

## **A Call for Research: Technology, Inequality, and Information Policy**

The MIC Center is supporting new research that explores the connections between inequality and technology with a specific focus on journalism, policy, work, and social movements.

Our society is caught in a growing paradox. On one hand we are in a moment of rapid technological advancement that creates greater communication and information sharing, economic prosperity for all, and more democratic possibilities. On the other hand, we see a declining fourth estate, platforms that spread disinformation with little accountability, more economic insecurity and precarity, and a debased political process.

Recognizing these potentials and perils, MIC is supporting a wave of research focused both on understanding this conjuncture from structural and historical perspectives, while also offering viable strategies for social change. Our goal is threefold: 1. Inspire research focused on these thorny questions, 2. Build a network of scholars, organizers, and policy makers collaborating on addressing core social problems, and 3. Help to build a coordinated field focused on the intersections of technology and inequality that advances theoretically informed praxis.

As part of our launch, MIC welcomes 2-3 page proposals for research that help to clarify key problems at the intersection of media, technology, and social justice. In this first RFP, we will be making small grants of between \$1,500-5,000. We accept research that involves a variety of methodologies, such as in-depth case studies, content analyses, institutional/organizational analyses, political economy, discourse analyses, close analysis of technical or infrastructural conditions, survey research (involving quantitative and qualitative approaches), action research, and ethnographic approaches. The proposals should be a for 2-4 month turnaround time, though in some cases, longer projects might be considered. Geography is open, and we especially welcome projects focused on Philadelphia and New Jersey.

- **Future of Journalism and Information Policy**
  - Government supported models for journalism
  - Nonprofit models for journalism and other experiments
  - History of media policy failures and successes
  - Mapping local media ecosystems
  - Platforms and the future of information
  - Political economy of journalism and platform companies
  - Unions and the future of journalism
  - Community driven journalism
  - Mis/disinformation
  - Journalism and storytelling in poor communities, immigrant communities, and communities of color
  
- **Gig platform companies, workers, and strategies for survival**
  - Regional specific approaches to workers in the gig economy
  - Strategies for organizing in the gig economy
  - Worker misclassification in gig economy

- Role of unions or worker centers in protecting gig workers
  - Workers and informational asymmetry
  - Algorithmic management and gig workers
  - Gamification, worker rating systems, and other strategies of worker control
  - Political economy of gig companies
  - History of neoliberalism and the rise of just in time workforce
- **Social Movements**
    - Technology and rise of networked social movements
    - Resurgence of social movement-driven political parties and electoral politics
    - Digital media and current wave of resistance
    - Technology and the problems and possibilities of scalability
    - Capitalism, class, and contemporary social movements
    - Social movements' reliance on Facebook, Google, and Twitter for communication strategy
    - Social movements and broader political alignments

**Eligibility:**

Individuals or institutions may apply. We also accept proposals that have cross-cutting themes and we encourage collaborations across organizations. We welcome partnerships between academics and those with more practitioner/organizer profiles. Non-traditional approaches to the final deliverables and their dissemination are also welcome.

**The proposal should include:**

- Brief description of the research
- Method for collecting data
- Proposed budget
- Timeline
- Deliverables
- The name and contact information of someone who can be reached between July 31 and August 31 for follow up questions prior to the final announcement of the award recipients August 31, 2018

**MIC Center:**

The newly formed MIC Center is a collaboration between the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School and Rutgers University's School of Communication and Information.

MIC explores the intersections between media, democracy, technology, policy, and social justice. MIC produces engaged research and analysis while collaborating with community leaders to help support activist initiatives and policy interventions. More on MIC [here](#).

Awards will take into consideration the relevance of the work proposed and the quality of work to be anticipated. Please send proposals to Briar Smith (briar.smith@asc.upenn.edu) **by 5pm EST on July 31, 2018.**