Human Insight Collaborative

SHASS Education Innovation Fund Call for Proposals

Background and Focus

The SHASS Education Innovation Fund is a new funding opportunity that 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 that address clearly defined problems with scalable solutions. This fund is not meant to support efforts confined to single subjects, for which other funding opportunities exist, but rather ideas that can be applied across curricula and programs (even if the approach is developed in a single context).

The fund will support efforts that help address concrete challenges our students face, both during their MIT education and beyond.

We intend to fund several proposals in 2025, with new funding available in 2026 and 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 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. Published research that substantiates the scope of the problem and/or the efficacy of the proposed approach may be used, where appropriate, to support the proposal.
- **Systemic Approach:** Proposals should consider different elements of student learning (in-class activities, out-of-class activities, student engagement, faculty preparation, materials, etc.), rather than targeting one isolated component.
- **Sustainable:** Proposals should suggest future pathways to sustainability beyond support from the Education Innovation Fund.
- **Transferrable:** Innovations to create new subjects or transform existing subjects should have the potential to apply to other subjects.
- **Measurable/Evaluable:** The intended outcomes should be defined and clearly evaluable, especially for full proposals. Measures could be quantitative or qualitative. The Teaching and Learning Lab (TLL) may be able to support the measuring and evaluation of projects funded by this program, as well as provide pedagogical guidance. Please reach out to TLL at tll@mit.edu by the end of October to discuss.

Proposals may 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.

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. Full proposals should design and implement the intended innovation, whereas planning grants could conduct a range of activities including but not limited to symposia, background research, or benchmarking across peer institutions.

In addition to the requested budget, proposals can also request supplemental resources such as:
- Up to 3 UROPs (does not need to be included in the budget, as this is funded separately)
- Part-time use of a space in Building 16 with a common area and four 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 ideas at MITHIC celebration event
January 2026 – Project report due
Spring 2026 – Community event TBD

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 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-education@mit.edu.

Proposal Sections

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

Proposals will include the following sections (see criteria above and application for more details):
- Project Team
- Explanation of the Problem
- Proposed Solution
- Explanation of Transferability
- Evaluation Plan
- Sustainability Plan
- Budget and Justification

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

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

Frequently Asked Questions

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