INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM

2025 Call for Proposals:
Digital Media and Developing Minds Congress Grant

Deadline for Letter of Intent: **October 3, 2025, 5pm ET**
Deadline for Full Proposal: **February 6, 2026, 5pm ET**

1.0 About Children and Screens: Institute of Digital Media and Child Development

1.1 Mission

Children and Screens: Institute of Digital Media and Child Development is a 501c(3) nonprofit organization that seeks insights into how children, their peers and their families are engaging with digital media; and how these interactions at home, school and within their communities affect their cognitive, psychological, social, behavioral and physical development. The Institute advances interdisciplinary research, supports human capital in the field, informs and educates the public, and advocates for sound public policy for child health and wellness.

1.2 Background and Goals

Children and Screens believes that it is not enough to look at questions of digital media use among children from a single perspective — whether medical, educational, or sociological. Rather, effective research requires a multidisciplinary, comprehensive, "kaleidoscopic" approach. Multi-field collaboration and discourse are critical to enhance the holistic understanding of the cognitive, psychological, and physical impacts of digital media on toddlers, children, and adolescents.

Since its inception in 2013, Children and Screens has utilized its unique position as an independent nonprofit capable of developing new, integrated questions and ideas bridging the scientific and clinical divides. We realize the importance of developing a foundational research agenda from a child development perspective generated and curated by researchers themselves. We also understand the importance of sparking public, private and scientific interest in new, rigorous, and comprehensive approaches to research and research design. We fund research by interdisciplinary experts, publish state-of-the-science articles, and identify critical areas for future research.

Beyond its research funding, the Institute achieves its mission by: convening interdisciplinary conferences, meetings, retreats, and events; producing and publishing free, public resources to support and educate caregivers, educators, and policymakers; publishing resources to support caregivers, educators, and policymakers; and building diverse partnerships and collaborations that further enhance critical research, education, and policy initiatives.

2.0 About Children and Screens' Interdisciplinary Research Grants Program

"Employ the power of collaborative inquiry to understand the influence of digital media on the whole child and on the society to which that child is an heir. Make use of your respectful field's particular strengths, but share them. Help others to understand how your facet of the big picture relates to theirs and how your tools and methods might shed new light on their investigations. Invite them to do the same."

– Dr. Pamela Hurst-Della Pietra (Founder and Chair of the Board)

2.1 General Program Information

Children and Screens' Interdisciplinary Research Grants provide seed funding, on a competitive basis, to support cutting-edge interdisciplinary scientific research projects that seek to advance our knowledge and understanding of digital media and child development. These small research grants are intended to **deliver seed funds to interdisciplinary teams** (at least two researchers) **so that they may gain the preliminary results necessary to apply and compete for major funding from traditional funding sources.** The grants are not intended to supplement existing grants.

The projects completed as part of this grant program must be collaborative from start to finish; principle Investigators and collaborators should work together throughout all phases of the project. Research questions explored should be of national, state, and in many cases international relevance. We encourage collaboration with relevant stakeholders at any or all of these levels.

Interdisciplinary collaborations are required. These collaborations can be from one or across multiple institutions and should consist of at least two different disciplines.

2.2 Focus for 2025 Digital Media and Developing Minds Congress Grant

Children and Screens convened the 2025 *Digital Media and Developing Minds* International Scientific Congress in Washington, DC, bringing together hundreds of researchers, clinicians, educators, policymakers, and advocates. Over four days, participants engaged with cutting-edge research, explored complex questions, debated critical issues, and collaborated on bold solutions to advance children's well-being in an increasingly digital world.

From AI and novel measurement tools to online safety, global health equity, U.S. policy strategies, and the nuances of parent-child dynamics, this year's Congress pushed experts in the field to think more deeply—and more urgently—about what it will take to protect children's well-being in a rapidly-advancing tech landscape.

The 2025 Digital Media and Developing Minds Congress Grant will **provide up to $150,000 of seed funding to participants**, to enable further pursuit of important new research and other

activities stimulated by the Congress. There are no restrictions on areas of study, though all proposals **must demonstrate a clear connection to 2025 Congress topics** and include the study of digital media use and/or exposure. The ages considered in this research may include infants, toddlers, children, and/or adolescents. Projects may study children directly or the families and/or systems that surround them, but the outcomes assessed must have a connection to children's health and well-being.

This research endeavor should serve to further ideas generated by or advanced during the 2025 Congress, and could include projects that were specifically discussed at the event. Summaries of "Advancing the Research Agenda" breakout sessions will be shared separately from this informational document and may be useful in guiding research ideas.

These grants will provide seed funding for research that should be developed further after the current project (including efforts to obtain secondary / supplemental funding). This funding should promote deeper questioning by allowing for initial research steps. Funded projects are expected to last one year, beginning in 2026 (see timeline for award details). A no cost extension of up to an additional 6 months can be requested but is not guaranteed.

2.3 Eligibility

Each grant team must consist of at least one primary member (PI, Co-PI, or Co-I) who attended the 2025 *Digital Media and Developing Minds* International Scientific Congress. Additional investigators who did not attend the Congress may be included on the grant. Please note, it is highly encouraged to include other investigators who also attended the Congress, and teams that can demonstrate how the event specifically led to or strengthened the partnerships among grant team members will be reviewed favorably. It is also encouraged to include at least one junior or early career member on the grant team.

Please see below for all eligibility details.

- At least one PI, Co-PI or Co-I must have attended the 2025 *Digital Media and Developing Minds* Congress, hosted by Children and Screens.
- The Principal Investigators (PIs) must possess a terminal degree (PhD, MD, or equivalent) and a full-time appointment (tenure track or other research-focused roles) with a university or established research center.
- Teams are encouraged (but not required) to include at least one junior / early career member. (Note: Postdocs and graduate students may be included on the grant, but cannot be listed as PIs.)
- All projects must be a collaborative effort consisting of at least two PIs; a maximum of five (5) PIs may work on a single project.
- Projects must represent at least two different disciplines.
- The ability to demonstrate the role of the 2025 Congress in initiating or strengthening working relationships among project team members is encouraged.

- At least 1 PIs is expected to commit, at a minimum, 10% of their time annually to the project.
- A single PI may participate in a maximum of two Letters of Intent projects. A PI may only hold one award from the Institute at a time.
- Additional "collaborators" are permitted. These individuals do not need to be involved in the conception or execution of the project, but may act as resources or consultants.
- Multiple applicants from a single institution may submit Letters of Intent.
- All commercial and/or industry funding must be reported immediately to the Sponsor.

2.4 Funding Levels and Selection Criteria

The overall available funding is up to $150,000; the number of awards is contingent on requested budgets and successful applications. **Indirect costs per grant regardless of the number of subcontract institutions are limited to 10% of total direct costs**. The maximum budget request for the Grants Program is $150,000, inclusive of indirect and all other costs. Awards will be made to the contact institution; subcontract arrangements are managed by the contact institution.

Priority for funding will be based on the following:
1. Demonstrated extension of 2025 Congress topics and priorities;
2. Overall potential for field impact;
3. Novelty in terms of methodology or approach;
4. Multi-disciplinary nature that supports the needs of the whole child; and
5. Potential to lead to a larger project funded by other public or private sources.

The grants program is expected to be of interest to a wide range of disciplines and encourages unique perspectives. All grants will also be reviewed for their potential to support the Institute's key stakeholders (e.g., parents, clinicians, educators, media and policymakers) to improve children's media experience and overall well-being.

3.0 Award Terms and Conditions

3.1 Grant Amounts/Terms of Agreement

Grant requests can be made in any amount up to $150,000; the number of awards is contingent on requested budgets and successful applications. Funds will be awarded upon execution of the grant agreement for US-based Institutions. (Please note: Fund distribution timelines may vary for international institutions. Additional details can be shared with awardees at time of award notification.)

A PI can only hold one award from the Institute at a time. Research already supported by any other sponsored award is not eligible for Institute funds. Applicants who were declined are welcome to resubmit for a different project.

Indirect costs per grant regardless of the number of subcontract institutions are limited to 10% total direct costs. Any funds remaining at the end of the grant period must be returned to the Institute.

3.2 Taxes

Grant recipients are solely responsible for determining the tax consequences of Children and Screens' Seed Grants.

3.3 Notice of Award

Awards will be issued to the contact PI's affiliated "contact" institution through an award agreement that requires the signature of an authorized officer of a university, or an authorized business official of the private, 501c3 nonprofit entity. Investigators cannot sign these documents. Upon receipt of the signed agreement, Children and Screens will issue payment.

3.4 Acknowledgement of Support/Control of Research

All publications and presentations resulting from the funded research must acknowledge support of Children and Screens: Institute of Digital Media and Child Development, including the grant number. Hard copies and website links for all such publications should be made available in draft form to Children and Screens via email to grants@childrenandscreens.org.

3.5 Reporting Requirements

Grantees will be asked to self-assess their project on a variety of dimensions including scientific originality, interdisciplinary scope, integrative quality, conceptual links to the grant program topics and themes, and the likely scientific impacts of products produced by the project. Interim and final reports are required and should include:

1. A summary of progress toward the achievement of originally stated aims;
2. Description of unexpected accomplishments and/or challenges;
3. A concise description of the results (positive or negative) considered significant;
4. A statement about where more research is needed;
5. Status of the required manuscript suitable for publication;
6. A list of publications and other products (including website links) resulting from the project not already reported; and
7. Financial report.

See Section 6 for more details on Reporting.

3.6 Evaluation

In order to learn from our work and better inform decisions about Children and Screens' Grants program strategy, design, implementation, and impacts, grant recipients will be asked to participate in periodic program evaluation discussions and/or surveys.

4.0 Letter of Intent Guidelines

All interested applicants must submit a three-to-five-page Letter of Intent (LOI) via email in order to be considered for invitation to submit a detailed proposal for a grant. This letter should be a google doc or a .docx file. The letter should be emailed to grants@childrenandscreens.org.

LOI Deadline: Friday, October 3, 2025 by 5:00 pm ET

The LOI should be a google doc or a .docx file and should be emailed to grants@childrenandscreens.org.

4.1 Letter of Intent Content

It is expected that the Letter of Intent will be approximately three to five pages and should include the following information:

1. Name of contact/administrative/fiscal PI, Title, Institution;
2. Additional PI Name(s), Title(s), Institution(s);
3. Title of project;
4. Total dollar amount requested (may include a "wish list" budget, as well; maximum 10% indirect rate permitted);
5. Description of the needs or problem;
6. Specific aims, research questions and theoretical basis for the project;
7. Methodology including a description of the sample and recruitment feasibility (e.g., sample size, age of children, etc.), measures and analytic approaches;
8. Expected outcomes of the research (including plans for future grant submissions);
9. Expected output of the team (e.g., papers, conference presentations, etc.);
10. Anticipated benefit to the intended population and/or development of the field, knowledge and/or understanding;
11. Relevance to stated program topics and themes (i.e., 2025 *Digital Media and Developing Minds* Congress).
    a. LOIs that can demonstrate clear connections between Congress sessions and/or discussions and the resulting proposal and/or research team.

4.2 Suggesting Reviewers

Along with the Letter of Intent, applicants are invited to suggest an appropriate reviewer to be included in the review process for all proposals. Children and Screens is not obligated to consult this reviewer.

4.3 Invitation to Apply

Following a review of the Letters of Intent, a selected number of candidates will be invited by Friday, December 5, 2025 to submit a detailed proposal.

5.0 Full Proposal Guidelines

Proposal Deadline: Friday, February 6, 2026

Only proposals that have been invited following submission and review of the required Letter of Intent will be accepted. **The full proposal should be sent to grants@childrenandscreens.org, and should be a google doc or a .docx file. Proposals should be typed in Times New Roman, 12 point font, with 1 inch margins.**

5.1 Proposal Content

The full proposal should include all of the following sections.

1. PI names and affiliations
2. Project Summary (up to 2 pages)
   - Broad, long-term goals
   - Specific aims, research questions and theoretical basis for the project
   - Methodology including a description of the sample (e.g., size of sample, age of children, etc.), measures and analytic approaches
   - Expected outcomes
   - Anticipated benefit to the intended population and/or our knowledge/understanding
   - Connection to Congress themes, sessions, and/or discussions
3. Project Description (up to 8 pages). The underlined in the following list should be used as headers for the different required sections:
   - <u>The Problem</u>
     - State of existing knowledge
     - Rationale for proposed work, including the research questions and theoretical basis for the project
   - <u>Project Plan/Methodology</u>
     - Specific description of the sample (e.g., size of sample, age of children, etc.)
     - Describe the methods of recruitment and feasibility of sampling and project
     - Describe the methods, measures, and analyses planned in detail
     - Include a description of use of animals and/or human subjects, if applicable
     - Discuss potential pitfalls and plans to work around them (e.g., sample attrition)
     - Describe how results will be collected, analyzed and interpreted
     - Discuss the team's expertise and for each member, their individual role in the project

- Outline how the research might inform other work your team is planning for the future, and how it might be effectively communicated for others to continue with future research
    - <u>Relevance</u> (to stated program topics and themes)
        - Description of how your proposed research (content, methodology, or both) is related to themes, sessions, or discussions of the 2025 *Digital Media and Developing Minds* International Scientific Congress
        - Outline how your expected results could be relevant to audiences including those in your disciplines, as well as the Institute's key stakeholders (e.g., parents, clinicians, educators, media, and policymakers)
    - <u>Timeline</u>
        - Include a timeline of planned activities for the grant period
    - <u>Future Plans</u> (ideas for leveraging results to apply for larger, longer-term awards from larger institutions)
4. Supplemental Materials
    - References Cited
    - Budget
        - Total project budget itemized for the contact institution with line-item justifications, and separate subcontract budget(s) with line-item justifications.
    - Grant Team
        - Brief biosketches of all primary team members (PIs, Co-PI's, and Co-I's) in the format used for National Institutes of Health (NIH) proposals (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm).
        - For each proposal team member, include a list of current and pending support for your entire portfolio of work: include sponsor, sponsor ID number, PI name, period of support, direct costs for the current grant year, effort, and title of the project.

5.2 Funding Award

A decision on funding is expected to be finalized by June 5, 2026; applicants will be notified of the decision on their proposal by email. This timeline is subject to change; applicants will be kept informed of any changes. **Projects should begin as soon as possible thereafter.**

6.0 Reporting Guidelines

Interim (quarterly - or other timeline as determined by the current grant program) progress and financial reports are required, as well as final progress and financial reports. Final guidelines on interim and progress reports will be provided with the final grant contract, but may include:

1. A summary of progress toward the achievement of originally stated aims;
2. Description of expected and unexpected accomplishments and/or challenges;
3. A concise description of the results (positive or negative) considered important;
4. A statement on where more research is needed;
5. Status of the required manuscript suitable for publication where the lead PI is first author;
6. Financial report; and
7. A list of publications and other products resulting from the project not already reported.

A manuscript (e.g., white paper, concept paper or appropriate write-up of your results) suitable for publication will be submitted for review and dissemination by the Institute.

All products resulting from the funded research should include the following information:
- PI Name;
- Project Title;
- Institute Award Number (to be assigned); and
- Grant start and end dates.

All progress and financial reports are to be emailed to grants@childrenandscreens.org.

7.0 Timeline

Submission to the grants program begins with the required Letter of Intent (3-5 pages), which will, in some cases, be followed by an invitation to submit a proposal. **The deadline for submission of the Letter of Intent is Friday, October 3, 2025, 5pm ET.** Following a review of the Letter of Intent, a selected number of candidates will be invited by December 5, 2025 to submit a detailed proposal. **The deadline for full proposals is Friday, February 6, 2026 at 5pm ET.** In order to ensure fairness, late submissions will not be accepted. **All applicants will be notified of their status via email by June 5, 2026**. Projects are expected to begin as soon as possible thereafter.

This timeline is subject to change; applicants will be kept informed of any changes.

Review Timeline		
Steps	**Date**	**Time**
Grants Program Guidelines Published	Monday, August 4, 2025	
Letter of Intent Deadline	Friday, October 3, 2025	By 5pm ET
Invitations to Apply Sent	Friday, December 5, 2025	
Full Proposal Deadline	Friday, February 6, 2026	By 5pm ET
Questions from Reviewers Sent to Applicants	Week of March 30, 2026	
Answers from Applicants Due	Friday, May 1, 2026	By 5pm ET
Proposal Status Notification	Friday, June 5, 2026	
Start Date	As soon as possible	