



Bridging Divides Initiative

BDI Research Assistant Internship

About BDI

The Bridging Divides Initiative (BDI) is a non-partisan research initiative that tracks and mitigates political violence in the United States. BDI supports efforts to grow and build local community resilience through elections and other periods of heightened risk, laying the groundwork for longer-term to bridge the divides we face as a nation.

We do this by 1) producing action-oriented and responsive research to fill existing gaps and empower local leaders; 2) enabling cross-sector collaboration, so individuals and organizations are better prepared to mitigate risk and respond to crisis when it does arise; and 3) helping to drive the policy and community response. Over the past four years, BDI played an essential role in supporting a wide range of actors preparing for and responding to political violence and democratic crises. Our data, analysis, and tools continue to help a diverse coalition of national and local decision-makers better target their interventions.

BDI is based at the Princeton School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA), co-hosted by the Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC).

For more information, please visit our website: <https://bridgingdivides.princeton.edu/>.

Position and Internship Overview

BDI is seeking several student Research Assistants (RA) to support BDI's strategic objectives across multiple portfolios including our early warning project, threats and harassment against local officials project, and state-level violence mitigation project among others. Research Assistants will work directly with the researcher or project manager who oversees each of these portfolios.

The Research Assistant Internship is part of BDI's efforts to support and train the next generation of conflict mitigation and peacebuilding practitioners in the United States. The internship is a paid 12-month program, where RAs will receive hands-on experience in political violence research and mitigation efforts.

The internship program will include regular skill-building and professional development workshops on topics such as open-source intelligence research and analysis, digital safety and threat modeling, conflict analysis, briefing and presentation skills, and much more. Research Assistants will also have the opportunity to receive mentorship, resume and job support, and network with other mission-aligned organizations.

The Research Assistants will work remotely but will be **expected to attend an in-person retreat** to onboard, meet, and network with others in the cohort and BDI staff at the beginning of the internship.

Project Overviews

Research Assistants will be assigned to one of the following projects. Please indicate your preference in your application.

Building and Modeling Structures for Early Warning – BDI’s early warning project identifies the signs of violence and provides situational awareness for effective community responses. BDI’s core monitoring and analysis work, delivered reliably through our verified distribution network, has proven to be an essential part of the U.S. early warning infrastructure. Our strategic use of regular reporting, timely issue briefs, and custom memos – drawing on data and collaboration with over a dozen monitoring partners – provides reliable, trusted, and actionable information to help the entire early warning ecosystem get ahead of and respond to risk.

BDI is hiring 3 RAs to join the Early Warning team. In these roles, Early Warning RAs will provide research and ad hoc support to not only the regular production of our early warning products (such as our nationally focused Situation Reports or 'SitReps') and support BDI’s overarching research processes and systems. This group of RAs will report to the Early Warning Project Manager and will support both the Project Manager, two full-time Early Warning Researchers, and the research team more broadly, to identify and support the analysis of early warning indicators of offline political violence and hostility.

State-level violence mitigation support - BDI State Leads provide real-time monitoring and analysis of political violence risk, including tailored briefings for a range of stakeholders, rapid response memos, and additional concierge support to translate insights into action. Individual State Leads serve as conduits to and from state and local groups to national networks, resources, and training. By focusing on the unique needs of each state, our State Leads provide specialized, locally informed assistance to partners and regularly host state-wide coordination tables on monitoring and analysis.

BDI is hiring 6 RAs for this role and they will be paired with a State Lead and will support their work in that state by contributing to state-focused Situation Reports and supporting local networks. BDI state leads work in Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, North Carolina, and Wisconsin.

Data coding and analysis support - Data-driven research is at the heart of our work. BDI seeks to fill gaps in information about political violence in the United States and translate these insights into timely, accessible, and actionable resources that empower people working to track and mitigate risk.

BDI is hiring 1 RA for this role who will work with BDI’s research team to expand opportunities for project outputs, support in meeting turnaround times for fast-moving requests, and improve quality assurance of analysis. The RA in this position should be proficient in R and Tableau.

Media and communications support - BDI is a trusted provider of actionable research that translates complex data into the practical tools that communities need to mitigate risk. To amplify the impact of our work and distribute resources to key stakeholders, BDI conducts regular outreach to a wide range of audiences – including media, mitigation practitioners, and policymakers – and collaborates with partner organizations to push back on the threat of political violence, foster democratic resilience, and elevate local community voices.

BDI is hiring 1 RA to support the Communications Manager with media and public relations, digital content production, website management, and branding, among other communications projects. Preference will be given to applicants who have data visualization, graphic design, and/or audiovisual production skills and are especially interested in the intersection of research and communications.

Understanding Threats and Harassment Against Local Officials – The threats and harassment project is a mixed methods and participatory approach, BDI’s work advances essential understanding of where, who, and how threats are most directly impacting officials and our democracy at its most local level. Within this project, BDI coordinates (1) quarterly survey work, (2) interviews with officials, and (3) the Threats and Harassment Dataset (THD) - a first-of-its-kind database that tracks threats against local officials across the United States. Through documentation of threats against and harassment of local officials, the project helps to identify and monitor trends. Such work allows BDI to get the right data into the hands of communities and policymakers to drive research-informed interventions, especially in advance of the upcoming election season.

BDI is hiring 2 RAs for this role and they will report to the Threats and Harassment Project Manager and will support both the Project Manager and the THD Researcher, and the research team more broadly, to support their work to research and record content for the Understanding Threats and Harassment project, including though not limited to coding for THD.

Qualifications and Requirements

Applicants should meet all of many of the following qualifications and requirements:

- Current 3rd or 4th-year undergraduate, or graduate student enrolled in a relevant discipline.
- Expressed interest in gaining skills to mitigate and transform conflict in the United States.
- Willing to commit to the entire one-year internship (September 2024 - August 2025).
- Commit to work at least 10-15 hours per week including attending meetings with supervisors, training sessions, and other team meetings.
- Interpersonal and communication skills.
- Reliably meet project deadlines.
- Ability to work independently to locate and interpret information from multiple sources.
- Analytical and critical thinking skills that aim to master and apply complex methodology.

- High level of attention to detail.
- Ability to receive and incorporate feedback.
- Familiarity with MS Office suite (Word, Excel) & Google Drive (Docs, Sheets, Forms).
- Familiarity with common research tools (NexisUni, ProQuest, Google News Alerts).
- Experience conducting desk-based research.

Timeline: Start date for the position is September 3, 2024. Approximate hours: 10-15 per week. While the BDI team will work with Research Assistants to accommodate their schedules, Research Assistants are expected to adhere to the schedules to which they have committed.

Compensation: \$18 for undergraduate students; \$25/hour for those with a degree.

How to apply: Submit your resume and cover letter, specifying the position that aligns best with your skills and goals. For state-based roles, specify your preferred state in your cover letter.

Email your resume and cover letter to bdi@princeton.edu with “Research Assistant Internship Application” in the subject line.

You may email bdi@princeton.edu with any questions. Applications will be considered incomplete until all materials are received.

No matter who you are, BDI is a place you can call home. We know that our unique perspectives make us stronger, smarter, and well-positioned for success. We value and rely on the collective voices of our team to help guide our work on challenging issues. That’s why we’re proud Princeton is an equal opportunity employer and all qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to age, race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, disability status, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.