Researcher-Led Initiative Fund Application Form

Thank you for your interest in applying to the Researcher-Led Initiative (RLI) Fund.

Applications are invited from University of Sussex doctoral researchers and early career research staff for funding to support short-term, well-defined training and development, public engagement, and mental health, wellbeing and community projects.

The deadline for applications is **Thursday 30th April 2020.**

Please ensure that you have read the guidance before completing your application.

1. Name

████████

2. Sussex e-mail address

████████

3. Contact telephone number

4. School and department of lead applicant
Life Sciences

5. Are you a doctoral researcher or early career research staff?
Doctoral researcher

Type of activity

Do you wish to apply for funding for mental health, wellbeing and community, public engagement, or training and development?
Mental health, wellbeing and community initiative

About the mental health, wellbeing and community initiative

Title of initiative
BAME role models in science

When is the proposed initiative running?
On a single date

Date
29/07/2020

Mental health, wellbeing and community initiatives must fit into one of five themes.

Select one of the options below. Please explain your rationale when prompted.

Creating community belonging
Yes

Please explain your rationale
Research demonstrates that structural inequalities lead to BAME PhD students lacking a sense of belonging at university. In particular, a lack of role models can result in BAME students not feeling part of their School and academia in general. Within the School of Life Sciences, we have very few BAME academics, and so our BAME students struggle to see themselves as future scientists, in academia or elsewhere. For example, one Black PhD student has commented that it took 3 months before they saw a

BAME person in the School. Experiencing this at the start of a PhD can increase that sense of isolation and increase the chance of people dropping out of their studies.

The project aims to address that by highlighting BAME scientists who work across the sector, including Life Sciences Alumni. It will provide a community for BAME PhD students that the School and University can't provide (due to a lack of BAME academics/professional services staff), and build connections between current BAME PhD students so they can share challenges, experiences and build a support network.

Cultivating time to breathe
No

Celebrating self and successes
No

Encouraging life outside of research
No

Sharing PhD/ECR experiences
No

How will your initiative promote awareness of, support, or improve the mental health and wellbeing of Sussex researchers, or foster a research community?
By featuring BAME scientists in a range of scientific roles, I will be building an extended research community for our students. This currently isn't possible in the School, because there are so few BAME academics, particularly Black British. I hope that by providing stories of career pathways and the opportunity to ask these scientists questions, our students will see that there are many opportunities for them in science, maintaining their motivation and engagement with their research. I will follow up the project by arranging informal gatherings of BAME PhD students, to continue fostering the community.

Who is the target audience of your activity, and how will you engage with them effectively? If your focus is on a specific group of researchers, how could your initiative be rolled out to others?
Primary audience: BAME PhD students in Life Sciences. Engaged and promoted through the BAME Ambassadors, the School newsletter, School Reps, the Research and Enterprise Coordinator and the Director of Doctoral Studies, as well as personal contacts.
Secondary audiences: BAME undergraduates in Life Sciences, and BAME postgraduates and undergraduates across the STEMM (science, technology, engineering, maths, medicine) subjects. Final outputs can be shared with the Schools/students through the BAME Ambassador programme, Communications officers and Student Experience teams in the Schools.

What are the objectives of your activity? Please list the steps you will take to achieve these objectives.
Aim:
To increase visible role models in science for BAME PhD students, building a community that extends beyond the School

Objectives:
1)   Identify 5-10 BAME scientists: using social media, the Alumni office and contacts within the School, I will approach scientists to invite them to be a part of the project. I will ensure that there is diversity in the scientists approached and keep intersectionality in mind (e.g. ensure representatives who are LGBTQ+, disabled, women, as well as BAME). Some scientists have already been identified, including people who have already collaborated with the School (e.g. for LGBT+ STEM Day).
2)   Commission a BAME artist to collaborate on the programme, producing engaging artwork of the scientists that includes key messages: this will form a key part of the post-event online engagement (via the School webpages and social media). Some potential science artists have already been identified (e.g.

Christine Liu https://twophotonart.com/) and will be approached as soon as I hear if funding is successful. The artwork will also serve to attract scientists to the programme. There is evidence that minority groups end up taking part in a lot of extracurricular activities to support their communities, which has an impact on their research/work. While we won't be paying the scientists for their time, we hope that providing artwork that they can use will be appreciated.

3) Have recorded interviews with the scientists to host on the School webpages: the scientists will be interviewed over the internet with prepared questions (about their career, any struggles in science, advice for students, why they wanted to take part in this). I will be able to take these recordings and edit them so we have short videos that students can watch. Alternatively, we will ask the scientists to record the videos themselves, answering the questions. The videos and artwork will be hosted on the School website and featured on the School twitter account.

4) Produce a PDF of the scientists: the artwork will be aligned with key messages from the scientists in an accessible and engaging PDF, that will be hosted on the School webpages, promoted to students and downloadable.

5) Host a live Q&A session with the scientists online: the scientists can share their experiences and career, and answer questions from BAME PhD students. The session will be recorded and embedded onto the School webpages. If the lockdown has ended, this will be hosted in a lecture theatre so PhD students can come together.

6) Maintain engagement with the featured scientists, to look at future collaborations (e.g. mentoring opportunities). I will ask if the scientists are happy to be contacted about future collaborations, and build from there depending on the needs of the BAME PhD student community.

7) Measure the impact on the students who attend, and the scientists who take part (see next section for method)

How will you evaluate whether you have achieved the objectives of the activity? If your proposal is based on an existing U-DOC RLI, how will you build on what you have learned so far to improve your initiative?

The key aim is to increase visible role models in science for BAME PhD students, building a community that extends beyond the School. As part of my BAME Ambassador role, I am measuring the current sense of community for BAME PhD students. Immediately after the project, I will measure whether they feel the event has changed their sense of community and belonging in Life Sciences and science, as well as what future opportunities they would like (objective 6). This will get fed back to the School.

6 months after the event I will follow up with the BAME PhD students again, and see whether the work has impacted their thoughts about career options.

Formative evaluation will be used to assess whether objectives 1-4 met their milestones.

Process evaluation will be used to assess the effectiveness of objective 5.

I will also keep in touch with the scientists, to see what impact the project has had on them in the medium term (e.g. increased confidence, taking part in similar events).

The RLI Fund is designed to provide short-term support to researcher initiatives. Describe how your initiative will be sustained in the future (if that is the intention). What is the potential legacy of the project?

The outcomes of the project will be presented to the School, to make a case for similar events to become more regular (if successful, modified post-evaluation). The project is timely, as the School is looking at methods to improve the support it provides for BAME students.

Given the current isolation in the UK, I decided to run this event online, rather than in person. This provides the opportunity to create engaging material that can be used on the School website, as well as for social media. There is the future option to have printed material, but the online resources will be accessible and relevant for several years, and for the secondary audience mentioned above as well as the primary audience.

Being online, this makes it more difficult to build a network of BAME PhD students within Life Sciences. However, I will collect names of those attending (inline with GDPR) and ensure that informal meet-ups are arranged when we return. If we are back on campus by the time the event takes place, we can hold it in a

lecture theatre (with speakers calling in remotely), which will help us to meet each other and network. As mentioned, I hope to maintain contact with the scientists to enable future opportunities to engage with them, such as for mentoring or in-person events.

Budget

Please provide a detailed budget indicating what you would spend the funding on if you are successful in your application.

Your budget should include a breakdown of costs and justification for each item (e.g. lunch for 30 people at £6 per head from Sussex Food; accommodation for external speaker at £80 per night at a University approved hotel or guest house). See the guidance notes for further advice on your proposed budget.

Budget details

Item details	£
Artist commission for production of artwork for invited external speakers. Cost is for a maximum of 10 speakers, and design of the online material. This could be changed for direct payment of the speakers if this is felt more appropriate.	£750.00
	Total: £750.00

Total requested
£750.00

Budget code
██████████

Supporting statement

You must submit a supporting statement (in PDF format) from your PI or Supervisor (for doctoral researchers) or Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange (for research staff).

Their name, title and electronic signature should be included in the statement.

If you have any difficulty with this, please contact researcher-development@sussex.ac.uk or call 01273 873366.

Upload your supporting statement here
████████████████████████.pdf