

# Collaboration Kickstarter

## Application Guide and FAQ's

Imperial College London's Public Engagement team are launching the Collaboration Kickstarter. A new approach to seed funding engaged research with communities that aims to award funds of up to £10,000 to support Imperial Researchers and Community Partners to do research together and in collaboration.

This guide has been developed to support a diverse range of Imperial researchers and community partners to access the fund. If you have any questions about the fund or would like to request support with your application, please [book a one-to-one advice session](#) with a member of our team.

**This guide will be updated as other frequently asked questions about the fund emerge. If you have any questions about the Collaboration Kickstarter that are not covered in this document, then please get in touch at [societal\\_engagement@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:societal_engagement@imperial.ac.uk)**

## Application process

### When will applications to the Kickstarter be open?

**The fund will launch on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September 2024** and will be open to expressions of interest from Imperial researchers and community partners for two months.

**Our deadline for expressions of interest will be the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2024** when, following review, those with a good chance of being awarded funding will be invited to turn their expression of interest into a full proposal.

**Applications that are invited to develop a full proposal will have until the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2025 to submit them to the Public Engagement team.**

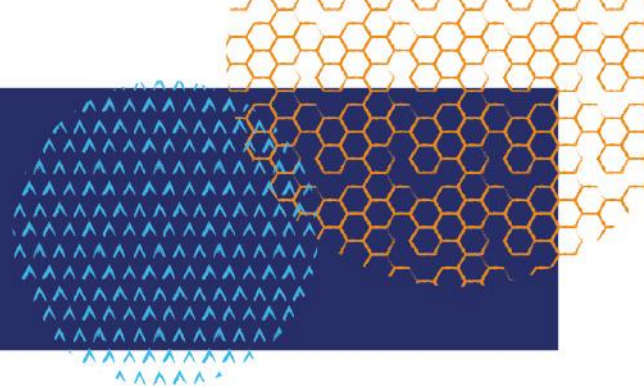
### How can I apply?

Our application process is across two stages. If you are interested in applying to the fund, you will first need to submit an **expression of interest**, these will be reviewed and those with a good chance of being awarded funding will then be invited to submit a **full proposal**.

Lots of Imperial researchers and community members may want to apply for seed funding but not all will have an existing community or research partner. At the Expression of Interest stage of our process, we will give potential applicants the opportunity to signal initial interest even where they do not currently have a partnership in place. In these cases, the Public

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Engagement team can try to help find suitable partners. Whilst brokering new relationships may not always be possible, it is in line with our principle to make our fund as accessible as we can and will likely offer many opportunities to learn from our pilot.

The expression of interest stage will be light touch and cover:

- The project's aims
- A description of project roles (What work will community partners be doing; how will researchers be involved etc.)
- What benefits the project will bring to those participating and more broadly.

In line with our ambition to make seed funding as accessible as possible, expressions of interest do not rely solely on written contributions and instead welcome other formats such as video applications that address each of the questions in the [application form](#).

Whilst the fund is open to expressions of interest, we will host a **Community Connection and Collaboration Café on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October**, where interested researchers and community members can have an opportunity to network with potential collaborators and get a sense of where areas of interest overlap.

### When will funding be awarded?

**Successful applications will receive funding in January 2025** and will have six-months to spend the funds.

## Eligibility

### Who can apply and what is meant by “community” partners?

We welcome applications which have collaboration at their heart. So, we will ultimately require proposals to the fund to include both a named Imperial researcher and a named community partner.

However, at the first stage of our application process, we are only asking for an expression of interest. This means that if you have an idea for a research activity but don't yet have a partnership in place, you can still submit an expression of interest to the fund, and we will try our best to support you to find a suitable partnership with either an Imperial researcher or a community partner.

Imperial staff and PhD students are eligible to apply to the Kickstarter.

We hold a deliberately broad definition of “community partner” and ask applicants to simply make the case that your particular partnership is a community partnership that is appropriate, relevant, and will deliver small-scale research activities in line with the aims and principles of the fund in its pilot year.

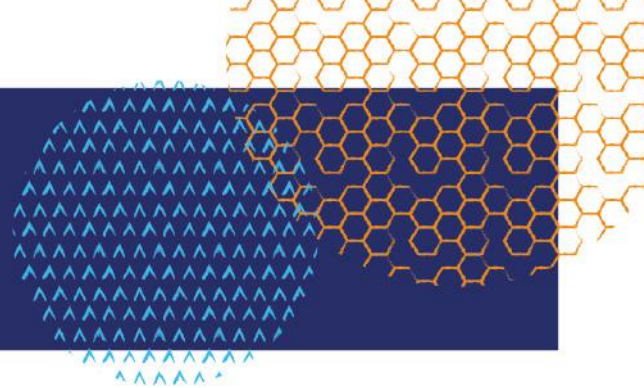
### What kinds of research does Imperial do?

The acronym STEM, refers to the subject areas that Imperial College delivers research in. The letters stand for:

- Science
- Technology
- Engineering
- Maths (and sometimes Medicine)
- Business

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The College has four faculties working across these subject areas. These are **Engineering, Medicine, Natural Sciences, and the Business School**.

You can find out more about our faculties and the departments within them [here](#).

### What types of activity can the Kickstarter support?

We are looking to fund small-scale research activity that reflects the principles and aims of the fund in its pilot year.

Research means activity that creates new knowledge. It aims to gather evidence that can answer a general question about the world and identify something new that no one has discovered before. This is different, for example, from evaluation, which analyses the value of something specific, such as a service, programme, or event.

As a Kickstarter, we don't expect you to undertake an entire piece of research. Our aim is to support work to get going and we therefore invite proposals for a range of activities including:

- **Building trust and relationships between Imperial Researchers and Community Partners** as the groundwork for future participatory and co-produced research.
- **Working collaboratively to co-produce grant proposals** for funding from elsewhere.
- **Citizen science** and other methods of collecting and analysing data collaboratively.
- **Co-designing** technologies and services.
- **Co-authoring** research outputs such as reports and journal papers.
- **Co-producing dissemination and knowledge exchange** activity based on knowledge created as part of research.
- Anything else which reflects the principles and aims of the fund.

### What kinds of activity won't be funded?

Our seed fund exists to support Imperial researchers and community members to use more participatory and co-produced approaches to research.

This means we will not fund educational activity, non-participatory forms of public engagement with research (meaning engagement that is not co-designed/co-created/co-produced) or evaluation, as other funding streams already exist that can support this kind of work.

## Funding and review

We aim to be fully transparent about how we make decisions about who will ultimately be awarded funding. All proposals will be reviewed against our four selection criteria, which are as follows.

- 1. How well does it fit the principles and aims of our fund?**
  - Is this proposal submitted jointly by an Imperial College Researcher and a Community Partner?
  - What are the project aims, who will they benefit and how?
  - Does this project demonstrate collaboration beginning to end?
  - Does this project demonstrate mutual benefit? (Skill sharing etc.)

### **2. Is the project achievable within time and resource constraints?**

- Does this project explain clearly how funds will be used?
- How much of the funding is going to community partners and do they have a say over how it is spent?
- Does this project properly value the time of community partners (£20-£25 per hour) and/or actually fund the cost of delivery rather than relying on “in-kind” contributions?
- Is the timeline feasible?

### **3. Is it clear how the resources will be used to build trust?**

- Does this project present a plan to manage and safeguard data?
- Will data be accessed, collected, and analysed by everyone who participates in the project?

### **4. Will this project contribute learning to our pilot and develop shared knowledge around how to co-produce research?**

- Are we avoiding duplication if we fund this project? Our focus is on quality. Less is more.
- Is it clear how this project or activity will help us learn about how to co-produce research together longer term?

## **Who will funding be awarded to?**

Funds will be awarded to Imperial researchers named on the proposal. Community partners would then be paid as external facilitators, consultants, participants etc. as appropriate. This would require that community partners be set up on Imperial systems. The Public Engagement team can facilitate this process.

We recognise that not all community partners will be in a position to accept “payment” (without it affecting benefits for example). In these cases, we will explore alternative means of acknowledging people for their time and skills.

In some instances, and where stated in proposals, community partners may be awarded funds directly. Please bear in mind that organisations without a written constitution and bank account will not be able to receive funds directly.

## **How will you decide who gets funding?**

Proposals will be reviewed by a panel that includes:

- Two members of the Public Engagement team
- An Imperial researcher
- An external reviewer from another University
- Two community reviewers.

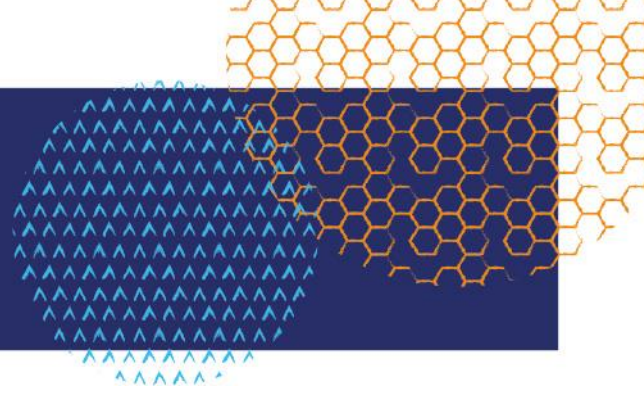
For our pilot, we have discussed not duplicating work and trying to fund work so that we can learn as much as possible. To meet these ambitions, we will take a ‘portfolio approach’ to awarding funding. This would mean that rather than deciding to fund only those projects that score most highly against our selection criteria, we will try to fund a diverse set of projects.

Diversity of projects, here, will refer to:

- Research topic/theme/area.
- Where on the research cycle activity is taking place.
- Type of community partner (e.g., charity, local authority, community organisation).
- Career stage (early career vs senior academic etc.).
- Demographic considerations (which communities does the project engage with)
- Geographical location of project work.
- Size of funds requested (medium pots vs large pots etc.)

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By aiming for diversity, we may stand to learn more from the work we fund. What the portfolio will look like, however, will emerge based on the proposals we receive. This means that rather than targeting specific research areas, types of community organisation (etc.) we will see what kinds of proposals we receive and try to avoid funding similar kinds of projects. We will make this approach to awarding funds as transparent as possible and publish our rationale publicly following the review.

A portfolio approach will mean that review will take place over two stages:

**Stage 1:** reviewers score proposals against our selection criteria to assess how well each project aligns with the aims and principles of our fund.

**Stage 2:** reviewers then consider those projects that are most aligned and award funds whilst attempting to not duplicate work, considering funding a diverse range of research areas, community partners, locations etc. based on the applications we have. Unsuccessful proposals will receive feedback from the review panel about why their projects were not awarded funding with a view to sharing learning and building capacity to apply for funding elsewhere or in the future.