



Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund 2021

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
Co-funders:	State of São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), Taiwan Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£1,000,000
Maximum award:	£100,000
Publication date:	1 February 2021
Opening date:	1 February 2021
Closing date:	30 March 2021 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 10 February 2021

[Start application ►](#)

Apply for support to develop new long-term partnerships with international researchers.

Your proposed partnerships:

- can be in any research area from across NERC's remit
- must be with one or more international partners
- must have a new partner as the primary partnership, but can include other existing collaborations
- must have the potential to become self-sustaining after the grant period.

You and your organisation must be eligible for NERC funding and you must not hold another active Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund grant, as a PI or Co-I, at the closing date for this grant.

This funding supports partnerships for up to 24 months.

[Open all](#)

Who can apply

Standard NERC individual and research organisation eligibility apply for principal investigators (PI) and co-investigators (Co-Is) and can be found in section C of the [NERC research grant and fellowships handbook \(PDF, 755KB\)](#).

In addition, a number of specific criteria apply to the Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund programme:

- investigators may only submit one proposal as either a PI or Co-I
- investigators who hold an active Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund grant either as PI or Co-I at the time of the call closing date are ineligible
- resubmission of proposals is not permitted under this call
- new investigators must meet the eligibility requirements for the New Investigator's scheme in NERC standard grant (see section C paragraphs 57-59 of the [NERC research grants handbook \(PDF, 755KB\)](#)). The process to allocate funding under this call will consider new investigator status in the final decision by the NERC office, after ranking by the panel, to allow an increased chance of success. The new investigator must be the PI on the grant and use the prefix "NI:" in their project title to indicate it is to be considered as a New Investigator proposal
- International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) researchers are eligible as Co-Is. Note, if claiming funding as a Co-I they cannot be the project partner for the purposes of meeting the call requirements.

International partners

The inclusion of one or more international project partners is mandatory. To maximise the quality of the activity and its potential to develop long-term sustainable partnerships, international project partners must have an integral role in the proposed work.

Applicants should note the following when considering potential partners:

- the quality of partnerships should be the primary criteria rather than the number of international partners
- while existing long-standing international partners are welcome to participate, the application must primarily involve developing new international project partners. Applications that are judged not to meet this requirement, or only work with existing partners, will be rejected prior to assessment.

Details of the project partners and their contributions to the project must be recorded in the appropriate sections of the application, including the Je-S form, case for support and project partner letters of support. Letters of support will be a

key consideration of the panel at assessment and should complement the case for support effectively.

NERC-FAPESP and NERC-MOST (Taiwan) proposals

Joint proposals with researchers from the State of São Paulo in Brazil may apply under the terms of the UKRI-FAPESP Lead Agency Agreement, and with researchers from Taiwan under the NERC-MOST MoU.

Please refer to the supporting documents for either FAPESP/NERC proposals or MOST/NERC proposals respectively for further guidance on how to apply.

What we're looking for

Programme objectives

The Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund enables UK researchers to develop new international partnerships and networks which underpin the development of long-term sustainable collaborations.

Proposed collaborations may involve an international research partner or partners from any country and in any science area within NERC's remit. Although the majority of the application should lie within NERC's remit, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary collaborations with international partners are welcomed. [Read NERC's remit \(NERC website\)](#).

The Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund has the following objectives:

- support development of new long-term partnerships with international scientists that have potential to become self-sustaining beyond the lifetime of the grant, for example through accessing new collaborative research funding opportunities
- support new international collaborations with the best researchers, wherever they are located, that will result in excellent research, developing new knowledge that cannot be achieved by individual national research communities alone or by existing collaborations. For example, new collaborations may enable sharing of unique or complementary data, skills, infrastructure and field sites between UK researchers and international partners to develop novel research outcomes
- develop new collaborative research ideas with international partners or enhance existing activities through adding an international dimension, or extending the number, nationality or type of international partners already engaged.

In addressing the programme objectives, the case for support should make clear:

- the significance of the international collaboration to the project's objectives
- specific intellectual and material contributions of each partner
- the expected outputs and impact of the project.

Importantly the case for support should describe the potential durability of the collaboration, including plans for further long-term collaboration beyond the life of the grant.

Supported activities may include but are not limited to:

- programmes of exchange visits or staff secondments
- establishing networks on a common research area
- scoping, feasibility or proof of concept studies
- workshops.

In all cases activities must be undertaken with the clear and demonstrable intention of developing long-term sustainable collaborations. Whilst some exploratory elements are expected, the proposal must include specific scientific objectives.

Applicants should ensure the balance between partnership-building activities and direct research is appropriate, considering the key objectives of the call.

Programme funding

NERC has provisionally allocated £1 million to this call. The maximum funding for Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund proposals is £100,000 (at 100% full economic cost) with a duration of up to two years.

All applicants are advised to consult their institutional finance officers when completing the financial parts of the application. All applicants should enter the 100% full economic cost of the proposed research into the budget sections of the Je-S form. All costs should be in pounds sterling (£). Requested costs for UK research organisations will be funded at 80% of full economic cost.

All costs associated with the project must be itemised in the Je-S proforma and justified in the justification of resources document.

Funding for international project partners

International project partners are not eligible for direct funding, however eligible UK organisations may request up to £15,000 towards their international partners' travel and subsistence costs during visits or exchanges.

Costs for UK and international project partner organisations must be entered as separate items. All travel and subsistence for international project partners (only) will be payable at 100% of actual costs and entered as 'exceptions' on Je-S (UK travel and subsistence is still paid at 80% full economic cost). For projects seeking support from FAPESP or MOST you may still use this allowance, or part of, but should carefully consider and make clear which costs are supported by NERC and why.

Ineligible costs

The following are ineligible costs under this call:

- conference attendance, including both travel and subsistence and registration fees
- standard office computing equipment
- equipment over £10,000 (inclusive of VAT)

- all international project partner costs (for example salary and estates costs) except for travel and subsistence up to £15,000
- associated studentships.

Implementation and delivery

Projects should be no longer than 24 months in duration, starting no earlier than September 2021 and no later than end of November 2021.

Data management

The NERC data policy must be adhered to, and an outline data management plan produced as part of proposal development. Applicants should ensure they request sufficient resource to cover preparation of data for archiving by the relevant data centre.

[Read the NERC data policy \(NERC website\).](#)

NERC facilities

Prior to submitting a proposal, applicants wishing to use a NERC service or facility must contact the facility to seek agreement that they can provide the service required. Please read more information on the [NERC services and facilities \(NERC website\)](#).

Reporting requirements

As for all NERC grant holders, there will be a requirement to report through the UKRI reporting system, Researchfish. This is required annually and continues for up to five years after funding ends. Projects identified as meeting Official Development Assistance criteria will have some additional reporting requirements.

How to apply

For either NERC-FAPESP joint proposals or NERC-MOST joint proposals, please refer to the supporting documents respectively for further guidance on how to apply.

Notification of intent

Register by 18 March 2021 16:00 using the mandatory [notification of intent online form \(NERC website\)](#).

This includes the names of the applicant, their international collaborator or collaborators and the main research area or areas of the work. Full applications will not be accepted unless NERC has received a notification of intent.

Full proposal

The full proposal must be submitted by 30 March 2021 16:00 using the research councils' [Joint Electronic Submission system \(Je-S\)](#).

Applicants should select:

- council: NERC
- document type: 'Standard Proposal'
- scheme: 'Directed International'
- call: 'Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund 2021'.

Applicants should ensure that their proposal conforms to all eligibility and submission rules, otherwise their proposal may be rejected without assessment. More details on NERC's submission rules can be found in:

- section F of the [NERC research grant and fellowships handbook \(PDF, 755KB\)](#)
- the [submission rules on the NERC website](#).

Applications to the Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund require the following mandatory documentation, uploaded as attachments.

Case for support

Consisting of the following three sections clearly labelled.

1. Previous track record

Not exceeding two sides of A4, covering standard NERC requirements and in addition:

- any experience and leadership in an international context including past collaborative work that is relevant to the current activity
- summarised CVs of key project partners
- new investigators must demonstrate they are the proposal leader and will be responsible for its direction.

2. Description of the proposed activity

Not exceeding three sides of A4, covering standard NERC requirements and in addition, how the activity will deliver against the aims of the programme (see section three).

3. Potential for long-term partnership

Not exceeding one side of A4, describing the durability of the collaboration and plans for long-term collaboration, including how it will develop beyond the duration of the grant and potential future funding opportunities targeted.

Project partners' letters of support

Each not exceeding two sides of A4. Letters of support should be signed on headed paper and provide evidence of sufficient contributions that substantive collaboration will go-ahead if funded.

Outline data management plan

See section above for details and link to form.

Justification of resources

Not exceeding two sides of A4. For information on what to include in the justification of resources, see section E in the [NERC research grants handbook \(PDF, 755KB\)](#).

Other requirements

NERC-FAPESP or NERC-MOST proposal requirements

See supporting documents for further requirements. 'NERC-FAPESP' or 'NERC-MOST' proposals should add this prefix to their project title.

CVs

PI and Co-Is CVs are required as attachments on the Je-S application as per standard NERC grants.

A separate pathways to impact attachment is now not required, however impact remains an important part of NERC research and innovation funding and relevant information should be included within the case for support.

How we will assess your application

Sift process

NERC will implement a sift stage before the panel to reduce the number of applications to a manageable level for a two day panel meeting.

All applications will be assigned to two panel members who will then pre-score the proposals. Based on these scores the sift will be carried out by the NERC office and approved by the panel chair.

Assessment panel

Proposals will be directly reviewed by an assessment panel of independent experts including members of the NERC Peer Review College.

The full assessment panel will discuss all proposals that progress from the sift process and agree a single score for each proposal. The panel will make funding recommendations to NERC via a single ranked list of proposals. NERC will use the recommendations of the assessment panel along with the overall call requirements and the final available budget in making the final funding decisions. New investigator status will be taken into consideration, as previously described.

Panel feedback will be provided to both successful and unsuccessful applicants following the funding decision. Applicants whose proposal is sifted prior to the panel assessment will receive introducers' pre-score and comments.

Assessment criteria

All proposals must clearly show how the project delivers against the Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund objectives. If proposals fail to demonstrate a strong link between the project objectives and the Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund programme objectives they will be office rejected on poor fit to scope of the call prior to panel assessment.

Proposals will be assessed on how well they meet the programme objectives and given a single score by the panel. The full scoring criteria can be found in the supporting documents.

The following considerations will be included in the assessment:

1. Development of new research collaborations and the extent to which this will promote excellence. Some aspects of the proposed research collaborations may be more speculative and exploratory than is expected for NERC standard grants. Consideration of excellence will take into account both the duration of the grant and the potential to achieve further excellence in the longer term.
2. The level of unique or complementary contribution and expertise of the UK team and the international partners, and why the proposed project objectives require collaboration between the UK and international partners.
3. The potential for long-term sustainability of the collaboration, including routes for further collaboration beyond the duration of the Seedcorn Fund grant.
4. The level of the contribution made to this award from other sources including the UK institutions and international potential partners.
5. The balance between partnership building activities and direct research activities is appropriate to achieve the objectives of the grant.
6. Number of international project partners is not a primary consideration, which should be the quality and value of the partnership being developed as well as the likelihood of developing a successful partnership (long term). One partner can be just as valuable as multiple individuals or networks.

The panel meeting will be held in mid to late June, with the funding decision expected by mid to late July. Outcomes will be communicated to applicants beginning of August 2021.

Contact details

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Additional info

Background

Environmental science is inherently global in nature. Many of the biggest environmental challenges the world faces do not respect national boundaries. Advancing our understanding of the environment and developing innovative solutions to these challenges requires UK researchers to collaborate with the best international researchers wherever they are located.

Considering the increasing importance of international partnerships for research the Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund provides support to enable UK researchers to establish sustainable long-term partnerships with international collaborators and reap the benefits that these relationships can deliver.

Supporting documents

- [NERC-FAPESP guidance \(PDF, 122KB\)](#)
 - [NERC-MOST guidance \(PDF, 110KB\)](#)
 - [Proposal scoring criteria \(PDF, 122KB\)](#)
 - [MOST budget form \(Word, 888KB\)](#)
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Timeline



Project start dates

Related content

[Global Partnerships Seedcorn Fund 2021: Notification of Intent form](#)

NOTE This is the first phase of our new website – let us know if you have [feedback](#) or would like to [help us test new developments](#).

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