

WILLIAM & MARY
GLOBAL RESEARCH
INSTITUTE

General GRI Research Pathways FAQs

Q: How “global” is “global”? My research focuses on US issues or topics without a geography—should I still apply?

A: Yes! While we are still called the Global Research Institute, lots of ideas can have a global impact without being explicitly focused internationally. Our current staff have a comparative advantage and partner networks that tend toward comparative/international work. But we are open-minded. Bring your research idea, and we’ll help try to amplify its impact.

Q: Is it a requirement that my research be multidisciplinary? I think my work would be a good fit for one of these grants, but I’m not working outside my department or discipline.

A: Although GRI’s broader research portfolio is multidisciplinary, individual projects can be anchored in just one discipline. If you have a great proposal and you don’t need anyone from outside your field to solve it via research (and your program is potentially sustainable), we want you to consider one of our research pathways. If at some point you find that collaborating with an environmental scientist or psychologist would augment your work, great—we’ll help connect you to the perfect collaborator—but having a multidisciplinary project is not a requirement to apply for one of GRI’s grants.

Q: Do I have to bring a totally new research idea that I’m building from scratch, or can I apply with research-in-progress?

A: Both—and where you are in the research lifecycle will determine which pathway is the best fit. Have an idea you’d like to explore in a collaborative group? Consider a Pathfinder Group. Have a research question and looking to launch a pilot study to seek external funding? Apply for Seed Funding. Do you have a track record with an existing research project or lab and want help to expand the program and grow your reach? Make it sustainable with Accelerate funding.

Q: Is this funding for labs, projects, or individuals? There are different research frameworks in every discipline, and I’m not sure my work is the right fit.

A: GRI is a big tent: We want physicists and sociologists and comparative government professors and historians and marine biologists, and anyone else who has an idea that might impact the world. Different disciplines have different research methods, and it’s our goal to be accessible to as many as possible. If you have a specific question about whether your research

WILLIAM & MARY

GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

is a good fit for this funding, contact David Trichler (dmtrichler@wm.edu). That said, these programs are designed to foster collaborative research, so come with an openness to working with students and other researchers..

Q: My research currently involves grad students, but I don't see a place for undergraduates on my project—should I still apply?

A: From its founding, GRI has prioritized undergraduate research as a core pillar of its mission. That's not changing in this new era: We want undergraduates to be true collaborators with grad students and researchers and learn crucial skills, build connections, and direct research. You'll find that undergraduate involvement is a requirement for applications to all GRI grants. However, we expect to do more to support graduate students in this next chapter of GRI.

Q: I understand meaningful engagement with students is a requirement, but what counts as "meaningful engagement"?

A: This can look different from project to project or lab to lab, but a few ways it might look are: empowering students to help direct the research agenda; including students in the process of designing survey protocols or coding schemes; co-authoring papers, op-eds, or blog posts with student researchers; providing opportunities to present to stakeholders and at conferences; and/or serving as a mentor connecting them to other professional or academic opportunities.

Q: Several applications reference "external partners." What's meant by that?

A: Partners come in at least three types: funding partners, research partners, and dissemination partners. For some GRI programs, including Accelerate Funding, you'll need to bring established funding partners at the time you are applying. However, it is often also valuable to have research or dissemination partners. Research partners could be government agencies, non-profits, corporations, or other universities that help to co-design the research, use the knowledge produced by research in their work, or help to implement the research. Dissemination partners are media companies, journalists, or convening organizations that help you get your research findings to audiences that can use them, fund future research, or raise the profile of your research or W&M in general. If dissemination is successful, it can be self-reinforcing and can make your research more sustainable.

Q: What are the possibilities for external funding? It seems traditional sources for research funding are drying up.

WILLIAM & MARY

GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

A: We are entering a moment when traditional sources of funding have been reduced, and they may be reduced further. For this reason, W&M and GRI are working to diversify funding streams and support applied research. Your project may be suitable for traditional funding via federal grants, but it may also require other sources of funding. Whether your business model includes traditional grants, government contracts, corporate contracts, corporate philanthropy, private foundation funding, earned revenue via services, monetizing IP, or licensing data, GRI staff will work with you and with relevant W&M offices to secure long-term funding for your work. One size likely does not fit all. However, GRI is unlikely to support research efforts that rely exclusively on internal funding from W&M.

Pathfinder Groups FAQs

Q: Can I participate in multiple GRI programs simultaneously?

A: Yes! You might be in a Pathfinder Group while also having Seed Funding or applying for Accelerate Funding. We just ask that you be realistic about your capacity and commitments.

Q: What if my cohort doesn't produce a proposal for Accelerate Funding or major grant?

A: That's okay! Pathfinder Groups are exploratory. Success might be concept papers, new collaborations, externally-focused LOIs, or refined research directions. Not every cohort will (or should) lead immediately to major grant proposals. But we have designed supports and incentives to encourage this as one of several positive outcomes.

Q: Can I apply to lead a cohort if I've never done anything like this before?

A: Yes! We value both experienced facilitators and researchers trying this for the first time. What matters is your commitment to collaborative research and student mentorship. GRI will provide staff support and guidance to ease the workload for busy researchers.

Q: Can graduate students be cohort facilitators?

A: No. Cohort facilitators must be faculty and staff. However, graduate students will be valuable cohort members and should apply once the cohorts have been selected.

Q: Are stipends taxable?

A: Yes. Stipends are considered taxable income and will be reported to the IRS. Consult with W&M HR or your tax advisor if you have questions.

Q: What if my cohort dynamics aren't working well?

WILLIAM & MARY

GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

A: GRI's Senior Research Manager and Director of Research are here to help. We can provide facilitation coaching, mediate conflicts, or make adjustments as needed. Good group dynamics are essential, and we're invested in helping cohorts succeed.

Q: What if we have an established cohort working on a particular theme and then half way through the year we discover 1 or 2 other researchers at W&M who are interested in the same theme/topic? Can they join us mid-year?

A: Yes. If you are doing interesting work and others would like to join your group or explore research collaboration, your cohort can decide to open some or all of your meetings to others on campus. GRI needs to make budgetary decisions in the spring for the following year, so we cannot guarantee stipends for other researchers you'd like to add later in the process, but GRI is happy to support the expansion of your group by providing staff support for a larger group.

Seed Funding FAQs

Q: Can I apply if I'm already PI on other grants?

A: Yes! Seed funding is intended to support new research directions or pilot studies that complement your existing work.

Q: Can I submit more than one application?

A: Faculty and staff may submit only one application for seed funding as a PI per funding cycle. You may be listed as Co-PI on additional applications.

Q: Can graduate students be PIs?

A: No. PIs must be W&M faculty or staff. However, graduate students can be integral research team members.

Q: What about projects that are purely domestic (US-focused)?

A: GRI welcomes projects addressing domestic social, policy, technological, or environmental problems that align with the Institute's mission of applied, impact-driven research. While many GRI projects have international dimensions, domestic projects are eligible if they address significant challenges that may touch on issues also found around the world. We are interested in supporting high-quality, fundable research that will have an impact within and beyond the university.

Q: Can I use seed funding to support my own salary?

WILLIAM & MARY

GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

A: No. Course buyouts are permissible and require strong justification, based on the budget constraints.

Q: What if my project requires IRB approval?

A: You should note IRB requirements in your application. IRB approval is not required at the application stage, but it will be required before research activities begin. Build an IRB timeline into your project plan.

Q: When will funds be available?

A: Funds will be available starting July 1, 2026. Limited pre-award spending may be permitted in spring 2026 for essential preparations (e.g., IRB applications, partnership development) with GRI approval.

Q: What happens if I don't submit an external grant during the pilot period?

A: External grant submission is an expectation of seed funding. If circumstances change that affect your ability to submit, discuss with GRI leadership as early as possible. Failure to make reasonable efforts to submit high-quality funding proposals without justification will affect future eligibility for GRI programming.

Accelerate Funding FAQs

Q: Do I need to have participated in other GRI's programs to apply for Accelerate Funding?

A: No. Accelerate Funding is open to all W&M faculty/staff based on merit. However, researchers who have participated in Pathfinder Groups or received Seed Funding may be well-positioned to compete for Accelerate Funding if they've developed strong partnerships and preliminary results.

Q: Is preliminary data or pilot work required?

A: Not absolutely required, but strongly encouraged. Experience has shown that projects with proof-of-concept are most likely to succeed in acceleration investments. If you don't have pilot data and a track record, you will need to make a compelling case for why your project is ready for acceleration.

Q: What if I don't have an external funder yet?

WILLIAM & MARY

GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

A: Some level of prior or existing external funding for your project is required for Accelerate Funding applications. If you're still developing partnerships, consider applying for GRI's Seed Funding first to support partnership development and pilot work.

Q: Can I apply if I already have significant external funding or am basing it on an existing project or lab?

A: Yes! Accelerate Funding can expand current work or support new directions. Moving your current research lab from a single PI model to a model that includes an integrated research team with external funding to support staff positions, postdocs, graduate students, etc... is the type of research operation that can have a larger impact within and beyond the university.

Q: How many external grant proposals do I really need to submit?

A: At least 5 over 3 years. This is a hard requirement. Roughly: 1 in Year one, 2 in Year two, 2 in Year three. This demonstrates commitment to sustainability and helps us justify W&M's investment. The purpose of the initial investment is to expand and sustain applied research. You can't do that without substantial external support.

Q: What if my external grant submissions aren't successful?

A: Not every submission results in funding. What matters is that you're actively pursuing external funding with strong proposals. GRI will provide grant development support to strengthen your competitiveness and will connect you with partners and potential philanthropic funders. However, if you're not submitting multiple proposals, that's grounds for funding discontinuation.

Q: What happens at annual milestone reviews?

A: You'll present progress against agreed-upon benchmarks to GRI leadership and potentially external reviewers. We assess whether you're on track and whether continued investment is warranted. Projects not meeting milestones may have funding reduced or discontinued.

Q: Can graduate students be PIs?

A: No. PIs must be W&M faculty or staff. However, graduate students can be integral research team members.

Q: How much can I budget for my own salary?

A: This funding can be used for course buy-outs, with approval from your Department Chair; however, it cannot be used for direct salary support (e.g. summer salary). Direct salary support should come from external grants, contracts, or gifts designed for that purpose.

WILLIAM & MARY

GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Q: Can I submit an application for Accelerate funding if I'm planning to submit an external grant before Accelerate funding would begin?

A: Yes! Pending external proposals don't disqualify you. They enhance your application. However, you should explain how Accelerate funding fits with that potential funding.