MIT Human Insight Collaborative

Humanities Cultivation Fund Call for Proposals

Background and Focus

The Humanities Cultivation Fund is a new funding opportunity designed to stimulate and nurture generative research and innovative productions across the humanities, arts, and humanistic social sciences. 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 2025 for a combined total of $500K, with additional funding available in 2026 and 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 MIT.

We especially welcome projects that:

- draw on or take advantage of the humanities' particular position within MIT.
- include scope for non-specialist and/or public engagement with the research methods and results.
- 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.

Proposal Deadline

Proposals are due by 5:00pm on Friday, November 22.

Funding and Resources

A total of $500K is available to be awarded across all projects. Proposals are welcome for any amount.

In addition to the requested budget, proposals can also request supplemental resources such as:
- Up to 3 UROPs
- Part-time use of a space in Building 16 with a common area and 4 offices

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

Friday, November 22 – Proposals are due by 5:00pm
Week of December 16 – Selected projects notified
January 6 – Earliest project start date
Spring 2025 (date TBD) – Awardees present their idea at MITHIC celebration event
January 2026 – Project report due
Spring 2026 – Community event TBD

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 committee co-chairs.

Proposals will not be shared outside of MITHIC, the CISO's office and the SHASS Dean's office, and the committee's evaluation process will be confidential.

Contact

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

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Proposal Sections

Proposals should be 2-3 pages, not including budget and budget justification.

Proposals will include the following sections (see application for more details):
- Project Team
- Description of the Project
- Explanation of the Project's Importance
- Outline of the Project's Collaborative Nature (if applicable)
- Explanation of the Project's Impact on Humanistic Inquiry
- Budget and Justification

A preview of the application can be found here.
The budget template can be found here.

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

Frequently Asked Questions
Visit mithic.mit.edu for a list of Frequently Asked Questions.