



MAGIC Research Seed Fund Spell Grant Application

Introduction

At MAGIC, we learn by making things! The Spell Grant program serves to provide researchers at RIT with seed funding **up to \$5000** to aid their pursuit of external grant awards in their field. Funds are provided to assist faculty and staff researchers investigating any direct application of **digital media** in art, games, interactivity and creativity. Eligible submissions may include focus on art or technology, entertainment or serious distribution, humanities or engineering, storytelling or discovery. The portfolio of digital media research at RIT is diverse and world-class. MAGIC researchers are pushing the bounds of creative workflows, technological innovation, and alternative applications for media and games across visual arts, narrative experience, healthcare, simulation, digital twins and beyond. The landscape for extramural funding is lucrative, but we recognize the power that early results and prototype platforms can bring to a successful proposal. The Spell Grant program provides a boost to your current work and can cover costs associated with grant writing and early development.

The outcome for the Spell Grant program will be a successfully submitted **proposal for external funding**, contributed by the project principal investigator(s) within the award period of engagement. In the event of a successful external proposal award, the subsequent sponsored project will be managed through the MAGIC Spell Studios Center of Excellence (<https://www.rit.edu/research#signature-research-areas>). In addition to the funds themselves, MAGIC has the network and the facilities to enable your early research work. We're excited to start making something with you!

Eligibility

Any current full-time faculty or staff member engaged in research at RIT is eligible to apply. Funds may be used for hardware or software, wages for student research assistants, experiment-related costs, and/or conference travel and networking. Note that funds may **not** be used for course release or payment to external contractors, subcontractors, or temporary workers. Research expenditures are governed by RIT policies and procedures.

Award Period of Engagement:

The funding period for Spell Grants is February 1, 2026 through August 31, 2026, commensurate with our goal to see extramural funding proposals submitted by the end of the summer term (or shortly thereafter if agency application deadlines permit). Should the work require continuation beyond this date, a one-time no-cost extension appeal may be filed to allow expenditure through the end of the calendar year in which the award was earned.

Application Requirements:

Submissions to the Spell Grant program are made via online form:

<https://www.rit.edu/magic/research>

Application Deadline: **January 12, 2026**

Each application must include the following information:

- ✓ Project Title
- ✓ Principal Investigator(s) and contact information
- ✓ Project Abstract: provide a 1-paragraph summary of your project
- ✓ Digital Media Statement: provide a 1-paragraph statement of how your project extends the mission of MAGIC to explore storytelling or technical innovation in digital media applications across art/design, games, interactivity and creativity
- ✓ Project Statement of Work: detail your project objectives, goals, and deliverables for the Spell Grant period of engagement (Feb 1 – Aug 31, 2026)
- ✓ Personal Background Statement: provide a 1-paragraph statement of how your previous work and preparation substantiate your potential for success in this project
- ✓ Project Budget: outline your high-level plans for seed fund expenditure amounts by category, which may include student labor, supplies, hardware, software and travel
- ✓ External Funding Proposal: provide a statement of intent for extramural funding applications enabled by this project, including source (i.e. NIH, NSF, foundation, industry, etc.), budgetary ask and timeline

To strengthen the likelihood of your application receiving funding, an evaluation rubric is available for your review prior to submission. Additionally, you may direct any questions to David Long, Director, MAGIC Spell Studios at David.long@rit.edu

Award Announcement: **February 1, 2026**

RIT | MAGIC Spell Studios

MAGIC Research Seed Fund Spell Grant Application

The following rubric will be used by the selection committee to evaluate each submitted application for the Spell Grant

Evaluation Rubric

Criteria	0-1 (Weak)	2-3 (Adequate)	4-5 (Exceptional)
Fit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project addresses a research opportunity in digital media through creative expression, technical innovation, or novel domain application (serious games, novel tool for experimentation, novel platform for discovery, etc.) Project has, at its core, an emphasis on media, arts, games, interactivity and/or creativity 	Project does not make a clear contribution to associable MAGIC digital media domains.	Digital media relevance/emphasis as core to research outcomes for the project is minimal or needs additional clarity.	Project's association with MAGIC core mission for digital media scholarship is clear and exemplary.
Extramural Funding Feasibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project shows a clear path to earning future extramural funding 	Project includes speculative argument or weak narrative on plans for future grant writing. There is low likelihood of extramural proposal submission and award.	Project includes adequate narrative, complete with identified vehicles, for additional funding. There is reasonable likelihood of extramural proposal submission and award.	Project has strong plan for earning future external funding, with identified funding agencies, programs and contacts. There is evidence of prior networking and outreach from PI team with identified agencies.
Execution Feasibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project is feasible to complete within the timeline and budget proposed 	Project is not feasible within the timeline and budget proposed. Proposal lies outside the domain of expertise of the PI team.	Project has potential to be completed within the timeframe and budget proposed. PI team is reasonably experienced in domain.	Project can be completed within the timeframe and budget proposed and is built on explicit strengths of the PI team and the support afforded by MAGIC.
Innovation & Creativity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project includes novel approach or application in creative or technical digital media scholarship 	The project mimics prior work from other practitioners in the field or shows inadequate novel contributions to the proposal domain.	The project shows some novelty, originality, or unprecedented contribution in the proposal domain.	The project shows clear novelty, originality, or unprecedented contribution in the proposal domain.