

Statement on General Conference Research Priorities, 2016–2020



Summary

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC) seeks partners to undertake quantitative and qualitative research that will assist the Seventh-day Adventist Church in evaluating and improving its outreach to the world, its ministry to members globally, and its internal administration and operations.

The General Conference and research

Church leadership recognizes a need for professional research into the operations of organizations as well as programs to determine the effectiveness of various initiatives that have been established to fulfill specific purposes within the overall mission of the Church. The GC Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research (ASTR) has been assigned responsibility for initiating, coordinating and funding research.

Why is the GC funding research?

Research objectives are to:

- Improve the effectiveness of mission to those outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church
- Enhance pastoral ministry to, and discipling of, church members
- Provide an informed basis for global strategic planning
- Assist denominational entities and denominationally funded programs in achieving their mission objectives
- Understand current trends, facts, and growth potential

How will the GC support research?

ASTR will:

- (1) Specify research that the GC needs (which will be chiefly applied research, intended to enable evaluation of the mission effectiveness of existing denominational programs); and
- (2) Issue Requests for Proposals (RFP) to carry out the specified research. In these cases, ASTR expects to be the primary funder of the research and to own the findings.

ASTR will also:

- (3) Support initiatives by existing researchers, especially SDA faculty and post-graduate students, where their research has the potential to meet the GC research objectives (see above) and/or to further the implementation of the GC 2015_2020 strategic plan, “Reach the World.”

What kinds of research will the GC support?

Primary priorities:

- a) Research that has the potential to help the world Church meet the objectives and KPIs of the “Reach the World” strategic plan
- b) Analysis of the effectiveness of services and resources currently being delivered by GC-funded programs and ministries
- c) Research on the impact on wider church life of educational institutions, and on how Adventist health principles could be most effectively used in outreach to communities
- d) Attempts to identify *needs* for different and/or new programs and *insights* for improving delivery of existing key programs

Secondary priorities:

- e) Consideration of the extent and significance of global variations in SDA mission and ministry
- f) Investigation of Adventists' beliefs, perceptions, and practices
- g) Analysis of the dynamics of denominational outreach

Methodologies:

Quantitative and qualitative approaches are both equally welcome, and though ASTR is especially interested in rigorous human-subject research, it is also willing to fund statistical analysis and literature reviews where these would help meet the GC research objectives.

Scope

Priority will be given to projects that take in several of the denomination's world divisions. Funding for research focused on just one division ought initially to be sought from that division. Studies in two or three divisions may be funded, if they address issues of global significance, but priority will be given to studies that cover at least four divisions and multiple continents.

Research partnerships with ASTR

ASTR recognizes that Adventist colleges and universities have a strong commitment to the core mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as well as faculty with special research expertise. ASTR therefore seeks to establish partnerships with denominational higher education institutions committed to research.

Who can apply for GC funding?

ASTR welcomes applications from all Seventh-day Adventist researchers — especially, though not only, faculty and postgraduate students in denominational colleges and universities — whose research has the potential to meet the GC's objectives. Research teams may include non-Adventists, but in that case the team must be based at an Adventist institution and led by a church-member; a rationale should also be supplied. ASTR encourages applications from interdisciplinary and inter-institutional research networks, as these are likely to produce findings that meet the GC's objectives.

How does one apply for GC funding?

Application is possible in two tracks:

- (1) By responding to RFP issued by ASTR. RFP will specify the subject, objectives, preferred time frame, desired research outcomes, and whether scholarly publication of data or findings will be permitted. Proposals in response should identify methodology, timeframe, stages and expected completion dates, and relevant experience and expertise; and should include a budget, timeline for payments, and associated Key Performance Indicators. Successful responses to RFP will receive funding that is typically, albeit not invariably, substantial.
- (2) Alternatively, at Adventist higher education institutions in partnership with ASTR, applications for internal institutional funding can include a request that they also be considered by ASTR for matching funding; in exceptional circumstances, if a compelling case is made, ASTR funding may exceed institutional funding. In either case, these are likely to be relatively small grants.

What happens if funding is granted?

Regardless of whether funding is granted via track 1 or track 2, a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed between the research team's parent institution and ASTR. Where scholarly publication of findings is permitted, any publications deriving from ASTR-funded research must be pre-submitted to ASTR and acknowledge the source of funding, unless ASTR stipulates otherwise.