

COMPETITION POLICY AND POWER RESEARCH FUND

Call for Proposals

Call closes at midnight GMT on 30 April 2024

CONTEXT/PROBLEM STATEMENT

The monopoly power, or excessive market power, of the world's largest corporations has expanded rapidly over the last few decades, increasing in terms of revenue, market capitalisation, and ownership of assets. The top four companies in any given sector now hold a larger market share than a decade ago. If left unchecked, concentrations of corporate power negatively affect labour rights, exacerbate inequality within and between countries and, ultimately, undermine democratic structures and institutions. Actors with monopoly power gain ever greater political power and with it, the capacity to determine the rules of the game, making sure economies work for them rather than for everyone.

The rise of monopoly power and the dimensions of that power in the 21st century are perhaps most evident in the Big Tech sector, but dangerous monopolies are increasingly defining sectors such as pharmaceuticals, agribusiness and healthcare.

Combatting monopoly power requires the expansion and effective use of existing tools, in particular competition or anti-trust policies and regulations, as well as innovative approaches that view the challenge through new lenses. Practical short-term action must be combined with longer-term visioning of fair markets that serve and benefit society and the environment, rather than preying upon them.

PURPOSE AND FOCUS OF THE CALL

The Competition Policy and Power Research Fund was established to promote research that will help combat excessive market power, by bridging gaps in current knowledge and supporting practical advances and innovations in the use of competition and anti-trust tools. The Fund also seeks to build connections between researchers in this field and thereby promote a strong international and interdisciplinary network of researchers working on competition and monopoly power.

In this inaugural *Call for Proposals*, we are seeking applications from civil society and academic organisations for research grants on the theme of competition policy and concentrated corporate power. The Call is broad in scope, but the projects proposed should show how the research can advance, in concrete ways, the anti-monopoly agenda. This could be through links to policy advocacy, engagement with regulatory authorities or involve more innovative approaches to impact. It is also important that proposals can demonstrate what

gap the research will fill and how it will be used by the proposing entity to achieve impact. Activities to share and workshop the research with key stakeholders can be covered by the Fund, but the expectation is the funding will primarily support research. We encourage two types of research proposal:

- ▶ Proposals for short-term / quick turn-around research with a clear link to policy opportunities or work with regulatory bodies (duration: 6 months – 1 year)
- ▶ Research that helps address critical gaps in knowledge and proposes innovative approaches (up to two years in duration)

With this *Call for Proposals* we also seek to encourage the involvement of early career researchers, including but not limited to post-doctoral researchers, in proposals. Research proposals that include roles for, and build the capacity of, researchers in the early stages of their research career will be given priority.

We encourage applications from all countries and regions and will seek to award research grants to a broad diversity of applicants.

All successful applicants will be invited to present their research at an international conference to be held in 2025.

Grant awards will be up to a maximum of USD 60,000. While there is a maximum, we do not expect all proposals to reach this amount, and we encourage proposals that are focused and seek smaller amounts of funding for specific research initiatives. We will examine budgets and may engage short-listed applicants on budget questions. A budget line for overhead should not exceed 10%.

Applications should be submitted in the format set out below by 30 April to competitionfund@somo.nl. Please observe the maximum word length.

INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR THE APPLICATION:

All applications should be submitted via the application form available at somo.nl and follow word limits for each section. The main areas which each application should cover are:

- A. Context/problem statement: What is the specific problem/opportunity the research is seeking to address? (maximum 500 words)
- B. Proposed research question(s) and methodology: What is the question/are the questions that will be explored and how? (maximum 1,500 words)
- C. Theory of change: What will the research achieve once completed? (maximum 750 words)
- D. Dissemination: How will the research reach relevant stakeholders? (maximum 500 words)
- E. Proposed timeframe for the research and follow-up work (minimum 6 months and maximum 2 years)
- F. Individual's qualifications for the proposed activity: What qualifies the research team to conduct this research? Please include a résumé for the lead investigator as well as summaries of the qualifications of associated investigators.
- G. Budget with justification for each core budget item

SELECTION CRITERIA:

We will prioritize proposals which meet the following criteria:

- Clarity on how the research will advance policy reform and/or regulatory enforcement and/or advancing the anti-monopoly agenda
- Innovative, novel approaches to addressing monopoly power
- Interdisciplinary, multi-country, research team
- Clear plan for how research will reach relevant stakeholders
- Proposals that include roles for, and build the capacity of, early career researchers

PROCESS AND TIMEFRAME

- Proposals should be submitted using the application form available at somo.nl by 30 April 2024.
- All applicants will be informed of the Panel's decision by 30 June 2024.

STEERING COMMITTEE

The Competition Policy and Power Research Fund is hosted by the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) and overseen by a Steering Committee comprising:

- [Audrey Gaughran](#), Executive Director, Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations
- [Michelle Meagher](#), Competition law specialist and Founder of the Balanced Economy Project
- [Professor Nicolo Zingales](#), School of Law, Fundação Getulio Vargas Rio de Janeiro
- [Professor Thando Vilakazi](#), Director, Centre for Competition, Regulation and Economic Development, University of Johannesburg
- [Maria Luisa Stasi](#), Head of Law and Policy for digital markets at ARTICLE 19
- [Professor Simon Roberts](#), School of Economics, University of Johannesburg
- [Helena Malikova](#), Fellow at Hertie School
- [Elizabeth Frantz](#) and [Vera Franz](#) of Open Society Foundations act as advisors to the Steering Committee. Vera Franz is Division Director for Technology & Society. Elizabeth Frantz is Deputy Director of Equity & Division Director for Corporate Accountability & Workers' Rights.

ADJUDICATING PANEL

In addition to the members of the Steering Committee, the Fund's Adjudication Panel comprises the following experts:

Dr. Andrew McLean	Edinburgh University, UK
Dr. Anna Rita Bennato	Loughborough University, UK
Dr. Kati Cseres	Amsterdam Centre for European Law and Governance, Netherlands
Dr. Ben Wood	Deakin University, Australia
Professor Ioannis Lianos	University College London, UK
Professor Giorgio Monti	Tilburg Institute for Law, Technology, and Society, Netherlands
Professor Thomas Cheng	University of Hong Kong
Ms Yasmin Carrim	Acting Judge, High Court of South Africa, former member Competition Tribunal of South Africa
Professor Juan David Gutiérrez	Universidad de los Andes, Colombia.
Dr. Maria Fernanda Viegans	Center for Technology and Society Studies (CETyS), Universidad de San Andrés, Argentina
Vanessa Turner	Senior Advisor, Competition, BEUC (The European Consumer Organisation)

This call for proposals is supported by the Open Society Foundations.
If you have questions on the Call, please send these to competitionfund@somo.nl.

ETHICS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

All applicants will be asked to complete a disclosure form notifying the Competition Policy and Power Research Fund about relationships with the Fund and/or individuals on the Adjudicating Panel. These disclosures will be used by the Chair of the Adjudicating Panel to ensure that proposals are reviewed in line with the Fund's policy on avoidance of conflicts of interest.