



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Columbia Global Innovation Awards: Artificial Intelligence and Society

RFP issue date: April 20, 2026

Deadline for submissions: May 29, 2026

The **2026 Columbia Global (CG) Innovation Awards** seek proposals that advance knowledge, develop new frameworks, and translate scholarship into programs or practice under the theme of ***Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Society***. These awards support the generation of new knowledge, strengthen research partnerships and engage students and external partners to address complex global challenges in New York City or in locations where a Columbia Global Center is situated.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping how we work, learn, communicate, govern, and understand the world. AI's influence cuts across disciplines, from economics and public policy to the humanities and the arts, transforming how knowledge is produced, culture is expressed, and institutions function. Addressing these questions requires the breadth of scholarship: empirical and humanistic, theoretical and applied, local and global.

Columbia University is already at the forefront of this work. Across Columbia's schools, departments, and research centers, faculty and researchers are exploring how AI is shaping society and scholarship and how it should be governed, designed, and applied. Through its Global Centers, grounded in strong in-country partnerships, and its long-standing engagement in New York City, Columbia Global aims to advance scholarship and to enrich it through global or local connections.

Columbia Global welcomes proposals that engage with one or more of the following areas:

- **AI, Governance and Democracy:** Effects on political systems, regulation, elections, and public trust.
- **AI, Law and Rights:** Impacts on legal frameworks, liability, IP, civil rights, and algorithmic governance.
- **AI, Security and Conflict:** Roles in security, surveillance, autonomous systems, disinformation, conflict resolution and geopolitics.
- **AI and Economic Opportunity:** Implications for labor markets, equity, access, and the future of work.
- **AI, Health and Medicine:** Uses in care and research, including equity and ethics in

- AI-driven decisions and treatment methodology.
- **AI for Public Good:** Applications addressing climate, the environment, cities, food systems, public services, and humanitarian and disaster response.
 - **AI, Education and Learning:** Transformations in teaching, pedagogy, access, academic integrity, and impacts on cognitive development.
 - **Equity, Ethics and Inclusion in AI:** Issues of bias, fairness, representation, and power in AI systems.
 - **AI, Culture and Society:** Impacts on identity, norms, and human experience.
 - **AI, Language and Knowledge:** Changes in knowledge creation, translation, and access across languages.
 - **AI, Creativity and Expression:** Effects on and advancement in art, storytelling, journalism, and authorship.
 - **AI and the Environment:** Implications on the environment and surrounding communities; potential uses for preservation, conservation and environmental resilience.

These areas are illustrative rather than exhaustive. We welcome proposals that bridge disciplines and contribute to shaping the future of AI in society.

Types of Awards

CG Innovation Awards are offered at three funding Tiers:

Tier 1: Concept and Convening Awards support early-stage ideas that lay the foundation for larger efforts. Awards can be utilized for idea/project exploration and initial research, convenings, workshops or partnership development, and/or early-stage project activities.

Award Amounts: \$10,000 - \$25,000 (per award) for up to 12-18 months.

Anticipated number of Awards: 6-12

Timeline: Anticipated start date, July 2026.

Submission Process: A one-step application process: Application includes a Concept Note, Budget and Work Plan submitted through [Submittable](#) (see instructions on p.4 below).

Tier 2 and Tier 3 Awards support multidisciplinary teams of Columbia University faculty and researchers to collaborate with external partners to address complex challenges associated with AI and Society through co-created, action-oriented research and interventions.

Tier 2. Innovation and Proof of Concept Awards are designed to bridge insight and application by enabling translation of scholarship into new educational, comparative, or applied forms.

Award Amounts: up to \$150,000 (per award) for up to 3 years.

Anticipated number of Awards: 4-5

Submission Process: a two-step process.

Step 1: A Concept Note with Summary Budget submitted through [Submittable](#) (see

instructions on p.4 below).

Step 2: Invited applicants to submit a full proposal, budget and workplan.

Timeline: Anticipated start date, October 2026.

Tier 3. Impact and Scale Awards support larger, more developed projects with the potential to drive meaningful impact. Awards are designed to scale or adapt proven approaches, strengthen evidence base for broader adoption, embed solutions within institutional or policy frameworks, and/or advance the sustained implementation of piloted work through integration with partners and stakeholders. Priority will be given to projects that build on established work and are positioned to expand, replicate or influence policy, practice, tools or systems.

Award Amounts: up to \$300,000 (per award) for up to 3 years.

Anticipated number of Awards: 2

Submission Process: a two-step process.

Step 1: A Concept Note with Summary Budget submitted through [Submittable](#) (see instructions on p.4 below).

Step 2: Invited applicants to submit a full proposal, budget and workplan.

Timeline: Anticipated start date, October 2026.

Geographic Focus

CG Innovation Awards should either focus on work in New York City or in conjunction with one of Columbia's Global Centers. Global Centers are located in: [Amman, Jordan](#); [Athens, Greece](#); [Beijing, China](#); [Istanbul, Turkey](#); [Mumbai, India](#); [Nairobi, Kenya](#); [Paris, France](#); [Rio de Janeiro, Brazil](#); and [Santiago, Chile](#).

Requirements for All Proposals:

- Proposal lead(s) must be full-time faculty or researcher(s) at Columbia University.
- At least one proposal lead must be eligible to serve as a Principal Investigator, per [Columbia University guidelines](#).¹
- Proposals must include collaboration across disciplines, schools, institutes, or centers.
- **For international proposals:** Prior to submission of the proposal, applicants are required to have, at minimum, one consultation with the Director of the relevant Global Center(s) to discuss the proposed project, including its feasibility, potential partnerships, and the role of the Global Center(s).
- Proposals are encouraged to include ways to engage with Columbia University undergraduate, graduate students and/or postdocs.
- Proposals that aim to incorporate learning into coursework, curriculum and/or capstones

¹ Includes: Professors, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Senior Research Scientist/Scholar, Research Scientist/Scholar

will be prioritized.

- Proposals must describe how the award will lay the foundation for subsequent work.

Additional Requirements for Tier 2 and 3 proposals:

- Proposals must have at least one additional full-time Columbia University faculty or researcher from a distinct university unit as part of the project leadership.
- Proposals must also include at least one external partner outside Columbia University (e.g., academic institution, government agency, civil society organization, community groups and/or, private sector).
- Proposals must include ways to engage with Columbia University undergraduate, graduate students and/or postdocs.

Application Process and Deadlines

- Applications are submitted via the [Submittable Platform](#), which can be accessed [here](#).
- Proposal submissions for Tier 1 and the first phase of Tier 2 and Tier 3 are due May 29th at 11:59 pm EST.
- Notice of Awards for **Tier 1** proposals are expected in June 2026.
- Invitations to submit full proposals for **Tier 2 and 3** projects, are also anticipated in June 2026.

Templates

Tier 1: Concept and Convening Awards	Tier 2: Innovation and Proof of Concept Awards Tier 3: Impact and Scale Awards
Application Template (reference only) Budget Template Work Plan Template	Application Template (reference only) Budget Template

Questions

A virtual meeting to answer questions about this request for proposals will be held on **May 5th at 10:00 am EST**. Please register and join [here](#).

General questions can also be directed to Christine Hunt, ch3326@columbia.edu.

FAQs

A list of Frequently Asked Questions is [found here](#). Additional questions will be posted after the virtual information session.

Evaluation Criteria

The review of each proposal will be conducted by a selection committee, composed of faculty from various fields and Columbia Global faculty and staff, and will assess each application based on the following criteria:

1. **Scholarly and research excellence:** Originality, rigor, and the significance of the intellectual contribution.
2. **Innovation and potential for impact:** The creativity of the approach and the plausibility of meaningful outcomes.
3. **Engagement with Columbia Global Center platforms:** Depth and quality of engagement with a Columbia Global Center (if relevant).
4. **Student and academic experience:** Inclusion of students—undergraduate, graduate, and/or postdoctoral.
5. **Feasibility:** Appropriateness of the design, work plan, team, and budget.
6. **Follow-on potential:** Clarity of the pathway beyond the work and potential to catalyze future external funding.
7. **External partnerships and community engagement (required for Tier 2 and 3):** Strength and relevance of external partners and, where applicable, engagement with relevant communities.

Technical Support and How to Receive Application-related Reminders

For applicants who encounter technical difficulties or have questions about the submission process, contact Christine Hunt at ch3326@columbia.edu.

To keep applicants informed and on track, regular reminders will be sent regarding upcoming deadlines and any updates to the application process. To receive these updates, please initiate a draft proposal form in [Submittable](#) – you do not need to complete the draft to receive updates.