Respondent: Tyler Cowen, Emergent Ventures

What is your role at your institution?

Director of Emergent Ventures, and also of the home institution Mercatus Center.

What types of projects does your organization fund? (Including broad topic areas, though I know specific priorities might change over time. Academic research, books, conferences, policy engagement?)

Individuals with projects to change the world for the better, can be anything.

Does your organization offer smaller grants for early-stage projects?

Absolutely, very much one of our priorities.

How do you find/identify projects of interest? (Calls for proposals? Invitation?)

There is an application process, plus general word of mouth. We deliberately do not advertise to avoid being inundated.

If some/all proposals are by invitation, how do you learn about projects and scholars you might want to fund?

Projects are recommended to me pretty much every day, usually by previous Emergent Ventures winners.

Do you send proposals out for review? If so, how do you choose reviewers?

Many but not all are sent out for review. I choose reviewers on the basis of their knowledge of a technical area that I might not be very familiar with.

Who decides whether to fund a particular proposal?

I do, Tyler Cowen, as project director.

If someone does not receive funding based on an initial proposal, what feedback do they receive, if any? Can they submit a revised proposal?

No feedback is offered to the nos, too many proposals to deal with. Revised or entirely different proposals are always welcome.

Can scholars reach out to you to discuss ideas before submitting a proposal? Is this something you recommend/encourage?

It is preferred that they first apply, as the application process is fairly quick and simple.

What are the most common mistakes you see scholars making in their proposals?

Timidness perhaps? Unwillingness to try something strange or unusual?

If you could give potential applicants one piece of advice that might not be obvious on your website, what would it be?

Apply!

In economics, organization like CSWEP have been working to reduce harassment and discrimination in the profession. Does your organization have any safeguards in place to avoid funding individuals who engage in misconduct? How do you handle such cases? (e.g. Do you require applicants to disclose ongoing or past investigations by their employer or a professional organization like the AEA? What happens if a victim reports harassment by a grantee?)

We are very keen to choose winners whose behavior will reflect well on our program and be in accord with our ethics. We do not, however, have access to systematic data about the behavior of our applicants in the outside world.