

Digital Technology for Democracy Seed Grant Program 2026-2027

The [Digital Technology for Democracy Lab](#) invites proposals from UVA faculty for funding for projects connected to the DTD Lab's mission of understanding the intersections of democracy and digital technology, including how rapidly evolving digital technologies and artificial intelligence can challenge but also fortify democratic institutions and practices.

ELIGIBILITY

Tenured/tenure-track faculty at UVA should serve as lead PIs/researchers, while Academic General Faculty Members and postdocs are eligible as co-PIs.

TWO GRANT PROGRAMS

1. **Large Grants:** For projects with prospects to leverage findings to secure external funding for research or creative activities. Collaborative proposals are encouraged, especially those spanning departments/schools or career ranks or stages. Applicants should submit a two-page letter of intent by January 23, 2026, at 5 PM. Finalists will then be notified to submit a full proposal due by March 20, 2026, at 5 PM. Project duration is one year with an interim report due in six months and a final report at year's end. **Funding requests may be up to \$40K per project.**
1. **Small Grants:** For projects requiring a smaller investment to initiate research and develop collaborations. Proposals are due by March 20, 2026, at 5 PM. Project duration is one year with an interim report due in six months and a final report at year's end. **Funding requests may be up to \$15K per project.**

DECISIONS AND REPORTING

Applicable to both grant programs

- Decisions are anticipated in early May 2026, with awards beginning by July 15, 2026.
- Project duration is one year with an interim report due in six months and a final report at year's end.
- Project Reporting:
 - Interim report: A brief update or in-person presentation to the DTD lab (due December 2026)

- Final report (maximum of two pages, due June 30, 2027). Grantees are welcome to include appendices with supplementary materials from the project.

HOW TO APPLY FOR LARGE GRANTS

Letter-of-Intent (LOI)

Submit a brief two-page letter of intent (excluding CVs) by **January 23, 2026, at 5 PM**. Full proposals will be requested from finalists. LOIs should include the following clearly labeled sections:

1. Project title with PIs' names, departments, emails.
2. Brief project description: Description of the area of research or practice, its importance and impact, and its connection to DTD's mission.
3. Brief plan and objectives: Include questions to be addressed, methods, goals, rough timeline, and potential for future external funding opportunities.
4. Brief budget and justification: Budget should include a short list of approximate expenses in major budget categories such as catering and meals, computing equipment, travel & lodging, books and supplies, honoraria, student or postdoc support, contracted services, etc.
5. CVs - max two pages for each PI/co-PI.
6. LOIs should be submitted by January 23, 2026, at 5:00 pm by emailing **submissions.karsh@virginia.edu**, with the subject line "**DTD Large Grant LOI Submission**"
7. Finalists are expected to be notified by mid to late February 2026.

Full Proposals for Large Grants

Full proposals requested from finalists are limited to six pages (excluding title page, CVs, and letters of support) and must be structured to include the items below:

1. *Title Page* with a project title and PIs' names, departments, emails.
2. *Project description*: Detailed description and overview of the research or practice area. Articulate the relevance, significance, and impact of the planned work within the broader context of existing research or practice. Emphasize the connection to DTD's mission.
3. *Plan, objectives, and timeline*: Include questions to be addressed, the methods and techniques to be employed, the goals of the project, and the expected outcomes with their potential impact on the field. Additionally, please outline the timeline of the project
4. *Next steps and advances that are needed to pursue external funding*: Describe the next step in the research or practice, how the supported research will enable the PIs to successfully pursue funding opportunities, etc. If applicable, list planned funding sources and grant types, planned submission date, and anticipated funding level.
5. *Budget and justification*: Budget should include expenses in major budget categories such as catering and meals, computing equipment, travel & lodging, books and supplies, honoraria, student or postdoc support, contracted services, etc., including explanations as appropriate.
6. *Project team*: Include brief qualifications and contributions of the PIs, key faculty collaborators, or students, as well as their roles in the proposed project.

7. CVs - max two pages for each PI/co-PI.
8. All materials should be submitted by March 20, 2026 at 5:00 pm as ONE PDF FILE_ by emailing **submissions.karsh@virginia.edu**, with the subject line “**DTD Large Grant Proposal Submission**”
9. Applications will be evaluated by a faculty committee. Decisions are anticipated in early May 2026, with awards to begin by July 15, 2026.
10. Awarded funds are available for one year. Requests for a no-cost extension will be considered if received by May 1, 2027. Any unused funds as of June 30, 2027, will be returned to the DTD Lab.

HOW TO APPLY FOR SMALL GRANTS

1. Write a brief proposal (max three pages, excluding CVs) structured to include the items below:
 - a. Project title and Pls’ names, departments, and emails.
 - b. Project description: Description of the area of research or practice, its significance and impact, and its connection to DTD’s mission.
 - c. Research plan and objectives: Include questions to be addressed, methods, goals, rough timeline, and potential for future external funding opportunities.
 - d. Brief budget and justification: Budget should include a short list of approximate expenses in major budget categories such as student or postdoc support, material, contracted services, travel & lodging, etc.
 - e. CVs - max two pages for each PI/co-PI.
2. All materials should be submitted by March 20, 2026, at 5:00 pm as ONE PDF FILE by emailing **submissions.karsh@virginia.edu**, with the subject line “**DTD Small Grant Proposal Submission**”
3. Applications will be evaluated by a faculty committee. Decisions are anticipated in early May 2026, with awards to begin by July 15, 2026.
4. Awarded funds are available for one year. Any unused funds as of June 30, 2027, will be returned to the DTD Lab.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

- All projects must comply with university and school procedures.
- The funds cannot be used for faculty summer salary.
- In order to receive funding, accepted proposals must submit a letter from the relevant Department Chair or Dean that indicates they support the application and, if funded, the relevant unit will be able to accept and manage the funding. Note that DTD Lab Grant funding cannot be used to pay the 22% University tax. Instructions will be provided with the acceptance notification.

IMPORTANT DATES

Friday, January 23, 2026, 5:00 PM – LOI for Large Grant proposals due

Mid to late February – Notifications sent for LOI submissions

Friday, March 20, 2026, 5:00 PM – Large Grant and Small Grant proposals due

Early May 2026 – Notifications sent for all submissions

By July 15, 2026 – Funding awarded

December 2026 – Interim reports due

May 1, 2027 – Requests for Large Grant no-cost extension due

June 30, 2027 – final report due

June 30, 2027 – all grant funds must be used, at which time any unused funding will return to the DTD Lab