Call for Proposals Guidance

SSRP Fund # 8
'Research at the Mid-point of SDG Implementation'

Overview

The Sussex Sustainability Research Programme (SSRP) is continuing to make available small grants for projects that advance cutting-edge sustainability research. Projects up to £20k will be funded.

Special consideration will be given to projects that advance two or more UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are inter/transdisciplinary in nature, and involve two or more Schools.

We particularly welcome applications from researchers across the University who have not previously led or engaged in previous SSRP funding rounds.

Funds can be used, for example, to acquire new data and knowledge, to prepare bids for external financing, to achieve greater social or policy impact, and/or to achieve academic impact by producing joint papers with research partners. Other uses are acceptable, and support of early career research-ers and post-doctoral candidates is strongly encouraged.

Background and Purpose

2023 marks a pivotal year as we approach the mid-point in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With increasing evidence of climate impacts, widening conflict, economic disruption, and the after-effects of the coronavirus pandemic, many compounding challenges threaten to derail efforts and research is needed now more than ever on how to achieve these global goals. Delivering action on implementation and progress of the SDGs to fully leverage and advance cutting-edge sustainability research.

This call for project proposals is being led by the Sussex Sustainability Research Programme (SSRP), a University-wide bottom-up programme for stimulating and coordinating sustainability research. Fol-lowing its vision of providing 'Science for the SDGs' SSRP supports sustainability research with impact at the regional, national and international levels, with particular emphasis on interdisciplinary studies, cross and trans-School cooperation.

Scope

Bids for projects up to £20k are welcome.

Carry-over of funds into the next financial year (after 31st July 2024) will **not** be permitted, however alternative financial arrangements may be possible depending on the duration and scope of the project proposal submission.

Funds can be used, for example, to acquire new data and knowledge, to prepare bids for external financing, to achieve greater social or policy impact, and/or to achieve academic impact by producing joint papers with research partners (see "Eligible Activities").

Consistent with SSRP policy, grants can support either *ongoing or new sustainability research projects and activities*. An aim of this call is to support a mix of both. New applicants are encouraged to apply.

Projects in all geographic regions will be considered, and at all scales. We note, however, that achievement of the SDGs is a particular challenge to people in the Global South.

Special consideration will be given to projects that:

- Support SDG implementation and promote an 'integrated approach' to the SDGs by helping to advance two or more SDGs at the same time. All proposed research should have an environmental element.
- Fit under current SSRP research themes described in Annex A. Applicants are encouraged to visit the SSRP website for an indication of the type of projects supported under those themes to- date. Consistent with the bottom-up nature of SSRP, exceptions will be considered.
- Include collaboration between two or more Schools.
- Are interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary. Cooperation between STEM researchers and researchers in the social sciences, arts, and humanities is especially encouraged.
- Promote strong, enduring and equitable partnerships between Sussex and academic communities and stakeholders.
- Involve preparation of a bid for external financing. The expectation is that most proposals funded with SSRP seed grants will lead (immediately or eventually) to bids for external financing.
- Involve preparation of peer-reviewed publication(s).
- Support the development of early career and post-graduate researchers.

We note that projects funded by this call **will benefit from the support structure of SSRP (during and after the grant period) which includes:** support for boosting impact (impact fund; policy briefs; parliamentary contacts; support for working with local stakeholders; support for REF case studies; other); finding external financing (regular compilation of calls; sandpits; direct support of bids); and networking and exchanging knowledge with colleagues working on sustainability issues across campus (research cluster meetings; workshops; symposia, other).

Project outputs and impact

Proposals should briefly describe plans for how the project, or follow-up activities, will achieve academic and/or social impact. This includes describing the means for achieving this impact (e.g., through meetings, workshops, journal articles, policy briefs, books/chapters, reports, audio-visual materials, or other).

Proposals that build on a previously funded SSRP project should briefly describe the achievements of this earlier work and the added value of the proposed new project.

At the end of the project PIs will be expected to prepare a brief final report describing project outputs.

Applicant eligibility

- Applications are welcome from academics and research staff from all disciplines. We encourage increased engagement from colleagues in Engineering and Informatics, Maths and Physical Sciences, Psychology, Media, Arts and Humanities, and the Medical School.
- Applicants may only be named as PI on one submission but may be named Co-Investigator (Co-I) on multiple applications.
- Members of faculty on fixed-term contracts may apply if their existing employment contracts extends beyond the proposed project (after 31 July 2024).
- IDS researchers can apply in collaboration with Sussex faculty, one of whom must be from an SSRP Core School (e.g., Global, Life Sciences, LPS, MAH or USBS) and will be the nominal PI.
- Staff on teaching and scholarships contracts are eligible to apply with HoS / DRKE confirmation that the applicant has School support to undertake the proposed research activity.
- Research students are not eligible to apply but can be included in the research team
- In accordance with the University's Athena Swan objective of addressing gender equality, applications are welcome from those returning from parental leave.

Eligible activities

1. Acquiring new data and knowledge: Lab-based work, archival research, modelling, fieldwork, networking and partnership building, desk-based research.

2. Capacity and capability building: Increase people-based capacity and capability to undertake sustainability research in DAC countries. This means travel to and from DAC countries, including hosting researchers from DAC countries at Sussex. Funds can cover travel, subsistence, visas, a stipend and any applicable School bench fees (considering, pandemic-related restrictions).

3. Generating impact from research: This includes activities that interpret and use findings for increasing social, economic, and academic impacts. e.g., stakeholder engagement, broader dissemination etc. Funds can cover research assistance, research-based training, dissemination costs, meeting costs, and travel and subsistence, as examples.

4. Preparation of bids for external financing: This includes bids to acquire new data and knowledge, to exchange knowledge, to carry out capacity building, and/or to achieve greater social, policy, and/or academic impact from existing research.

5. Pump-priming activities: This may include exploratory meetings to identify new partnerships and projects. The outcomes of pump-priming activity should inform more substantive research.

Eligible costs
Research & technical assistance, consumables, travel and subsistence, fieldwork, survey costs, workshops, project-specific equipment.

Ineligible costs

- Teaching relief and permanent staff time are not eligible
- Overheads
- Costs incurred by collaborators at UK institutions
- Conference attendance

A PI should discuss this application with their Head of School or Director of Research & Knowledge Exchange to ensure their School is aware of what funding would be received for this project which is not being funded on a 100% FEC basis.

Project duration

Projects start dates may depend on what due diligence and contractual arrangements are needed for project partners.

Key Dates

Call issued	Deadline	Panel meeting (tentative)	Decision to applicants (tentative)	Project expenditure (Due to University budgetary restrictions)
Friday 16 June 2023	Wednesday 27 September 2023	TBC – October 2023	TBC – October 2023	Carry-over of funds into the next financial year (after 31st July 2024) will **not** be permitted, however alternative financial arrangements may be possible depending on the duration and scope of the project proposal submission. (Project start dates may depend on what due diligence and contracts partners require)

Review criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a cross-School panel and will address the following criteria:

Relevance to specifications: in the Scope section and other sections of the Call document.

Research Excellence: activity should be underpinned by excellent research.

Problem and/or solution focus: applications will be assessed on how the proposed project directly relates to addressing the challenges of sustainability

Impact: research should have high potential to achieve social, cultural, economic, and/or academic impact

Equitable partnerships: activity should promote strong, enduring and equitable partnerships between academic communities and stakeholders.

Value for money: Proposals will be assessed on perceived impact vs cost and those with the best value for money will be given priority.

How to Apply

- Please complete the **Application Form** and return to SSRP Programme Manager, Katie Hiscock at k.hiscock@sussex.ac.uk by **12:00 noon Wednesday 27th September 2023**. Late applications will not be accepted.

- For further information or to give an early indication of intention to apply please contact the SSRP Programme Manager, Katie Hiscock k.hiscock@sussex.ac.uk

ANNEX A. Sustainability Research Themes

The sustainability research community at Sussex has identified broad research priorities addressing interactions among the UN Sustainable Development Goals and how to minimise trade-offs and maximise synergies. These priorities have further evolved into 5 new themes below for cataloguing SSRP research projects on our website.

Project proposals are welcome for any of these themes. However, consistent with the bottom-up nature of SSRP, consideration will also be given to proposals that help to develop new themes for SSRP research.

Our 5 themes are:

Ecosystems, rights and justice

Gaining new understanding of natural ecosystems, and how forests and other ecosystems are affected by global supply chains. Explores our role in ecosystems and the importance of biodiversity for eco-cultural conservation. Investigates and documents the tragic occurrence of rights violations, inequalities and violence affecting the peoples that inhabit tropical forests and other ecosystems.

Planetary health

Investigates the interconnection between environmental health and human health worldwide. Integrating partner expertise in biodiversity conservation, sustainable food systems, health and hygiene, food security, supply chains and local food economy.

South Coast sustainability

Investigates rapidly changing environments in and around Sussex and along the South Coast – and their potential to be sustainable. Building on local and regional networks and communities to support sustainability transitions towards a resilient, healthy and inclusive future.

Sustainable climate and food systems

Explores all aspects of climate impact and adaption, as well as various aspects of food systems such as: responses to climate threats to food security, conflicts between food production and biodiversity conservation, environmental and equity aspects of food supply chains, and the prospects for sustainable agriculture and other solutions.

Sustainability frontiers

Investigates the methods, practices, governance, institutions, trade relations and partnerships necessary for achieving sustainable development. With particular interest in interactions amongst the SDGs and partnerships for education, awareness raising and climate action.