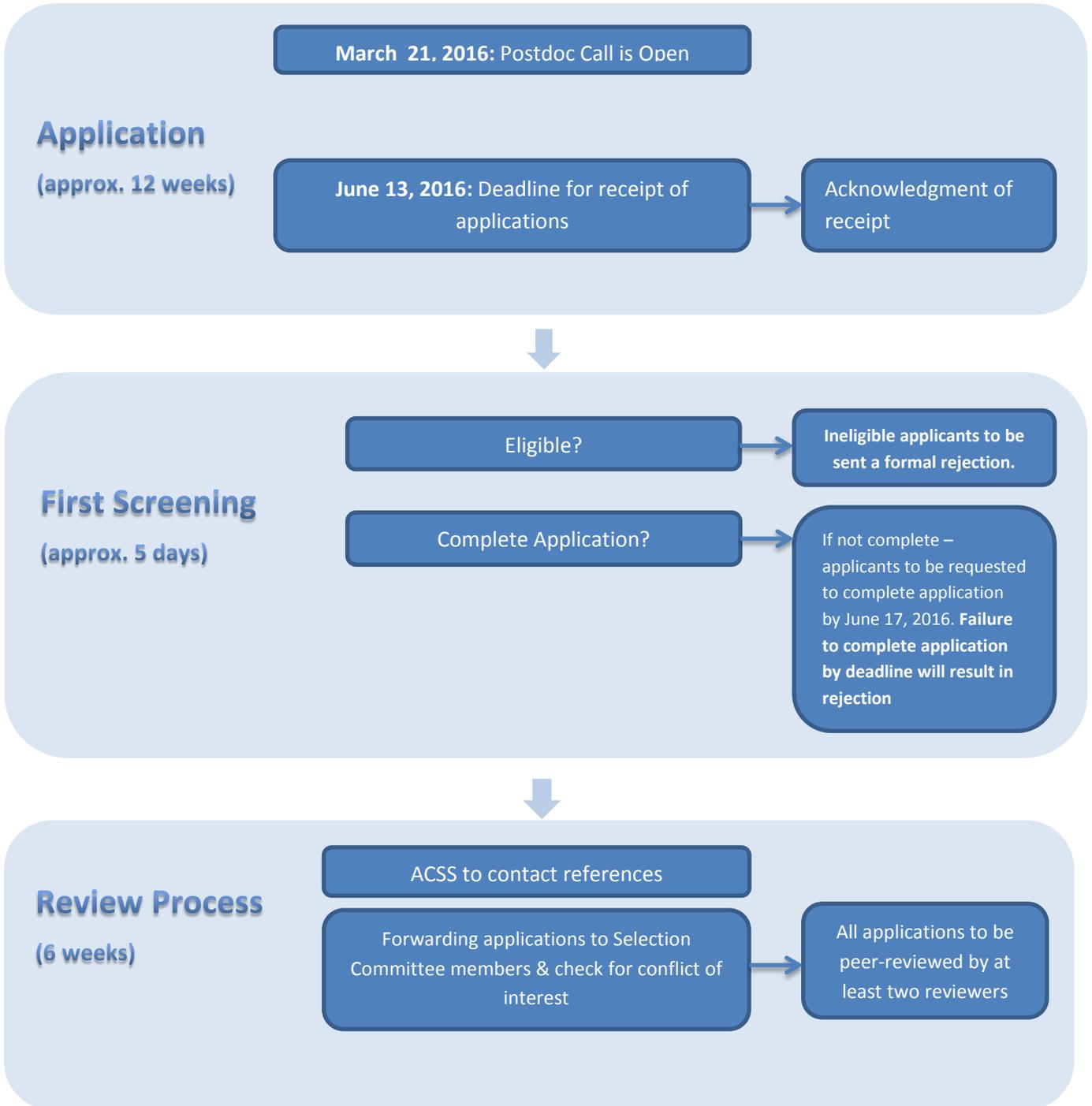
**Can I ask for feedback on my application before submission?**

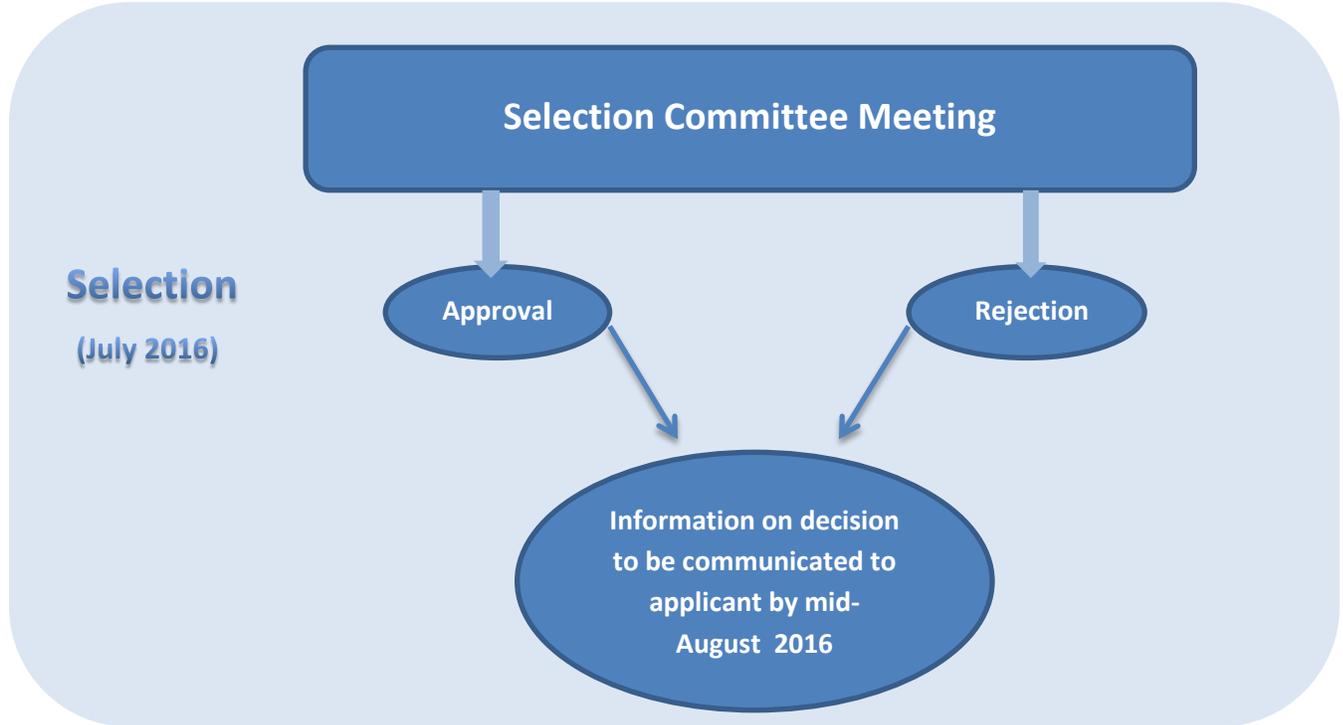
Yes and no. The ACSS will provide applicants with general feedback on whether their proposed research subject falls under the Call's theme, fulfils eligibility requirements and specific issues regarding the application materials requested. However, applicants will not be provided with feedback on the content and quality of their application and narrative proposal.

**What should I expect once my application has been submitted?**

The ACSS Secretariat will be doing the initial review of applications to determine eligibility and eliminate disqualified applicants before applications are sent on to the Selection Committee. During the initial review phase, the ACSS Secretariat may contact applicants to inquire about any missing information and/or documents.

The review and selection process is expected to proceed as follows:





### **How will my application be evaluated?**

As can be seen in the charted review and selection process, applications received will be first reviewed for eligibility by the ACSS Secretariat and applicants will be asked to provide any missing documents during the initial review phase. Disqualified applicants will be rejected at this phase. Qualified applications will then be sent to members of the Selection Committee for review and evaluation. The Selection Committee is composed of three senior scholars from across the Arab region with diverse social science backgrounds, who will be asked to provide an objective evaluation of the applications. The Selection Committee will then meet to discuss each application, rank them and select the best applicants on the basis of both merit and promise.

### **What are the criteria according to which my application will be assessed?**

The evaluation criteria that will be used to evaluate the applicant's application can be summed in the following:

- **Research Proposal's Contribution to Knowledge (30%):**
  - o Evaluations will be based on the following:

- Research questions (10%)
  - Significance (5%)
  - Quality (10%)
  - Originality (5%)
- **Feasibility of Proposed Research Plan (20%)**
- Is the timeframe realistic? (10%)
  - Are the methods and plans proposed appropriate for the aims of the project? (10%)
- **The Candidate's Competency (20%)**
- Evaluations should be based on the following:
    - Academic credentials (5%)
    - Existing publications (10%)
    - Promise (5%)
- **The Candidate's Postdoctoral Plan (20%):**
- Evaluations will be based on the following:
    - Choice of mentor (10%)
    - Institutional affiliation (5%)
    - Mobility (5%)
- **Expected Outputs (10%):**
- Evaluations will be based on the following:
    - Planned Publications (5%)
    - Career Plan (5%)

**If my application is not successful, will I receive feedback as to why my proposal was not selected?**

No. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications. Only shortlisted applicants that receive a 'revise and resubmit' will receive feedback as to why their applications have been unsuccessful and will be encouraged to resubmit an application in the following cycle.

## **Grant Details**

### **What happens after I am selected for a grant?**

Successful applicants will receive provisional Acceptance Letters confirming their selection and, if applicable, requests for clarification and elaboration from the Selection Committee. The ACSS Secretariat will contact the proposed mentor(s), explain to them their terms and conditions of their work with the successful applicant and ask them to sign a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize their commitment with the Council. After that, a contract will be sent to the applicant detailing the terms of the grant, including deadlines for reporting and required activities and outputs.

### **Do I have any reporting obligations upon being awarded the grant?**

Yes. Selected applicants will be expected to provide three periodic narrative reports on their work and progress dispersed over the 9-months period of their Fellowship. Mentors will have the same reporting obligations as the Fellows, where they will be asked to report on the progress of their Fellows and provide any details on any concerns that may arise.

### **Do I have to attend events organized by the ACSS upon receiving the grant?**

Yes. Unless there are compelling reasons that prevent the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellow from attending any of the ACSS organized events to which he/she is invited, the Postdoctoral Fellow is expected to commit to attending at least two events during his/her postdoctoral term. All expenses of attending such events will be covered separately by the ACSS and will not come out of the grant budget.

### **Do I have any other obligations upon receiving the grant?**

In addition to attending at least two events, the ACSS requires each Postdoctoral Fellow to submit one working paper to its Working Paper series (see this [page](#) for submissions guidelines). The series is a prepublication outlet that enables dissemination of work supported

by the ACSS in the region and beyond. The Fellow retains the rights to the paper, which can then be submitted for publication in a journal or a book of the Fellow's choosing.

**When must I conclude my work under the Postdoctoral Fellowship if I am selected for funding?**

The Postdoctoral Fellowship is for 9 months from the date chosen by the applicant as the starting date for their Fellowship. Additional funding at an average of \$5000 per fellow for up to 9 months will be available if accepted for a second phase based on a proposal in which the Fellow requests to extend his/her work in new directions.

**What does the ACSS Postdoctoral Fellowship amount to?**

The Fellowships will provide for 9 months of full support (living expenses plus research expenses) with a total stipend of an average of \$32,000. This amount will depend on the respective price levels in the proposed country/countries of residence where the Fellow will be residing during his/her Fellowship as well as whether or not the applicant will be having other sources of income and/or funding throughout the Fellowship period. If shortlisted, applicants will be asked to provide a budget estimating (1) the costs of living, (2) the costs of research, and (3) indicating whether or not they will be having any other sources of funding and/or income during the period of their Fellowship.

In agreement with the Postdoctoral Fellow, the funds will be disbursed in three payments upon the delivery of detailed periodic narrative reports.

**What does the Fellowship cover?**

The Postdoctoral Fellowship is meant to cover the living and research expenses of the Fellow during the postdoctoral period. Before being offered the Fellowship, applicants will be asked to indicate whether or not they will have any other sources of funding and/or income during the period of their Fellowship. If the applicants will have any other sources of income and/or funding during their Fellowship period, the ACSS may decide to deduct the equivalent amount

of this income or funding from their grant. In principle, Fellows are not allowed to accumulate sources of funding/income.

**I am applying for multiple grants. Should I be awarded the ACSS Fellowship, can I also accept funding from other sources?**

Yes and no. In case the Fellow is offered any other funding from any other sources, he/she is obliged to communicate the exact terms and conditions of the offer to the ACSS Secretariat and seek approval. The ACSS will examine the offer and reach an agreement with the Fellow that is to his/her best interest. In principle, the Fellow cannot accept any funding from any other organization for the same research project or items covered by the ACSS during the Postdoctoral period. In case the second offer covers the same research project or items as those covered by the ACSS, the Fellow may then have to choose between both grants. If the second grant covers different items then the Fellow may be allowed to hold both grants. The ACSS will contact the other funding agency to make sure that the terms are clear to all sides.

**Will the ACSS share the information submitted in the proposal with other bodies?**

By submitting the application, you are granting the ACSS at its own discretion the right to share information with other institutions (including donor agencies) on your research title, objectives, location and the researchers' contact information. In case of compelling circumstances limited exceptions can be made on a case by case basis in this regard.

It should be also noted that upon selection the name, bio, the title of your research project and abstract will be posted on the ACSS website as part of the ACSS' commitment to transparency towards its stakeholders. As the ACSS develops its website and other forms of dissemination and communication, Fellows will be invited to contribute essays, articles, abstracts and other material related to their research.

The applicant should contact the ACSS Secretariat (at [grants@theacss.org](mailto:grants@theacss.org)) in case he/she does not wish to share particular information at any point of the process due to compelling reasons.