

Levy Inspiration Grant Program

Funded by a generous gift from Larry and Carol Levy, the Levy Inspiration Grant Program allows students who want to be an entrepreneur the opportunity to immerse themselves in on-the-ground, in-market research. Rather than studying a problem from afar, we want you to experience it firsthand. As the name implies, the core tenets of this program are **inspiration**, **exploration**, and **immersion**. What you immerse yourself in and where you do it is completely up to you. With a Levy Inspiration Grant, we want you to **go see for yourself**.

About the Program

Program Goal

The goal of the Levy Inspiration Grant Program is to give entrepreneurial students the opportunity to study a problem firsthand rather than researching it from afar. Students may submit an application on nearly any subject or location of their choosing, but keep in mind that we are looking for students to tackle **big, gnarly issues** through their grant. In particular, the problem that you focus on in your application should be a **significant issue that affects a lot of people**. The “inspiration” part of the grant is about you getting inspired about a topic that you care about, but also working on an inspiring problem to create a business that could help change the world!

This program is intended for:

- Students looking to go deeper in a topic and/or problem they're **passionate** about with an eye towards **starting a business while at Kellogg** or towards a business that you've **already begun to explore**.
- Students applying with an **entrepreneurial focus**. For us, this means focusing on *"I'm going to learn so I can **do**"* rather than *"I'm going to learn so I can **know**."* This should be evident through your proposed itinerary and meetings, your questions and hypotheses, and your motivations and interest that you share in the application.

Funding and support

- Up to **\$5,000** for an individual or up to **\$7,500** for a pair, paid via reimbursement
- Allowable expenses include **economy airfare, hotel/accommodations, and ground transportation**. *Food and alcohol will not be reimbursed*. Any other types of expenses will be determined on a **case-by-case basis** based upon student's proposed activities and budget.

Process

Application and eligibility

- All **full-time and Evening & Weekend** Kellogg students are eligible to apply.
- If you are approved for an Inspiration Grant, your travel must take place within the **current or next quarter** from when you have applied.
- You may only receive **one** Inspiration Grant during your Kellogg career.
- All travel must be completed **before graduation**.
- Students who have already taken or are currently enrolled in **Entrepreneurship courses** at Kellogg will be more heavily weighted during the application review process.
- For paired applications, each student must submit unique responses to select questions as noted in the application form.
- For paired applications, we also expect you to share hotel rooms, which is a policy we hold across all Entrepreneurship at Kellogg programs. If you're traveling as a pair and would like to each have your own room, the second room would be at your own expense.

Application Deadlines:

In addition to the application form, students will also be asked to participate in a brief 20-minute interview during the application process.

For the 2024-2025 academic year, the application deadlines are as follows:

- For travel during November/December, the deadline to apply is **September 30**, interviews will take place by **October 11**, and decisions will be shared by **October 16**.
- For travel during March/Spring Break, the deadline to apply is **January 5**, interviews will take place by **January 17**, and decisions will be shared by **January 22**.
- For travel outside these parameters, the deadline to apply is **2 months** prior to your anticipated travel start date.

For students who apply well in advance of the deadline, interviews are likely to be scheduled earlier and decisions communicated in advance of the dates specified here.

Process

Post-approval timeline

Below is a tentative timeline for how the process will work if you are approved for an Inspiration Grant:

Before your trip

- **Meet with your faculty expert** to discuss your itinerary and refine your questions/assumptions.
- **Attend a networking lunch** with the other Inspiration Grant recipients who will be traveling on their own grants at the same time. This gives you an opportunity to connect with others who are going through the same experience!

After your trip

- **Participate in a “demo day” of presentations** with your fellow Inspiration Grant recipients where you’ll share your learnings and experiences.
- **Record a podcast episode** with our Entrepreneurship staff, where you’ll be able to share stories and debrief on your lessons learned and future plans with us.

Dates for the networking lunch and post-trip group presentations will be communicated at the time of application approval.

Deliverables

- **A summary slide deck** that details the lessons and learnings from your trip and helps prep for your interview.
- **An interview** about the experience, which helps you debrief and synthesize your learnings and may also be used for the Levy Inspiration Grant Program podcast. You can find all published episodes of the Levy Inspiration Grant Program podcast [here](#).
- **A presentation of your learnings** to the Kellogg community in a “demo day” style event, which will include other Inspiration Grant recipients presenting their learnings as well.
- **Photos and videos from the trip.** We’ll use these photos and videos as an archive of your trip and potentially for program marketing. The more photos and video you can provide, the better!

A few things to note...

Reimbursement Policy

- Receipts are due **within 30 days** of the conclusion of travel and will be submitted electronically through the online ENTR Reimbursement Portal.
- Reimbursement cannot occur until all deliverables have been provided. Additional reimbursement details will be provided upon application approval.

Travel Visas

For countries that require a travel visa, **it is the responsibility of the student applicant(s) to complete all visa requirements upon grant approval.** Our team is happy to provide an official grant letter if needed, but all other visa paperwork must be completed by the student in a timely manner. We recommend researching visa requirements before you apply for a grant, as they will vary and visa application timelines may take weeks to process. We also recommend checking the [U.S. DOS Travel Advisory](#) page to check the advisory level for your intended destination(s). Any countries with **Level 3 or 4** advisories should be reconsidered for Levy Inspiration Grant travel.

Additional Notes

- The program is not intended to prepare you for a role after Kellogg.
- The program is not intended to cover travel you will be undertaking anyway (such as travel for a planned exchange quarter), personal travel, or to provide a cultural immersion experience.
- The program is not intended to cover travel to conferences.
- The program is not intended to provide inspiration for a business with a tourism focus.
- The program is not intended to cover travel for something you're simply interested in learning more about without an intention of starting a business.
- The program is not intended to provide inspiration around starting a non-scalable, services business or pursuing an ETA search.

A few things to note...

A word about the difference between Levy Inspiration Grants and [Levy Spark Treks](#), deciding which is right for you, and the possibility of participating in more than one...

Both Spark Treks and Inspiration Grants are intended for students who want to be founders and are looking for inspiration beyond secondary/online research. A Spark Trek is a small group experience led by a faculty member around a particular topic in a particular location, and an Inspiration Grant is for you (with possibly one other person) to design an itinerary around nearly any topic in any location.

Due to the interest/demand for Spark Treks, once you participate in one, you will not be eligible for future treks. You should therefore carefully prioritize the trek that best supports your entrepreneurial journey when choosing to submit an application.

Additionally, if you are approved for an Inspiration Grant trip, it would be extremely unlikely that you would be invited to join a Spark Trek after that. Conversely, it would be rare, but possible, to be approved for an Inspiration Grant after having participated on a Spark Trek -- if continuation of your entrepreneurial explorations is evident, this will be considered.

Feel free to **reach out to the Entrepreneurship at Kellogg team** if you have questions about whether an Inspiration Grant or Spark Trek makes the most sense for you.

Check out the next few pages of this guide for sample itineraries from actual Inspiration Grant trips!

Sample Itinerary #1 - South America

Below is an example itinerary from a previous Inspiration Grant trip (individual names have been changed).

Location	Date	Proposed Activities
Santiago, Chile	6-Dec	1) 3 Restaurant Owner Visits (contacts in progress)
	7-Dec	2) Meet with Person A (Kellogg '14) - Director of Biz Development at Business A (chain of bakeries in Chile)
	8-Dec	3) Set up meeting with team at Pipol - restaurant tech startup (e.g., mobile payments)
	9-Dec	
Buenos Aires, Argentina	10-Dec	1) 3 Restaurant Owner Visits (contacts in progress)
	11-Dec	2) Meet with Person B (Kellogg '10) - entrepreneur in F&B space
	12-Dec	3) Meet with Person C (Kellogg alum) - comes from Coca-Cola, lead at Google, will have good insight into starting a business for restaurants in Argentina
	13-Dec	4) Set up meeting with team at Fudo - restaurant tech startup (e.g., online ordering for restaurants), Parra Payments - restaurant PoS, and Resermap (reservation platform)
	14-Dec	
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	18-Dec	1) 4 Restaurant Owner Visits (contacts in progress)
	19-Dec	
	20-Dec	2) Meet with Person D (NW '18), works at startup
	21-Dec	
Sao Paulo, Brazil	23-Dec	1) Meet with Rappi Sao Paulo team (contact in progress)
	24-Dec	2) 3 Restaurant Owner Visits (contacts in progress)
	25-Dec	3) Meet with Person E (startup founders) - will have good insight into startup space in Brazil
	26-Dec	4) Set up meeting with team at Zak - restaurant tech startup (e.g., PoS)

Sample Itinerary #2 - Australia

Below is an example itinerary from a previous Inspiration Grant trip (individual names have been changed).

Date	Start Location	End Location	Travel	Activities	Notes
4-Dec	Chicago	Flight	ORD-SYD	Fly to Sydney from school!	
5-Dec	Flight	Flight		In-flight (time change)	
6-Dec	Sydney	Sydney		Land in Sydney at ~9am Meet with Bain & Co Australia Sustainability Practice Head Meet with Ocean Impact Organization (startup accelerator)	
7-Dec	Sydney	Sydney		Meet with Planet Protector Packaging (startup) Meet with Hullbot (startup)	
8-Dec	Sydney	Sydney		Visit SEA Lift Sydney Aquarium; Meet with leadership / researchers there Meet with Samsara Eco (startup)	Activity expense = aquarium ticket Many aquariums around the world are also centers for conservation and education. Based on what I've gleaned from their website, this one seems to be no different. I'm hoping this will be a good time to learn more about the science, ecology, flora, and fauna. Maybe they'll even be showcasing some cutting edge ideas
9-Dec	Sydney	Sydney		Meet with various researchers at University of Sydney	
10-Dec	Sydney	Cairns	SYD-NCS	Fly to Cairns for weekend Potentially meet with researchers at James Cook University	
11-Dec	Cairns	Cairns		Day trip (maybe overnight) to Great Barrier Reef, ideally with environmentally / research focused organization	Activity expense = fee for typical tour I believe that it will be important to see the Great Barrier Reef (what am I hoping to protect? What damage can I see with my own eyes?) What I witness and learn may also give me credibility with the researchers and business leaders I meet during the trip
12-Dec	Cairns	Tasmania	NCS-HBA	Fly to Tasmania	
13-Dec	Tasmania	Tasmania		Meet with Sea Forest (startup) Meet with Wave Swell (startup)	
14-Dec	Tasmania	Melbourne	HBA-MEL	Fly to Melbourne	
15-Dec	Melbourne	Melbourne		Meet with Blue Carbon Lab at Deakin University Meet with Great Wrap. (startup)	
16-Dec	Melbourne	Melbourne		Meet with Slurry Tub (startup) Meet with other startups / leads from prior conversations	
17-Dec	Melbourne	Melbourne		Meet with other startups / leads from prior conversations	
18-Dec	Melbourne	Los Angeles	MEL-LAX	Fly home to LA for break!	

FAQs

What do you look for in an application? What makes an application stronger?

While this program offers a broad spectrum of freedom and options for students to apply with, here are a few things we look for across applications:

- Evidence of you **planning to be a founder**, both in what you've done to prepare while at Kellogg and your future entrepreneurial plans.
- An **entrepreneurial spirit** with specific plans regarding how you'll use your lessons learned to start a business as opposed to learning for the sake of learning. We call this "learning to **do**" rather than "learning to **know**."
- An **evident connection** between your area of focus, your destination(s), and your future plans. In other words, why this place to study this topic, and how will this help you start a business?
- A **robust itinerary** designed to challenge your assumptions and foster the inspiration you're looking for. The strongest applications also tend to have a variety of activities and/or plan to visit multiple cities or countries, with more than one visit or activity planned for each day. We encourage you to be ambitious!

Why do paired applicants need different answers for some application questions?

One of our main goals in reviewing applications is to try to learn why **you** want to pursue this project and, more broadly, an entrepreneurial path. When applying as a pair, there are some application answers that will naturally be the same, such as where you're going and what your hypotheses are. However, there are some questions, such as your entrepreneurial past experience, your future plans, and what makes you excited about pursuing this grant opportunity, that are **unique to you**. When students give combined or joint answers for these questions, it makes it harder for us to get to know you as individuals, and the best applications offer us compelling answers as to why students should be selected for a grant.

FAQs

Do you limit how many students can travel to specific countries or focus on a specific topic?

Our only official policy limits are that we do not allow travel for **conferences** or **tourism/travel-related topics** as the focus of an Inspiration Grant. Otherwise, students may submit an application with any other topic/focus or destination.

During high-volume application seasons like Winter Break and Spring Break, students will often submit applications that have the same topic, but a different point of view or a different country, and vice versa (same country, different topic). These are not inherently an issue, and depending on the strength of the applications, multiple students could be approved for the same topic or destination. However, if multiple students are submitting similar applications that travel to the same country for the same topic at the same time, it is unlikely that all of them will be selected.

What is the best way for me to get contacts in the industry or region I want to explore?

Generally, our team does not provide direct support with gaining contacts in your location or around your topic. First and foremost, we encourage you to do some research and find Kellogg alumni in your industry/location to reach out to. Kellogg's robust (and friendly!) alumni network should be an important piece of your outreach, as well as your own personal network. Over the years, nearly all of our grant recipients have noted that when you are a student and reach out to someone from a place of passion and wanting to learn, people tend to be very generous with their time and knowledge, even with cold contacts. Don't be afraid to put yourself out there and send that email, you'd be surprised how many people are willing to meet with current students looking to learn something!

Overall, part of the exercise of completing a Levy Inspiration Grant trip is to give you the freedom, but also the responsibility, of building your own itinerary and making your own contacts, just as you would if you were founding a business.

FAQs

What are the most common types of trips that students take?

The most common styles of trips that students take for an Inspiration Grant are:

Target market immersion

Students who are looking to build a business in a specific market (emerging markets being the most common example) will most often visit that country or countries on their trip to do things like customer discovery, ethnography, and other direct learning about that country's market dynamics. If you're planning to build a business in a specific place, we believe there is no better way to learn than by going there and seeing for yourself.

“Learning from the best” immersion

Students who plan to build a business in the U.S. or are otherwise looking to learn about the leading innovations and knowledge from experts may travel to a location that has the “best in class” knowledge of a certain topic. Most commonly, students will go to these places to learn how they operate differently (or better) in an effort to incorporate that knowledge into their future business plan. To be clear, these trips are not just for the sake of acquiring knowledge and require a clear connection as to how your learnings will further your entrepreneurial goals.