

## Frequently Asked Questions

**What is the time commitment?** The core commitment is the in-person convenings (two days in Williamsburg in September and a one-day workshop in DC in April) plus the virtual roundtables for your matched projects in November and February. Between convenings, your work with matched project teams will typically involve a few hours per month, such as reviewing drafts, making introductions, or advancing deliverables. If you opt into student mentorship, the recommended commitment is four 30-minute check-ins across the academic year. All told, most Fellows should expect roughly 4–6 days of engagement per year, with flexibility to go deeper in areas that interest you most.

**What research areas does GRI focus on?** Application windows will include descriptions of active research projects so you can indicate where your expertise aligns.

**How does project matching work?** At the start of each year, GRI projects define the kinds of external input they most need. Fellows review these and indicate where they can contribute. GRI's Senior Research Managers, in consultation with leadership, suggest matches based on Fellow interest, project needs, and portfolio balance. You can be matched with up to three projects across the Pathfinder, Seed, and Accelerate tiers. Depth of engagement will vary across your matches, and you'll be able to explore how you can best assist over the course of the upcoming year during the fall meetings in Williamsburg.

**What do Impact Fellows actually produce?** This will be a collaboration with the research team, as each project will have specific outputs to move their work from ideas to impact. The most common outputs are practitioner briefs, policy translation memos, co-authored commentary, and organized briefings for policymakers or practitioners. However, implementation playbooks, pilots, or practitioner-facing tools might be just as important depending on the project. Some Fellows may also contribute to Hill briefings, sector-specific convenings, or pilot deployment of research findings within their own organizations. If it makes sense for the Fellow and the research team, we want the Fellow to have the chance to leave with specific, portfolio-quality products.

**Why support projects across all three tiers?** GRI runs a portfolio because we don't know in advance which ideas will scale. The external input that helps a Pathfinder team sharpen its question is often what determines whether that project ever makes it to Accelerate. Fellows contribute across the portfolio for the same reason GRI invests across it: the early stages are where practitioner perspective can have the most leverage.

**What if I can't attend every convening?** We understand that professional schedules are demanding. We ask that Fellows commit to attending at least one of the two in-person convenings and participating in the virtual roundtables for their matched projects.

**Is there a pathway to deeper involvement with GRI?** Yes. The Impact Fellows program is designed to be the front door to a longer relationship with the Institute. Fellows may be invited to join GRI's Advisory Board or serve in other W&M leadership capacities.

**Do I need to be a William & Mary alumnus?** No. The program is open to any professional whose experience aligns with GRI's research portfolio. What matters is your expertise and your willingness to engage.

**Is this a fundraising program?** No. Dues cover the direct costs of convenings and guest speakers. Of course, if your experience as a Fellow inspires you to support GRI in other ways, we'd be glad to have you.

**Can my employer cover the dues?** Yes. Many employers will cover professional development costs of this kind. We're happy to provide documentation or a letter describing the program if that's helpful for reimbursement.

**Can I renew?** Yes. Terms are one year, and renewal is a formality for Fellows in good standing, up to a maximum of five years. After five years, Fellows transition to Emeritus status.

**What happens after my engagement ends?** Fellows who complete their engagement receive Emeritus status. Emeriti receive annual invitations to the Spring DC evening event and can continue mentoring W&M students. We're also exploring expanded benefits for Emeriti as the program matures.

**How are Fellows selected?** You submit a CV, a brief statement of interest (300 words max), your alignment with current GRI research projects, and two reference letters. For the inaugural cohort, selections are made by GRI leadership. In future years, the review panel will include current and former Fellows. We select with an eye toward building cohorts that represent a diversity of sectors, disciplines, and perspectives.

### **What makes a good reference?**

In the age of AI, the strongest references come from people who have seen you operate, not just people with impressive titles or a well-written letter. We are more interested in what your references can say specifically about you and how you might help move research from ideas to impact. Some examples of people who might be a strong reference:

- A supervisor, colleague, or collaborator who has observed your work translating research or analysis into decisions, policy, programs, or organizational change.
- A counterpart from the "other side" of the research-practice divide. E.g., if you are a practitioner, a researcher whose work you have applied or worked with.
- Someone who has seen you lead, convene, or build something: a team, a coalition, a program, a piece of work that involves multiple partners.

**I'm under 28. Can I still apply?** The program is designed for professionals with at least five years of career experience, with a minimum age of 28. If you're a recent W&M graduate interested in staying connected to GRI, we'd love to talk about other ways to engage.

**What if I am not selected?** We anticipate a higher number of qualified applicants than we can seat. Decisions will be made based on the research projects' needs, and so the types of individuals and their backgrounds will shift from year to year. Because of that, we encourage re-applications in future years.

**Who can I contact with additional questions?** Reach out to David Trichler at [dmtrichler@wm.edu](mailto:dmtrichler@wm.edu). We're happy to set up a conversation.