William & Mary
GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

GRI Seed Funding Application

AY 2026-2027 Funding Cycle

Applications Open: January 15, 2026
Application Deadline: February 15, 2026, at 11:59 PM ET
Decisions Announced: March 2026
Preliminary Kickoff: April/May 2026
Official Project Start: July 1, 2026

About GRI Seed Funding

The Global Research Institute (GRI) at William & Mary provides seed funding to support faculty/staff-led research pilots that address significant global challenges through rigorous, partnership-driven research. Seed funding awards of up to $20,000 to support pilot projects that generate preliminary data, test innovative methodologies, and build the foundation for larger external grants.

GRI's seed funding is part of the Institute's Tier 2: Explore programming, designed to help William & Mary researchers develop research projects with strong potential for real-world impact and external funding. This funding opportunity is open to all W&M faculty members and staff across disciplines who seek larger and more sustained funding from external sources.

What Makes GRI's Seed Funding Distinctive

GRI seed funding reflects the Institute's commitment to research that bridges academic excellence with impact beyond the ivory tower. We prioritize projects that:

- **Address real-world problems** through partnership with practitioners, organizations, or communities outside academia
- **Build toward external funding** with clear pathways to federal grants, foundation support, corporate contracts, or philanthropic resources
- **Generate actionable insights** that can inform policy, practice, or future research

- **Engage students as research partners** in meaningful applied learning experiences, to include, for example, co-authorship, collaboration on the research agenda, opportunities to present to stakeholders/at conferences

Past experience in research incubation has demonstrated that projects with strong external partnerships—whether that be funders, implementing and community partners, or research disseminators—are significantly more likely to achieve meaningful impact and secure sustained funding. For this reason, we strongly encourage applicants to develop collaborative relationships with partners outside academia as part of their seed funding proposals.

Expectations for Funded Projects

Required Activities

Funded projects must adhere to requirements in the following categories for continuation of funding and/or eligibility for future funding:

1. **Student Engagement:** Meaningfully engage students as research partners throughout the project
2. **External Grant Submission:** Submit at least one external grant proposal or Letter of Inquiry during the award period
3. **Progress Reporting:** Quarterly formal progress check-in with GRI's Director of Research with regular contact with GRI's Senior Research Manager
4. **Dissemination:** Present findings at GRI Research in Progress (RIP) seminar and other appropriate venues on and off campus
5. **Community Participation:** Engage with GRI's broader research community through events, workshops, or peer learning opportunities
6. **Final Report:** Submit a final report summarizing outcomes, outputs, and next steps for external funding

GRI Support

In addition to funding, seed-funded projects will receive:

- Strategic support from GRI's Director of Research
- Grant development coaching and proposal review
- Connections to potential partners and collaborators
- Access to GRI skills-building workshops and training

- Communications support for dissemination of research findings and publications
- Introduction to GRI's research community and networks

Funding Details

Award Amount

Individual applications of up to $20,000.

Eligible Expenses

Seed funding can support:

- Student research assistants
- Research materials, equipment, or software
- Data collection costs (surveys, interviews, data access fees)
- Travel for research activities or partnership development
- Workshop or convening costs
- Honoraria for external experts or partners
- Publication or dissemination costs

Seed funding is not eligible for:

- Faculty/staff summer research stipends or other salary support

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Eligibility

Who Can Apply

- All William & Mary faculty and staff are eligible. This opportunity is not open to postdoctoral fellows.
- Applicants from any school, department, or discipline are welcome
- **Collaborative applications** with multiple PIs are encouraged when there is clear rationale for collaboration

Project Requirements

To be eligible, projects must:

- Demonstrate commitment to **student engagement** as research collaborators
- Identify **specific external funding opportunities** the pilot will enable
- Include plan for **external partnerships to implement/expand the research**
- Propose activities feasible within time frame and up to $20,000 budget

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Application Requirements

Application Components

1. Application Form

- Basic project information
- PI and co-PI information
- Partner organization(s) information (optional but encouraged)

2. **Project Proposal** (maximum 3 pages, single-spaced, 11pt font minimum)

- Must address all four review criteria (see below)
- References/citations do not count toward page limit

3. **Budget & Budget Justification** (1-page maximum)

- Budget summary
- Brief justification for major expenses

4. PI/Co-PI CVs

- Focus on relevant research experience and expertise

5. **Letter of Collaboration** (1 page maximum, optional but strongly encouraged)

- From external partner organization
- Describes partner's role, commitment, and alignment with research goals
- Not required at the application stage but strongly enhances competitiveness

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Project Proposal Instructions

Your 3-page proposal should address the four review criteria below. You may organize your narrative as you see fit, but ensure all the primary criteria are addressed. Use clear section headings to improve readability.

Criteria	Weight	Description	Potential Guiding Questions
Real World Impact Potential	30%	Describe the problem you aim to address and the potential impact of your research.	What is the problem and why is it significant? Who is affected and how? What is your theory of change? How will your research lead to meaningful improvements in people's lives, policy, or practice? What gap in knowledge or practice will your pilot study address? What pathways exist for your research insights to be translated into action? What evidence do you have that practitioners, policymakers, or communities need the data or knowledge produced by your research?
External Funding Pathway	40%	Describe your strategy for securing external funding to sustain and scale this research.	What specific grant programs, foundations, or funding opportunities will you target and how are they aligned with your work? What is your timeline for external grant submission? (e.g., "NSF XYZ program, LOI due March 2027") How will the pilot data/findings strengthen your competitive position for external funding? What is the funding landscape for this research area? Have you had preliminary conversations with program officers or external funders or with staff at W&M's Corporate and Foundation Relations Office?
Research Excellence and Innovation	20%	Describe your research design, methods, and intellectual contribution.	What are your research questions or hypotheses? What methods will you use? Why are they appropriate for this pilot? Do you have preliminary data or pilot results? (encouraged but not required)

			What are the expected outputs? (preliminary data, validated instruments, proof-of-concept, etc.)
			How does this research advance knowledge in your field?
			What makes your approach innovative or novel? What are the key risks or challenges, and how will you address them?
Partnership Strength and Team Capacity	10%	Describe how you will integrate students in your work and how you will work with external partners.	How will students be involved as research partners, and how many students at what level do you anticipate engaging? What is your track record of mentoring student researchers?
			Who are your external partners (be they practitioners, organizations, or implicated communities) and what role will they play in research design and/or interpreting findings? What is the origin of this partnership and what is their capacity and commitment to engage in this work?
			What expertise does your team bring and if you are part of a multi-PI project, how do your skills complement each other?

Budget Guidance

Provide a sketch of your budget (a template can be found in the appendix of this document). Please note that while $20,000 is the maximum any project could be awarded, a project can be proposed at any amount below that. If you have access to other funding, this will not negatively impact your application, but you should make clear other funding you have secured and/or that you are applying for.

Budget Justification (1 page maximum)

Provide brief justification for 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

Budget Guidelines

- Be realistic about what can be accomplished with your total budget
- Clearly show how funding will support student engagement
- Include costs for external partnership development if applicable
- All expenses must comply with W&M financial policies

APPENDIX

A) Selection Criteria

Reviewers will evaluate proposals holistically using the four criteria below. We expect that proposals will be stronger in some areas than others. The most competitive proposals demonstrate strong alignment across all criteria and show how the criteria mutually reinforce each other.

1. Real-World Impact Potential (30%)

Excellent (9-10 points):

- Addresses highly significant problem with clear scope and affected populations
- Compelling theory of change with well-articulated pathways to impact
- Strong evidence of demand from practitioners/policymakers/communities
- Realistic plan for translating insights into policy or practice change

Good (7-8 points):

- Addresses important problem with clear definition
- Reasonable theory of change with identified impact pathways
- Some evidence of practitioner/community interest
- General plan for research translation

Adequate (5-6 points):

- Addresses relevant problem but significance not fully established
- Theory of change present but impact pathways unclear
- Limited evidence of demand for research
- Vague plans for translation or application

Needs Development (1-4 points):

- Problem significance unclear or not compelling
- Weak or absent theory of change
- No evidence of demand or need for research
- No clear pathway from research to impact

2. External Funding Pathway (40%)

Excellent (9-10 points):

- Specific grant programs identified with clear strategic fit
- Realistic timeline for submission with evidence of preparation
- Strong justification for how pilot will strengthen competitiveness
- Evidence of preliminary funder conversations or knowledge of landscape

Good (7-8 points):

- Several potential funders identified with reasonable fit
- Timeline for submission provided
- Clear connection between pilot and future proposals
- General knowledge of funding landscape

Adequate (5-6 points):

- Some potential funders mentioned but fit unclear
- Vague timeline for external funding pursuit
- Weak connection between pilot and fundability
- Limited knowledge of funding landscape

Needs Development (1-4 points):

- No specific funders identified or unrealistic targets
- No timeline provided
- Unclear how pilot enables external funding
- Appears to lack understanding of funding landscape

3. Research Quality & Innovation (20%)

Excellent (9-10 points):

- Clear, important research questions with novel approach
- Rigorous, appropriate methods well-suited to pilot study
- Innovative methodology or theoretical framework
- Strong potential for scientific contribution to field
- Realistic about challenges with mitigation strategies

Good (7-8 points):

- Sound research questions and appropriate methods
- Competent research design suitable for pilot
- Solid contribution to existing literature
- Aware of potential challenges

Adequate (5-6 points):

- Reasonable research questions but methods underdeveloped
- Research design needs refinement
- Incremental contribution to field
- Limited attention to challenges or risks

Needs Development (1-4 points):

- Unclear research questions or inappropriate methods
- Weak research design or infeasible for scope
- Limited scientific contribution
- Major methodological concerns unaddressed

4. Team & Partnership Strategy (10%)

Excellent (9-10 points):

- Students: Clear plan for meaningful student partnership with strong learning outcomes; track record of student mentorship
- External Partners: Strong partnership with defined roles, mutual benefit, and partner commitment demonstrated; equitable approach to collaboration
- Team: Exceptional relevant expertise; if multi-PI, strong complementarity and clear roles

Good (7-8 points):

- Students: Good student engagement plan with learning opportunities; some mentorship experience
- External Partners: Partnership identified with reasonable roles; partner interest evident
- Team: Strong relevant expertise; good team composition

Adequate (5-6 points):

- Students: Adequate student engagement plan but unclear learning outcomes
- External Partners: Partner mentioned but role/commitment unclear; may be more transactional
- Team: Adequate expertise; team composition reasonable but gaps present

Needs Development (1-4 points):

- Students: Minimal or unclear student engagement; students as assistants only
- External Partners: No external partner or only nominal involvement; extractive approach

- Team: Significant gaps in expertise; unclear roles or capacity concerns

Scoring

- Each criterion scored on 10-point scale
- Weighted according to percentages above
- Maximum total score: 100 points

Funding Decisions

Final funding decisions will be made by GRI leadership based on:

- Review committee scores and feedback
- Overall portfolio balance (disciplines, topics, career stages)
- Alignment of funding request verse project scope
- Available funding resources
- Alignment with GRI strategic priorities

B) Budget Template

Please use the following format for your budget. While your application can ask for up to $20,000, that total amount is not required. GRI has a total funding pool of $40,000 for this application cycle, and it will allocate funding for projects from this financial pool.

Budget Category	FY27	Justification
Student Researchers		
Research Materials/Equipment		
Data Collection Costs		
Travel		
Partnership Development		
Other (specify)		

TOTAL		