

Call for Proposals: Virginia Tech College of Engineering Major Grants Initiative (MGI)

Proposal Submission Deadline: May 1, 2026, at 11:59 PM

Submission Portal: Submit proposals as a single PDF through the designated [submission portal](#).

Purpose: Launching the Major Grants Initiative

In Spring 2025, the College of Engineering launched the Major Grants Initiative (MGI) as part of its continued commitment to securing large-scale, high-impact research funding. This initiative is designed to position Virginia Tech faculty for success in pursuing center- and institute-level funding opportunities, such as NSF Engineering Research Centers (ERCs), NSF Science and Technology Centers (STCs), DOE Energy Frontier Research Centers (EFRCs), NIH P50 or U54 Centers, and other equivalent large-scale funding programs.

The FY 2026 MGI Call for Proposals provides funding through two distinct tracks:

Track 1 - Team Formation Track: Facilitating New Collaborations (Up to \$50,000 per team)

Objective: Seed team formation around emerging research themes where Virginia Tech has promising faculty expertise but may not yet be competitive for a center-level grant. This track is designed to nurture interdisciplinary collaborations that have the potential to evolve into high-impact research teams capable of competing for large-scale funding in the future.

Eligibility & Expectations:

- Open to new or emerging teams with at least three CoE faculty members from three different disciplines
- Teams should aim to publish collaboratively and submit at least one external funding application together in the first year
- The intent is that teams funded under this track will develop the necessary foundation to compete for Track 2 funding in future years
 - Track 2 proposals from teams previously funded in Track 1 must include a supplementary document summarizing their Track 1 outcomes
- Teams are encouraged to build external partnerships, where appropriate, to strengthen their research vision and enhance their long-term competitiveness for large-scale funding
- Track 1 teams are not eligible for course release(s)
- *Deliverable:* Within 12 months, teams must either:
 - Develop a white paper in the form of an ERC-style pre-proposal (or an equivalent for other center-scale opportunities) and submit it to the CoE Research Office
 - Alternatively, if the team has already reached the stage of submitting external proposals, a successfully submitted large external grant proposal with a \$2M+ VT budget will be accepted in place of the pre-proposal

Track 2 - Strategic Expansion Track: Scaling Up Established Teams (Up to \$200,000 per team)

Objective: Propel well-established, high-performing teams toward securing center-scale funding within the next two years. This track is intended for teams that have already developed strong interdisciplinary collaborations and are in a position to submit a highly competitive full proposal to a major external funding agency within the next two years.

This call is expected to serve as a *forcing function* to ensure that teams are prepared before funding opportunities are officially announced, allowing them to act quickly and maximize their competitiveness when calls are released.

Eligibility & Expectations:

- Open to existing interdisciplinary teams that have a clear center-scale funding target and require additional resources to enhance their competitiveness
- Teams must include faculty from at least two CoE departments and at least one internal partner from other VT colleges or institutes
- Awardees will receive proposal development support from the CoE Research Office to strengthen their external proposal
- *Possibility of Faculty Lines¹:* Exceptional proposals demonstrating a clear, strategic need may request faculty lines to enhance competitiveness. Requests should be well-justified, aligned with the long-term research vision of the College and the Departments, and directly tied to the success of the external center-scale proposal
- *Possibility of Course Release:* Course release must be approved by the Faculty Champion's Department Head, and teams are limited to at most one course release per Track 2 project
- *External Partnerships:* It is encouraged to mention external partners and collaborators in the proposal to present a complete and compelling vision of the research initiative. However, this requires:
 - A formal collaboration letter from external partners. A short letter issued by the collaborating faculty members in the standard NSF style would suffice for this
 - A one-page supplementary document listing joint publications and prior proposal submissions with external partners
- *Deliverable:* Teams must produce a draft full-center-level proposal within 12 months. This will serve as the foundation for an external submission within two years

Eligibility and General Expectations for Both Tracks

- Lead faculty champions must hold the rank of Associate Professor or higher for Track 1 and the rank of Professor for Track 2
- Collaborations across multiple CoE departments and other VT colleges and institutes are highly encouraged
- External partners are encouraged in the external submissions, but Virginia Tech must be the lead institution. As the lead institution, VT is expected to have the largest portion of the budget
- Faculty Champions are strongly encouraged to consult with their Department Heads before submitting a proposal to ensure alignment with departmental priorities

¹ Contingent upon available funding.

Proposal Requirements

- Use the required Proposal Template for submission. Please note that there are different templates for each track
- Maximum 5 pages (excluding cover sheet, references, letters, and supplementary documents)
- Formatting: 1" margins, 11-point font or larger
- Submission: Proposals must be submitted as a single PDF via the [submission portal](#).
- For Track 2 proposals that include external partners, the submission must include:
 - A formal collaboration letter from external partners
 - A one-page supplementary document listing joint publications and prior proposal submissions with external partners

Review Process and Selection Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by the Engineering Research Advisory Council, which will make funding recommendations to the Dean. If needed, additional reviewers or panels may be consulted to provide further expert evaluation. Reviews will be based on the following criteria:

- Technical Merit & Alignment: Strength of the proposed research and its relevance to VT and national research priorities
- Team Qualifications & Interdisciplinary Strength: Expertise, prior collaborations, and ability to execute a competitive center-scale proposal
- Research Plan & Feasibility: Clear milestones, measurable outcomes, and an approach that ensures strong external proposal preparation
- Potential for Large-Scale Funding: Likelihood of securing external funding at the center/institute level within the expected timeline
- Justification for Faculty Lines (Track 2 only): For proposals requesting faculty positions, the justification must be clear, strategic, and aligned with the long-term success of the external proposal

Key Dates & Timeline

- Proposal Submission Deadline: May 1, 2026, at 11:59 PM
- Awards Announced: July 31, 2026
- Feedback Provided to Faculty Champions: August 2026

Reporting Requirements

- For Track 1: A white paper in the form of an ERC-style pre-proposal (or equivalent for other center-scale opportunities) must be submitted to the CoE Research Office within 12 months. Alternatively, if a team successfully submits a large external grant proposal with a \$2M+ VT budget within this timeframe, it will be accepted as a substitute deliverable
- For Track 2: Development of a draft full center-level proposal within 12 months, with the expectation of an external submission within two years. The draft proposal must be submitted to the CoE Research Office within 12 months

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