AI for Civic Cohesion Fellowship

A 12-month fellowship program to support early-stage innovators building AI-powered tools to bridge divides, improve civil discourse, and advance social and civic cohesion.

Civic Health Project (CHP) is a nonpartisan nonprofit organization based in the SF Bay Area, working at the intersection of artificial intelligence, civic discourse, and social cohesion. We believe that technology, when designed and deployed thoughtfully, can foster constructive engagement across divides and strengthen rather than erode our nation's social and civic fabric.

CHP is launching this fellowship program because we believe a thriving innovation ecosystem around AI for civic cohesion is both possible and necessary. Many tools with potential to move the needle on polarization and online discourse are early-stage, working in isolation, underfunded, and invisible to the networks and funders that could help them go further.

This fellowship is designed to address these gaps by identifying promising innovators, connecting them to a community of peers and practitioners, and providing resources and visibility that help their work gain traction. Our aim is to help high-potential projects reach the point where they can be broadly deployed and adopted - not just as standalone tools, but as resources available to the growing ecosystem of bridging organizations looking to scale their work and impact. We are especially interested in tools that can be integrated with shared AI infrastructure, such as agents or MCP servers that allow other tools and platforms to call on their capabilities directly.

What We Are Looking For

For this fellowship round, we will select five U.S.-based fellowship recipients building tools who are:

- Harnessing AI to mitigate polarization or enhance the quality of online discourse;
- Helping people to connect productively across differences through bridge-building, mutual understanding, and / or constructive conflict resolution;
- Displaying genuine potential and rigor, whether they are just starting out or beginning to scale.

The Opportunity

Fellowship recipients will receive the following support:

- **Grant Funding:** A $10,000 unrestricted grant award.

- **Cohort Community:** Five facilitated convenings throughout the fellowship period to exchange insights, learnings, and challenges with peer teams.
- **Thought Partnership:** Ongoing access to CHP's network of practitioners building cutting-edge civic AI solutions.
- **Funder Pitch:** An opportunity to present your project to a curated group of funders during the fellowship program.
- **Visibility:** CHP will showcase fellows and their work across our external communications and professional network.

Eligibility

We welcome applications from projects meeting the following eligibility criteria. Please make sure you meet all the criteria below before submitting your application.

- You are a nonprofit organization, academic team, or individual innovator (for-profit ventures are not eligible).
- Your team is US-based.
- Your tool is early-stage (i.e. you started building it within the past two years and you have spent less than $50,000 to date developing it).
- Your tool is beyond the conceptual phase (i.e. you've built a working tool).
- Your tool leverages frontier AI (i.e. LLMs, agentic AI). Tools built as - or adaptable to - an AI agent or MCP server are of particular interest, though this is not a requirement.
- Your tool's primary focus is to mitigate polarization, foster constructive online discourse, and / or help people engage productively across differences, applying principles of bridge-building or conflict resolution.
- Your tool's primary focus is not reducing mis/disinformation or supporting citizen deliberation. These focus areas, while important, are out of scope for purposes of this fellowship.

How to apply

This is a two-stage process. We will review short concept notes first and invite a select group of applicants to submit a full proposal.

Stage 1 applications are submitted via this Google Form. The form includes fields for your concept note and answers to additional questions.

STAGE 1 Concept Note

> Submit a concept note of no more than 300 words describing your project — what you're building, who it's for, and why it matters. Think of it as your 60-second pitch in written form: clear, concrete, and compelling. Alongside your concept note, you will be asked to answer a few brief questions.

STAGE 2 **Full Proposal** — by invitation

Applicants invited to Stage 2 will submit a full proposal covering project design, budget, timeline, and evaluation approach. We will provide a template and detailed guidance to all Stage 2 invitees.

Timeline

- **August 14, 2026** Deadline to submit Concept Note (Stage 1)) through this Google Form.
- **August 28, 2026** Invitations to Stage 2 sent
- **September 25, 2026** Full proposal deadline
- **October 5, 2026** Fellowship award notifications

FAQ:

- When does the fellowship start?
  - The fellowship program will begin in October, 2026.
- When do I receive the fellowship funding?
  - Fellows will receive 60% of their funding in October, 2026, with the remaining 40% to be disbursed in May, 2027.
- If I'm part of a team, who serves as the "fellow?" All of us, or a designated individual?
  - We welcome participation in cohort meetings from more than one team member, but ask that teams designate one person who carries the "fellow" title and commits to attending each meeting.
- When will the cohort meetings occur? How long are they?
  - Cohort meetings will be 60-90 minutes and take place approximately every two months over the course of the fellowship period.
- What is expected of me during the 12-month fellowship? How much time is required?
  - Our goal is to offer meaningful support that helps you move more quickly, not add additional burdens on your time. In addition to attendance at the five scheduled cohort meetings, we expect fellows to participate in shared communication channels (ie, Slack), share learnings and feedback with their peers, and present their project to a funder panel organized by Civic Health Project.

For questions related to the application process, please contact Trinidad Reynoso Castillo at trinidad@civichealthproject.org. Please include "AI for Civic Cohesion Fellowship" in the subject line of your email.