

LSE-SMU Research Seed Fund Application Guidance 2026

The LSE-SMU seed research funding call aims to strengthen ties between the two institutions by supporting research projects. In enabling both SMU and LSE faculty identify complementary strengths, explore synergies, and develop outstanding joint research projects, this will help foster long-term academic collaboration by engaging researchers from all schools and research centres at both universities. The fund supports both new collaborations and the development of existing partnerships.

Grant applicants submitting to this grant call should indicate which theme(s) they are submitting to.

There are three (3) themes under this Call for Proposals:

- (A) Urban Sustainability,**
- (B) AI and the Future of Work**
- (C) Longevity and Healthy Ageing**

More detailed descriptions of the themes are given below.

[A] Urban Sustainability

As cities grow, the question of how they can grow sustainably has become important. Whilst solutions involving governance, technology, policy, infrastructure, economic and industrial transformation, and more, all underpin the development of more sustainable cities, progress towards understanding what sustainability is or might be, and how it might be enacted effectively, remains slow. We invite proposals that seek to better understand the ideals that stimulate and barriers that hinder sustainability transitions in cities throughout the world. We are especially interested in proposals that explore cities in Europe and Asia. Topics of interest include, but are by no means limited to:

- **Inter-city networking and urban regionalism:** How are city- and region-building networks created and leveraged to drive urban sustainability?
- **Mobility transitions in and beyond the city:** How might advances in transportation and mobility lead to socio-economic and behavioural shifts?
- **Infrastructural innovation in the built environment:** How might infrastructural innovations - material, digital, and more - be harnessed to drive sustainability agendas?
- **Policies, plans and people in urban sustainability:** How do sustainability policies and plans translate to on-the-ground change?
- **New urban growth agendas in a climate changed world:** How might urban growth be rethought and renegotiated amidst the pressures of climate change?

[B] AI and the Future of Work

The rapid integration of AI, coupled with changes in work practices (such as remote, gig and fractional employment), is transforming the world of work, reshaping professional practices, leadership strategies and team dynamics, while also raising concerns about job security and workplace adaptation. This theme invites research that critically examines how organisations and societies can respond to these shifts and integrate technological advancements responsibly to support inclusive and sustainable work futures. The topics of interest include but are not limited to:

- **AI identity and reskilling:** Investigate how AI adoption reshapes worker identity, the demand for lifelong reskilling, and the practicality of reskilling pathways across different groups.
- **Impact of Technology and Work Practices on teams at work:** Analyse how AI tools and changing work cultures and practices mediate team interactions, collaboration, trust and productivity in hybrid, virtual, or distributed work environments.
- **Digital Innovation in Firms:** Analyze how firms, across different professions, are harnessing digital technologies, to differentiate their innovation journey and identify relevant best practices for integrating such tools in innovative, collaborative work.
- **AI and job insecurity/productivity:** Examine how AI and other technological disruptions shape perceptions of job security, and utilize field experiments to show how organisations can mitigate devise human capital development practices to tackle such insecurity while supporting workforce resilience, inclusivity and wellbeing.
- **Impact of AI and Machines on Labor Market Dynamics:** Quantify how adoption of AI and/or robotics across different sectors and jobs is reshaping market demand for jobs, skills and competencies, and how educational programs must be refreshed to respond to such shifts in market demands

[C] Longevity and Healthy Ageing

The ageing of populations globally, especially in cities, is transforming economies, social systems for health and care, and simply everyday life. Longer lifespans present both opportunities and challenges for sustaining economic growth and per capita productivity, safeguarding equity in social provisions, and ensuring well-being across generations. This theme invites research that critically examines how societies and economies must adapt to demographic change, and how innovation in business, policy, and technology can shape inclusive and sustainable futures for longevity societies and economies.

The topics of interest include but are not limited to:

- **Economic Transformation and Workforce Adaptation:** Investigate strategies for lifelong learning, age-diverse workplaces, and policies that support extended careers and individual productivity in longevity economies.
- **Silver Economy and Market Innovation:** Explore how an ageing population can create new markets, products, and services, and the shifting implications for new business models and consumer behaviour.
- **Healthy Ageing and Well-being:** Examine interventions across the life course that are effective in promoting physical, mental, and social health as one ages, and how these interventions impact on quality of life.
- **Intergenerational Dynamics and Social Cohesion:** Analyse how ageing affects family structures, caregiving models, and community resilience.
- **Urban Design and Age-friendly Environments:** Assess how cities and housing can be reimagined to support mobility, accessibility, and sustained engagement for older adults.
- **Policy and Governance for Longevity:** Explore frameworks for social security, healthcare systems, and inclusive governance in the context of demographic change.
- **Technology Adoption for Longevity:** Evaluate the role of digital health, assistive technologies, and AI in enabling economic participation and well-being for older adults.
- **Reimagining Volunteerism and Building Social Capital in Neighbourhoods:** Explore the design of shared community “Third Places,” where social initiatives foster organic connections and empower older adults to lead, drive, and participate in programs that strengthen community bonds.

Application Process:

Collaboration Interest Form (Optional): If you are interested in finding new collaborators at LSE or SMU, we invite you to complete [this short form](#) by **Friday 13 February**. The form will capture your research interests and help you connect with LSE and SMU researchers for potential projects under the LSE–SMU Research Seed Fund. Your profile will be shared with other participating researchers, who can reach out directly or request an introduction through our team. We may also organise a sandpit event to facilitate networking and collaboration development.

Intent to apply (Required) - The Co-PIs should contact the LSE Global Research Partnerships & Alliances Manager (global@lse.ac.uk) and the SMU Resilient Workforces Institute (ResWORK) (Reswork@smu.edu.sg) as soon as possible and no later than **25 March** to indicate their intent to apply. Please include the names and titles of individuals from LSE and SMU who will participate and a proposal title. In addition, please indicate if any staff costs will be included in the budget (see below).

Application submission - applicants must apply using the LSE- SMU Research Seed Fund Application Form 2026 by the deadline of **Friday 29 May 2026** (10am BST, 6pm SGT).

The following documents must also be submitted as part of the application:

1. LSE-SMU Research Seed Fund Application Form
2. CV of LSE Principal Investigator (max 2 page each)
3. CV of SMU Principal Investigator (max 2 page each)
4. Budget Excel
5. SMU PI only: Quotations for OOE items > SGD3,000 and all equipment requests

Examples of activities:

- Discrete pilot research project with at least one researcher from each institution.
- Collection of data, development of data resources, and/or data analysis.
- Evaluation of policies or proposed interventions for societal, economic, energy, and/or environmental impacts.
- Intensive research workshops or joint conferences intended to generate further collaborative research activities.
- Preparation of substantial joint external funding proposals.
- Expansion of existing LSE and SMU research activities to scale or otherwise increase their impact.

Funding:

Applications submitted to this grant call will be awarded as two separate grants: one awarded to the SMU PI by SMU, and one awarded to the LSE PI by LSE.

PIs should only utilise the funding awarded by their relevant institution, and utilisation of funding should not cross institutions.

The funding quantum is capped at SGD25,000 per project for SMU PI and GBP15,000 per project for LSE PI with a duration not exceeding 1 year.

Principal Investigators (PIs) at LSE and SMU are advised to aim for an equal partitioning of the budget when preparing their proposals. This will ensure that the grant can be divided and managed independently by both institutions.

Project timelines should not exceed 12 months from the project start date. It is expected that projects will start no later than October 2026.

Eligibility:

To be eligible, a proposal must involve at least one researcher from each institution. Prior collaboration history is not essential.

- **For LSE:** All schemes are open to Faculty, Research and Policy Staff and Fellows as listed in LSE HR Role Profiles, including practice roles. Applicants must have a contract of employment in place until at least one year beyond the end of the project, and be able to demonstrate continued links with LSE into the future, in order to ensure that post-award assessment and regular communications can be carried out for all awarded projects. Changes to contracts must be communicated to LSE's Global Research Partnerships & Alliances Manager to ensure compliance with this rule. Funding cannot be provided past contractual employment end dates.
- **Not Eligible:** Current students at LSE, LSE Graduate Teaching Assistants, Emeritus Faculty, Guest Teachers, Education Track Staff, and Visiting Scholars are not eligible to apply; however, they may participate in the project. Applicants must confirm that they have the full support of their host academic unit as part of their application.

Cost eligibility:

The following costs **are eligible** for this scheme:

- Directly incurred non-staff costs such as travel, fieldwork, consumables, goods, equipment, services, and consultants (including associated fees and taxes).
- Hourly Paid Staff costs for occasional research assistance and clerical support.
- Research staff/Directly Incurred Salaried research and policy staff costs.

Specialist costs to make project activities more accessible that are not already covered by benefits or elsewhere institutionally **are also eligible**, such as:

- Costs for care of dependents where it is unavoidable.
- Costs to make adjustments within travel and accommodation bookings for staff who need them.
- Cost to make sure outputs are accessible (both for researchers and stakeholders, such as braille printed books or pamphlets).
- Costs of specialist contractors that are working on EDI supporting activities, such as audio transcription for events, etc.
- Costs to make events more accessible including specialist venues and supporting staff.

The following costs are **not eligible** under this scheme:

- Faculty salary/Directly allocated salaried staff costs.
- Collaborator and partner staff costs, and subawards.
- Indirect (overheads) and estates (space) charges of LSE and SMU or any other Partner and Collaborator.
- Open Access fees and article processing charges covered by the Open Access Fund

- DI teaching contract or hourly paid teaching costs are not eligible. No funding can be requested for visiting scholars, as those are unpaid affiliations.

Examples of permissible costs

- Research assistance, both hourly paid and salaried, which is linked to roles in the project.
- Staff time, for Directly Incurred staff, to undertake research, write up outputs and engage with partners and collaborators.
- Data collection/fieldwork in the UK, Singapore and overseas including associated travel, expenses and service provision if this is being outsourced.
- Purchasing datasets for use in the research.
- Reasonable travel, subsistence and accommodation costs that conform with the cognizant institutions policies.
- Participant payments and/or incentives as part of formal surveys or for community groups and beneficiaries involved in the research.
- Consultancy services in the UK, Singapore and overseas which must include applicable taxes and fees.
- Goods and services required from suppliers including surveys or transcription and translation services which must include applicable taxes and fees.
- Attendance at conferences, symposia and other networking and dissemination events, if integral to the proposed project.
- Costs of hosting events and other dissemination activities.
- Costs of software or licences required for development, research and collaboration.
- Small items of consumables.
- Other project specific costs, such as equipment (where it is directly linked to delivering project objectives).
- Costs of proof-reading and copy-editing manuscripts or grant proposals.
- Costs for publishing monographs or experimental publishing outputs.

Project costing

For any staff costs, please contact global@lse.ac.uk as soon as possible, and no later than two weeks before the final submission deadline.

For accommodation and subsistence rates please consult [LSE Travel, Subsistence and Personal Expenses policy](#) and [HMRC expense rates](#); for accommodation for visits longer than three nights, please first check with the partner institution if they could provide support.

We are only able to accept [Club Quarter](#) (LSE preferred rate) as the upper limit for hotel rates in London.

- For catering (including dinner), please visit [LSE catering page](#) for the most up-to-date costing information.
- For travel booking, please prioritise using the university-appointed travel agent.

Non-permissible costs include:

- Faculty salaries or faculty salary supplementation of any kind
- Indirect and overhead costs
- Course fees, stipends or scholarships for students
- Infrastructure and equipment purchases, such as computers, including laptops and basic computing facilities such as printers, word processing and other standard software
- Conference registrations unrelated to the dissemination of results

- Costs already incurred prior to submission of the proposal
- Subawards

Assessment Criteria

All applications will be peer-reviewed and evaluated based on the following criteria. A joint selection panel of academics from LSE and SMU review and decide on awarded projects.

Criteria	Seed Research Fund	Scoring Model
1	<p>Originality <i>The Panel will consider the originality of the seed research idea/research question, and its potential to contribute to the state of the art and break new ground.</i></p>	4 – Outstanding 3 – Excellent 2 – Good 1 – Average
2	<p>Significance <i>The Panel will consider the ambition and significance of the research idea. Why is this research important and timely? Why do we need it and how critical is the question it will answer?</i></p>	4 – Outstanding 3 – Excellent 2 – Good 1 – Average
3	<p>Implementation <i>Research-focused projects: Quality of the methodology and research design. The Panel will consider the scientific merit, rigour, and feasibility of the research method and implementation plan, the strength of the research design, feasibility and timeline of the project. Workshop-focused projects: Quality of the proposed implementation plan. The panel will consider the suitability of the project's chosen format, the clarity of objectives and expected outputs, the extent to which proposed activities are concrete enough to deliver the intended outcomes, as well as the practicality and feasibility of the timeline.</i></p>	4 – Outstanding 3 – Excellent 2 – Good 1 – Average
4	<p>Potential <i>The Panel will consider how the project, if funded, may: 1) result in external joint funding proposals, identifying potential funders or schemes; and/or 2) contribute high quality, peer-reviewed co-authored research papers for publication in top journals in the relevant field of research and/or high-quality policy-related papers; and/or 3) strengthen long-term academic collaboration between LSE and SMU.</i></p>	4 – Outstanding 3 – Excellent 2 – Good 1 – Average

Reporting:

Successful applicants will be required to submit a post-award report summarising the activities, achieved outcomes, and future collaboration plans. The LSE International Strategy and Academic Partnerships Team and/or the SMU Research and Innovation Office may request additional updates after the final progress report as well to determine the impact of the funding.

In addition, the fund may include annual joint workshops and conferences, where funded teams will be invited to present the progress and findings of their research.

Key Dates

- **Grant Call Opens:** January 2026
- **Collaboration interest form submission deadline (optional):** Friday 13 February 2026

- **Intention to apply deadline (required):** Wednesday 25 March 2026
- **Application deadline:** 29 May 2026
- **Outcomes expected to be announced:** 28 August 2026
- **Project Commencement:** October 2026
- The project duration is capped at 12 months

Contact:

The Lead PIs should contact the LSE Manager and the SMU to indicate their intent to apply as soon as possible and no later than **Wednesday 25 March 2026**. Applicants must apply using the LSE-SMU Research Seed Fund Application Form 2026 by the deadline of **Friday 29 May 2026**. LSE contact: global@lse.ac.uk; SMU contact: Reswork@smu.edu.sg

For general scheme inquiries and assistance with budget costing, LSE staff should contact global@lse.ac.uk SMU contact: Reswork@smu.edu.sg