

WILLIAM & MARY

GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

GRI Accelerate Program

AY 2027-2030 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:	July 1, 2027

About the GRI Accelerate Program

The Global Research Institute's Accelerate program represents GRI's most significant investment in faculty and staff-led research initiatives. Accelerate awards provide ***significant institutional support along with up to \$300,000 over three years*** (July 2027 – June 2030) to cultivate research projects with exceptional potential for sustained, real-world impact.

Accelerate Funding is an invitation to transform an existing project into a sustainable research enterprise. This program is designed for faculty and staff whose research has demonstrated proof-of-concept, or preliminary research results, addressing complex challenges with impacts that reach beyond academia. ***Accelerate provides not just funding, but a launchpad: the infrastructure, partnerships, and staff support needed to turn rigorous scholarship into action.***

GRI does not expect researchers to do this alone; a defining feature of the Accelerate program is the significant investment of dedicated staff time, with GRI staff working alongside project teams to anticipate challenges, adapt strategies, and support success over time. Does your work have the potential to make a major impact beyond academia? If so, Accelerate Funding is your chance to build something bigger, bolder, and enduring, while maintaining the academic excellence that defines your work.

What Makes GRI's Accelerate Program Distinctive

Accelerate 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 and partnerships
- Dedicated **Senior Research Manager** assigned to your project
 - Support in partnership development and outreach, including connections with GRI's Impact Fellows and other external experts
 - Assistance with external proposals
 - Project management
- Full **fiscal and administrative support** from the GRI operations team
 - Budget dashboards
 - Purchasing support
 - Hiring students and full-time staff
- **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
 - Connections to outlets and experts who can share your research with broader audiences

Financial Investment:

- Up to \$300,000 over a maximum of three years for research activities
- Funding is flexible for course buyouts, student teams, equipment, data collection, travel, partnerships, and dissemination.
- Funding is not available for direct salary support (e.g. summer salary)

Strategic Acceleration:

- Weekly meeting with your Senior Research Manager, with monthly check-ins with the GRI Director of Research
- Annual milestone reviews with performance-based continuation decisions
- Integration into GRI's research community and external 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 strongly encouraged*** for the Accelerate Program. It is very difficult for a single PI to develop a scalable and sustainable research enterprise.

Project Requirements

To be eligible for Accelerate Funding, projects must:

1. **Address a significant real-world problem** with clear potential for meaningful impact
2. **Demonstrate proof-of-concept or preliminary research results**
3. **Show an ambitious trajectory/plan** for external funding with identified prospects
4. **Propose research activities and scaling pathways** feasible within three years
5. **Commit to meaningful engagement with students** as research partners throughout the project
6. **Agree to required program activities**, including annual milestone reviews, grant submissions, and GRI community participation with internal and external stakeholders

Eligible Expenses

- **Faculty time:** Course buyouts.
 - Note: Funding cannot be used for direct salary support (e.g. summer salary).
- **Research team salaries:** Postdocs, project managers, research coordinators, data analysts
- **Student researchers:** Undergraduate and graduate research assistants
- **Data collection:** Surveys, interviews, experiments, and 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
- Other costs can be considered upon consultation with GRI

Program Expectations and Policies

Required Activities & Deliverables

If your project is selected for Accelerate support, you will be expected to engage in the following activities. Continued funding is contingent on adherence to these expectations.

- **Grant Submissions:** Submit **at least 5 significant external grant proposals** over three years (at least 1 in Y1, and at least 2 in Y2 and 2 in Y3).
- **Student Engagement:** Meaningfully engage undergraduate and/or graduate students throughout the project as research partners. More than just data collectors, are students invited to co-author papers, for example, or present findings to stakeholders at conferences? Are they empowered to collaborate with PIs on the research agenda?
- **Progress Reporting:** Participate in monthly check-ins with the GRI Director of Research and six-month and annual milestone reviews; and present at GRI Research in Progress (RIP) seminars (or similar venues) annually.
- **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 research 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 raise the profile of your research; and share research tools, methods, and insights with the GRI community.
- **Partnership Engagement:** Maintain active external partnerships throughout the project; ensure partners are engaged in research interpretation and dissemination where applicable; and document partnership practices and lessons learned.

Annual Milestone Reviews

Accelerate funding is contingent on annual performance reviews:

Year 1 Review (July 2028):

- Progress toward research milestones as agreed with the GRI Director of Research at the outset of the year

- Partnership development and management
- Student engagement and mentorship
- Grant submissions and funding pipeline
- Decision: Continue to Year 2 or transition out

Year 2 Review (July 2029):

- Quantity and quality of research outputs
- Progress toward growth and impact goals
- External funding success and pipeline
- Partnership strength and student outcomes
- Decision: Continue to Year 3 or transition out

End of Year 3 (June 2030):

- Final project report and outcomes assessment
- Transition planning to Tier 4: Sustain, to include the future home for the project/lab/center
- External funding secured and sustainability plan

What Happens if Milestones Are Not Met:

- Projects that do not meet agreed-upon benchmarks may have funding reduced or discontinued, after consultation with GRI leadership and the Vice Provost for Research
- GRI leadership and staff will work with research teams to address challenges and adjust plans when appropriate

Sustainability Support

Projects that complete the Accelerate program may transition to **Tier 4: Sustain**, which provides:

- Continued communications and partnership facilitation
- Administrative transition support to the departmental home or other unit at W&M
- Ongoing grant development and strategic coaching
- Connection to GRI networks and community

The goal is for projects to become financially sustainable through external funding while maintaining strong academic and real-world impact and GRI connections.

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 may 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 funding. Include rough allocations across major categories. See **Appendix B: Budget Narrative** for detailed instructions.
5. **List of Current & Pending Awards** relevant to this proposal, annotated to include funder, award amount, duration and a brief abstract of award purpose
6. **Letter(s) of Collaboration** (Optional but strongly encouraged) from any external partner organizations describing partner's role, commitment, and alignment with research goals.
7. **Signature from Department Chair or Unit Director** (see template in application portal)

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, Leadership and External Reviewers. 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	35%
Guiding Questions: • What does the funding landscape look like for this research area? • What are your total goals for receiving external funding during the 3-year project timeline? • What specific grant programs will you target and what is the timeline for each submission? • How will the Accelerate program strengthen your position or make external funding more likely? • What is your track record of external funding?	
Research Excellence and Innovation	20%
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 three-year period? • What prior work has demonstrated feasibility, and what have you learned from earlier phases?	
Team Composition & Collaboration	15%
Guiding Questions: • What relevant expertise and track record does each PI bring, especially regarding major grants? • 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 Justification Template

Provide a sketch of your budget (500 words or less) of major budget items, such as:

- **Student researchers:** Number of students
- **Research staff:** program managers, post-doctoral researchers, etc.
- **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
- **Faculty time:** course buyouts are eligible, **summer salary is not**

Please use the following template to budget for expenses in the first year of the Accelerate program:

Budget Category	FY28	Justification
Student Researchers		
Research Materials/Equipment		
Data Collection Costs		
Travel		
Partnership Development		
Other (specify)		
TOTAL		