

Humanities Cultivation Fund Request for Proposals

Background and Focus

The Humanities Cultivation Fund is designed to stimulate and nurture generative research and innovative productions across the humanities and humanistic study of related disciplines. We are especially eager to fund proposals that take advantage of the special context in which the humanities and related fields are practiced at MIT and that articulate what makes MIT a great place to pursue the project. We are also eager to fund projects that lay the groundwork for larger, significant contributions beyond MIT. We recognize that humanistic inquiry requires a complex ecosystem of intellectual communities in order to thrive. Thus, we hope to fund projects that will strengthen and expand this ecosystem.

We expect to fund multiple proposals in 2026 for a combined total of \$500K, with additional funding available in 2027. We will consider full proposals as well as smaller planning grants that would be used to build relationships, explore a topic collaboratively, or study a topic further in order to prepare a subsequent proposal.

Selection Criteria

All successful projects will:

- present a clear, compelling account of how they address significant concerns in humanistic inquiry.
- propose important and/or exciting deliverable research outcomes.
- build, strengthen, or expand upon scholarly communities in the humanities at and beyond MIT.

We especially welcome projects that:

- draw on or take advantage of the humanities' particular position within MIT.
- involve UROP students or other scholarly collaborators, within or beyond MIT.
- may serve as a model for further work.

Eligibility

To be eligible to apply, a project lead must:

- Hold a full-time position in the following categories: Faculty, Academic Instructional Staff, Academic Research Staff in SHASS.
- Have an appointment with greater than one year of service
- Or hold a temporary position as Academic Instructional Staff (including part-time) for more than three consecutive semesters.

- An individual may only be the project lead on one full proposal per fund but may submit multiple planning grants or be listed as a collaborator on multiple proposals.

All grant recipients are required to submit a progress report a month before the deadline of the next round of funding, as well as a final report within 1 month of project completion. If you received funding in the first round you must be in good standing at the time of the application review.

Proposal Deadline

Proposals are due by 12:00pm on Thursday, October 23, 2025.

Funding and Resources

A total of \$500K is available to be awarded across all projects.

Budgets for planning grants should not exceed \$30K (direct costs). Full proposals should not exceed \$200K (direct costs).

In addition to the requested budget, proposals can also request supplemental resources such as:

- UROPs - Projects are encouraged to make use of UROP resources. Selection committees will not consider UROP costs (max 2 – fall or spring terms only – pending funding availability) in evaluating total project costs
- Part-time use of a space in Building 16 with a common area

Projects anticipating or desiring public policy relevance should consult with the MIT Policy Lab during proposal development. The Policy Lab can provide assistance with incorporating policy implications into the proposal, as well as ongoing engagement of policy communities with project outcomes. Please contact Drew Story (dstory@mit.edu) at least 3 weeks ahead of the proposal deadline to discuss available resources and support.

Timeline

September 2025 – Application portal will open
Thursday, October 23 – Proposals are due by 12:00pm
January 2026 – Selected projects notified
February 2026 – Earliest project start date
March 2027 – Project report due

Proposal Review

Proposals will be reviewed by a selection committee constituted by the SHASS Dean and convened under the auspices of the SHASS Research Chair.

Those on the selection committee may apply for funding but will be asked to recuse themselves from discussion of their proposal. All questions regarding potential conflicts of interest during the review stage will be decided at the discretion of the MITHIC faculty lead.

With permission, successful proposals may be circulated more widely as models for future cycles, or to help connect researchers across the Institute.

Sample Project Activities

- Hosting a scholarly workshop or symposium
- Building a scholarly resource such as a website, digital edition, or other digital humanities output
- Developing a creative or performance work with accompanying talk or workshop
- Hosting a visiting scholar
- Opening a new archive or making new use of an existing one
- Supervising UROP students
- Supporting mutually reinforcing interdisciplinary collaboration
- Using elements of the past to inform the present and future

Contact

For questions, please contact mithic-humanities@mit.edu.

MITHIC Website

Visit mithic.mit.edu for future updates and other information related to MITHIC.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long should the proposed projects last?

Projects will be funded for one year at a time (February to January). Project leads may elect to spread one year of funding over 2 or 3 years if that would lead to a more successful outcome.

Planning grants are only for one year at a time.

What are planning grants?

Planning grants are smaller awards to enable a team to work together to plan a future collaboration and prepare to apply to one of the funds in the following cycle.

Can I apply to more than one fund?

Yes, an individual may be the project lead on one proposal per fund.

Can I submit more than one proposal to the same fund?

An individual may only be the project lead on one proposal per fund but may be listed as a collaborator on multiple proposals. Multiple planning grants can be submitted to the same fund.

Are collaborators outside of MIT permitted?

Additional collaborators outside MIT are welcome, but all funding must be managed at MIT and no subawards will be considered.

What can I include in the budget? Are there any restrictions on the use of the funds?

All planned spending should be in accordance with [MIT policy](#). Summer salary is permissible.

What impact does the MIT hiring freeze have on MITHIC funded projects?

Hiring for positions included in awarded MITHIC projects will still need to be routed through the MIT hiring exception process, but since dedicated funding is secured, we anticipate successful exceptions.

Do I have to include UROPs in the proposal budget?

UROPs are not a requirement of the proposal. When requesting UROPs, please add all requests directly into your budget template.

Can Round 1 MITHIC awarded projects be extended or renewed?

Previously awarded MITHIC project leads can submit a new proposal for additional funds for existing projects in later rounds. These proposals should reference the existing project and explain how the additional funds would allow for an extension of the work. These proposals

must demonstrate that earlier funds are either spent down or committed before receiving additional funding. Otherwise, if awarded, any unexpended funds will reduce the size of the potential second round of funding. These renewals will undergo full review and are not guaranteed.

What reports or presentations will be required of funded projects?

Project leads for funded projects may be selected to present at a future MITHIC event (date TBD). All project leads will be required to provide a short, written progress report, including progress on spending, a month before the deadline of the next round of funding. To be eligible for new or additional funding you must have a complete progress report. A final report will be due within 1 month of project completion.

If I received an award in 2024, can I apply again in 2025?

If your project is on track to be completed by December 31, 2025, then yes, you can apply for a different project this fall.

If I request an extension, or if I request project dates other than January-December, can I still apply for the next round of funding?

It is only possible to have one full proposal, per fund, at a time. If you request an extension or project dates that go into 2026 for a full proposal, you cannot apply to the same fund in the fall of 2025 for a full proposal for a new project. You can apply for additional funds for the same project, but if successful, any unexpended funds for 2025 will reduce the size of the award in 2026. To be eligible for new or additional funding you must have a complete progress report.

How will the fall progress report be used?

The MITHIC team as well as the co-chairs for the fund will review the interim reports. If you apply for additional funding or a new project, your progress on your current project will be a factor in any future award decisions.

What about extenuating circumstances?

If progress on your project is delayed by circumstances outside of your control, contact MITHIC.