SHASS Education Innovation Fund Request for Proposals

Background and Focus

The SHASS Education Innovation Fund aims to foster transformative educational experiences and practices in SHASS for MIT students. A $500K fund is available on a competitive basis to fund educational projects central to SHASS's educational mission that address clearly defined problems in ways that will impact pedagogy and curriculum across the school. The fund will support efforts that help address concrete challenges our students face, both during their MIT education and beyond. Funding for individual subjects must support the development of ideas that can be applied across curricula and programs.

We intend to fund several proposals in 2026, with new funding available in 2027. We will consider full proposals as well as proposals for smaller planning grants that would be used to study a problem further and consider solutions for a subsequent year.

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- **Defined Problem:** There should be evidence of a clearly defined, significant educational problem. This could be documented by data from our own subjects, senior surveys, student feedback, and/or research data that provides evidence of the need.
- **Proposed Solution:** The proposal must explain how the educational problem will be addressed with exciting, impactful, and innovative methods.
- **Impact:** Innovations should be systemic and transferable, with the potential to apply to other subjects. These outcomes should be evaluable, in coordination with the Teaching and Learning Lab (TLL, tll@mit.edu) as needed.

Proposals may be entirely new projects or build on existing initiatives that fit these criteria to extend or expand them.

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.

Proposals from teams are encouraged. Collaborative proposals within or between units are highly encouraged, including across Schools and the College. Proposals must be led by a person from SHASS. 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.

There will be a meeting with the co-chairs and TLL in early September (exact date TBD) that is highly recommended for all applicants. Applicants should come to this meeting with a one-paragraph description of their idea.

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).

Full proposals should encompass the design and implementation of the proposed solution, while planning grants could fund a range of activities including but not limited to symposia, background research, or benchmarking across peer institutions in preparation for full proposals.

In addition to the requested budget, proposals may 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
Early September – Highly recommended preliminary meeting (see above)
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 consisting of faculty, teaching staff, and students from across SHASS.

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 handled 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 Problems and Solutions

- **Problem:** Students typically have the opportunity to understand issues from limited disciplinary perspectives
    - **Proposed Solution:** Subjects that address complex societal issues from multidisciplinary perspectives
- **Problem:** Students see their SHASS classes as interesting but unrelated to their STEM studies
    - **Proposed Solution:** New class materials that provide timely SHASS perspectives on current STEM topics
- **Problem:** Students don't know how to productively engage in discussion around controversial issues
    - **Proposed Solution:** Development of tools that productively engage students in discussions on controversial issues
- **Problem:** Students' mental and physical well-being are currently in decline
    - **Proposed Solution:** Educational practices that foster student well-being integrated into SHASS subjects
- **Problem:** Teaching and learning methods are rapidly changing post-COVID, with significant impacts due to AI
    - **Proposed Solution:** Develop or integrate innovative class formats or teaching methods to address these challenges

MITHIC
MIT Human Insight Collaborative

Contact

For questions, please contact mithic-education@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.