

WILLIAM & MARY

GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

GRI Seed Program

AY 2027-2028 Funding Cycle

Key Dates:

Application Opens:	September 14, 2026
Proposal Deadline:	November 1, 2026
Proposal Review:	Nov – Dec 2026
Finalist Interviews:	January 2027
Awards Announced:	February 2027
Project Onboarding:	March - April 2027
Project Start Date:	May 1, 2027

About the GRI Seed Program

The Global Research Institute's Seed program seeks proposals for early-stage faculty and staff-led research initiatives. Seed awards provide **significant institutional support along with \$20,000 over sixteen months** to help collaborative teams launch applied research programs.

Researchers selected for the Seed Program should expect to transform their research into a truly collaborative effort involving GRI's professional research support staff and external experts. They will participate in workshops and convenings and launch enduring partnerships with external funders and practitioners. ***Our approach is to combine staff support, startup funding, and external engagement to accelerate your research.***

We encourage proposals from across disciplines that explore and address complex challenges with impacts that reach beyond academia. While pilot research is not a prerequisite, Principal Investigators (PIs) should bring prior experience in the topical area and existing connections to communities or partners.

Does your work have the potential to make an impact beyond academia? If so, GRI's Seed program is your chance to draw on GRI's staff and networks to launch applied research while maintaining the academic excellence that defines your work.

What Makes GRI's Seed Program Distinctive

Seed projects receive a comprehensive support ecosystem in addition to funding.

Institutional Infrastructure:

- Strategic support from **GRI's Director of Research**
 - Structured check-ins and advising sessions
 - Guidance on external proposals
- Dedicated **Research Manager** assigned to your project
 - Support in partnership development and outreach
 - Assistance with external proposals
 - Project management
- Full **fiscal and administrative support** from the GRI operations team
 - Budget dashboards
 - Student hiring
 - Travel and logistics
 - Purchasing support
- **Communications expertise** for media engagement, policy briefs, and public impact
 - Coaching for public communications and engagements
 - Collaboration on op-eds, policy briefs, and other public-facing communications

Financial Investment:

- Up to \$20,000 over sixteen months (May 2027 - August 2028)
- Flexible funding for student researchers, equipment, data collection, travel, partnerships, and dissemination.
- Funding is not available for PI's direct salary support (e.g. summer salary)

Strategic Acceleration:

- Meet monthly with Research Manager; biannually with the Director of Research
- Integration into GRI's research community and networks
- Access to GRI's ecosystem of visiting experts, workshops, and professional development

Eligibility

Who Can Apply

- All William & Mary faculty and staff that have research as a component of their job descriptions are eligible. This opportunity is not open to post-doctoral researchers or adjunct faculty.
- Approval from Department Chair or Unit Director is required
- Applicants from any school, department, or discipline are welcome
- ***Multi-PI applications from different units or departments are encouraged***

Project Requirements

To be eligible for Seed Funding, projects must:

1. Address a significant, real-world problem with clear potential for meaningful impact
2. Show an ambitious trajectory/plan for external funding with identified prospects
3. Propose research, pilot fieldwork, and partnership building feasible within the program timeline
4. Commit to meaningful engagement with students as research partners throughout the project
5. Agree to required program activities, including milestone reviews, grant submissions, and GRI community participation

Eligible Expenses

- **Student researchers:** Undergraduate and graduate research assistants
- **Data collection:** Surveys, interviews, experiments, administrative data access
- **Research materials:** Equipment, software, lab supplies, fieldwork costs
- **Partnership development:** Partner capacity building, convenings, collaborative workshops
- **Travel:** Research fieldwork, partnership development, conference dissemination
- **Dissemination:** Publications, policy briefs, stakeholder workshops, media engagement
- **Professional services:** Statistical consulting, qualitative analysis support, specialized expertise

Program Expectations and Policies

Required Activities & Deliverables

If selected for the Seed Program, you will be expected to engage in the following activities:

- **Grant Submissions:** Submit **at least one significant external grant proposal** during the program.
- **Student Engagement:** Meaningfully engage undergraduate and/or graduate students throughout the project as research partners. More than just data collectors, students should be invited to co-author papers or present findings to stakeholders or at conferences, for example. They should be directly involved in research design and execution.
- **Progress Reporting:** Submit a report at the end of the program; participate in biannual check-ins with the GRI Director of Research; and present at GRI Research in Progress (RIP) seminars (or similar venues) during the program.
- **Community Participation:** Engage actively in GRI's research community, including participating in GRI workshops, seminars, public lectures, book talks, and peer learning opportunities, acting as a mentor to other GRI researchers when appropriate, and contributing to GRI's ecosystem-building activities.
- **Dissemination:** Produce both scholarly outputs (publications, presentations) and applied outputs (policy briefs, practitioner guides); engage with media to communicate research impact; and share research tools, methods, and insights with the GRI community.
- **Partnership Management:** Maintain active, equitable partnerships throughout the project; ensure partners are engaged in research interpretation and dissemination; and document partnership practices and lessons learned. Engage with GRI's network of external partners and subject matter experts.

Data Sharing and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use

This policy governs how GRI handles project information submitted through its research programs. It does not alter ownership of intellectual property, which remains subject to W&M Policy.

Information Categories

- **Public Summary.** Project title, a public-facing abstract provided by the PI at application, names of researchers, and names of collaborating organizations. Includes “one-pagers” or other briefs and dissemination documents that the PIs prepare for external audiences.
- **Full Proposal:** The complete application, including narrative, methods, and workplan.
- **Restricted.** Budgets, datasets, IRB-covered material, student records, unpublished findings, and any material the PI designates as restricted at onboarding.

Consent granted by application

Submitting a proposal constitutes the PI's consent that ***GRI may share Public Summary information with internal and external partners.***

Full Proposal information may be shared within W&M with university leadership and the Office of Corporate and Foundation Relations, and with review panels. Where a review panel includes reviewers external to W&M, those reviewers are bound by confidentiality and conflict-of-interest agreements executed before materials are released.

Restricted information is never shared outside of GRI without the PI's specific, written permission for each instance.

Outreach on behalf of funded projects

For funded projects, GRI staff conduct outreach to potential partners, funders, collaborators, and media on the PI's behalf. This outreach uses Public Summary information. Sharing Full Proposal information in outreach requires the PI's permission, either through a standing authorization elected at onboarding or through a specific request at the time.

Use of AI tools

GRI uses artificial intelligence tools in accordance with W&M's [GenAI Guidelines for Use](#), and only tools approved under those guidelines. Applications include identifying prospective external funding sources and matching projects to policymakers, journalists, or other potential partners covering relevant issues. These uses extend the reach of a small team working across unfamiliar disciplines. GRI staff may enter Public Summary information into W&M approved tools. Entering Full Proposal information requires the PI's standing or specific authorization, given during program onboarding. This permission may be modified or withdrawn at any time by written notice to GRI. Restricted information is never entered into any AI tool.

Application Components

1. **Abstract (max 250 words).** Public facing that can be used for external audiences.
2. **Proposal** (maximum 2,500 words not inclusive of abstract or references) The proposal should be written in language accessible to researchers and practitioners outside of the PI's field of study with minimal jargon. See **Appendix A: Proposal Criteria** for detailed instructions. ***We suggest using the four criteria as headings to organize your document.***
3. **PI/Co-PI CVs** that focus on relevant experience, funding, and outputs, including evidence of prior research impact and student mentorship.
4. **Budget Narrative** detailing how you plan to spend the Seed funding. Include rough allocations across major categories. See **Appendix B: Budget Narrative** for detailed instructions.
5. **Letter(s) of Collaboration** (Optional but strongly encouraged) from any external partner organizations describing partner's role, commitment, and alignment with research goals.
6. **Signature from Department Chair or Unit Director** (see template on GRI's website)

Proposal Review

Proposals will undergo a multi-stage review process to assess intellectual merit, impact potential and funding landscape. All applicants will receive feedback consistent with the stage of evaluation.

1. All applications undergo initial screening to ensure that the project meets the basic program requirements. Projects that do not advance will be notified in **mid-November**.
2. Competitive projects advance to a full proposal review by a panel of W&M Faculty. W&M Corporate and Foundation Relations (CFR) will simultaneously conduct a funding landscape analysis to identify the potential available federal, corporate and foundation funding a project would be competitive for.
3. Projects recommended by the review panel will advance to a finalist interview in **mid-January**. Those that do not advance will receive feedback from the review panel and CFR.

Appendix A: Proposal Criteria

Criteria	Weight
Potential Impact	30%

Guiding Questions:

- What is the problem/issue you're addressing?
- Why is now the right time to work on this problem?
- How will your research lead to meaningful improvements in people's lives, ecosystems, policy, or practice?
- How will insights from your research reach practitioners, policymakers, or affected communities? How will you facilitate translation and uptake or measure impact?
- Who are your external partners (implementers, funders, etc) and how did these partnerships develop? How deep are existing ties?

External Funding Trajectory	25%
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Guiding Questions:

- What does the funding landscape look like for this research area?
- What specific grant programs will you target and what is the timeline for each submission?
- How will the Seed program strengthen your position or make external funding more likely?
- What is your track record of external funding?

Research Excellence and Innovation	20%
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Guiding Questions:

- What are your core research questions and methods? What makes this research innovative or novel?
- What are some key milestones and deliverables during the 16-month period?
- What prior work has demonstrated feasibility, and what have you learned from earlier phases?

Team Composition & Collaboration	25%
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Guiding Questions:

- What relevant expertise and track record does each PI bring and how do your skills complement each other?
- Why is yours the right team to address this issue? How is W&M uniquely positioned to do so?
- How will students be involved as research partners? What is your track record of mentoring student researchers?
- How will you draw on GRI's research support services?

Appendix B: Budget Narrative

Provide a brief description (250 words or less) of major budget items, such as:

- **Student researchers:** Number of students
- **Materials/equipment:** Specify what you need and why
- **Data collection:** Survey platforms, participant incentives, data access fees, etc.
- **Travel:** Research sites, partnership development, conferences for dissemination
- **Partnership costs:** Partner honoraria, convening costs, capacity-building support

Dollar amounts are not necessary at the proposal stage. PIs selected for Seed support will draft full budgets during onboarding.