Call for Proposals

SSRP Fund #9 Guidance

'Scaling up Sustainability Research'

Overview

The Sussex Sustainability Research Programme (SSRP) is making available small grants to support researchers from across our research community to commit time **to developing bids for platform grants to scale up sustainability research** and help further the ambitions of the Sussex sustainability research community and the SSRP Centre of Excellence. Three to four projects of between £20-30k will be supported with a requirement for all funds to be spent by 31 March 2025. This is to ensure that external project bid applications are completed and in certain cases outcomes communicated before the end of the financial year on July 31, 2025.

All projects funded must align with the SSRP thematic areas. Details of the SSRP research themes are outlined below. Further information is available on our website.

  ➢ Ecosystems, rights and justice
  ➢ Planetary health
  ➢ South Coast sustainability
  ➢ Sustainable climate and food systems
  ➢ Sustainability frontiers

Projects supported should reflect the SSRP thematic areas even when the research may not have originated from a previous round of SSRP seed funding. SSRP will help by pre-identifying promising calls (examples in Table 1 below) and interested researchers can communicate with the secretariat to receive updates on eligible calls.

There will be opportunities to bid for funding for calls that may come up later in the round. We suggest that the external bidding process is between August and December 2024 for calls such as UKRI large grants and up to March 2025 for Horizon Europe.

For applicants interested in Horizon Europe, the PIs will be required to indicate potential EU partners they intend to work with in their applications. The funds can be used for events and networking that support the development of these relationships. Support of early career researchers is encouraged and indeed early career researchers are encouraged to also apply for the funding.

Definitions

1. **Supported Project:** This is the project that the researcher and their partners would like to execute over the long term.
2. **External funder:** These are the funders and fund types specified in this call document as eligible for our support.
3. **External bids/Platform grants**: This is the output of this call, successful applicants would be participating in external bids.
4. **Internal bid**: This refers to the application process for this funding round.
5. **Platform grant:** This is research funding that is longer term (**at least** 3-5 years) and larger-scale (> £1M). It covers a broad research area, and is large enough to encompass several research sub-areas. The funded project serves as a "platform" for collaboration amongst many researchers both within and outside of Sussex.

Background and purpose

The Sussex Sustainability Research Programme stands tall as a beacon of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary sustainability research at Sussex and globally. Over the last six years, the programme has catalysed research that provides Science for the Sustainable Development Goals.

In an increasingly dynamic world, research that has a global impact should include our immediate community. With this in mind, it is good news for Sussex researchers that this past January the UK again joined the European Research Area by associating fully with the Horizon Europe research programme. This provides our community with the opportunity to add European partners to its many fruitful existing science partnerships worldwide. (See Table 1.)

SSRP supports sustainability research with impact at the regional, national and international levels. It has a particular emphasis on interdisciplinary studies and cross school cooperation https://www.sussex.ac.uk/research/centres/sussex-sustainability-researchprogramme

Projects funded by this call will benefit from the support structure of SSRP. This includes support for networking with UK and European partners and other potential partners. Support for working with local stakeholders; engaging with the central research and enterprise division in bid development; the organisation of sandpits; research cluster meetings; workshops; symposia, and other activities that can support a strong bid for a platform grant.

Scope

The total funds available in this call are £90k. Three or four internal bids of between £20-30k will be supported. These bids will be for supported projects that must reflect the ethos of SSRP by advancing two or more SDGs while aligning with SSRP's thematic research areas. Applicants are also encouraged to review the nominated external funders' requirements as projects must be of a nature that achieves the requirements of SSRP as well as the external bids they will be applying to.

Projects should be interdisciplinary and involve cooperation between two or more schools and projects that support the development of early career researchers are particularly encouraged. It is important to consider the keys to a successful external bid when putting together your proposal.

Examples of funders

Table. 1: Examples of possible funders for a platform grant

Funder	Type of Funding/Area of Funding
Horizon Europe: Pillar One	European Research Council
Horizon Europe Missions	Missions: - Adaptation to Climate Change - Restore our Oceans and Waters - Climate Neutral and Smart Cities - A Soil Deal for Europe
Horizon Europe: Pillar Two	
Clusters	Health
	Climate, Energy and Mobility
	Food Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment.
	Other Horizon Europe Cluster
Horizon Europe: Pillar Three	European Innovative Ecosystems
UKRI	ESRC Large Grants
	NERC Large Grants
	Other UKRI large grant
Other Funding Scheme (e.g Leverhulme)	

Applicant Eligibility

- Applications are welcome from academics and research staff from all disciplines across the University of Sussex.
- Applicants may only be named as PI on one submission but may be named Co-Investigator (Co-I) on multiple applications.
  - IDS researchers may be named as project partners but are not eligible to apply.
- Cross-School collaboration is required.
- Members of faculty on fixed-term contracts may apply if their existing employment contracts extends beyond the funding period. (August 2024 – March 2025)
- Staff on teaching and scholarships contracts and research students are not eligible to apply.
- 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. Bid preparation. This includes activities to acquire new data and knowledge, to carry out capacity building for the project team involved in the bidding process. All such activities must lead to the development of a bid.
2. Travel to network with potential partners for the purpose of relationship building for bid development. Funds can cover travel, subsistence, visas, a stipend etc.

3. Pump-priming activities: This may include exploratory meetings to identify new partnerships. The outcomes of the pump-priming activity should support the bid preparation.
4. Research staff: Costs for a part-time research assistant to support with bid writing.

Eligible costs

Research & technical assistance, travel and subsistence, survey costs, and workshops

Ineligible costs

- Teaching relief and permanent staff time
- Overheads
- Costs incurred by collaborators at other UK institutions.
- Costs incurred by collaborators at international institutions/organisations
- Conference hosting or attendance

Important Note: Applicants 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

All proposals will have a window of August 2024 – March 2025 to spend time on bid development. Actual project start dates will vary and may depend on the requirements of the external funder the applicants choose to apply to. All internally funded proposals must submit their bids to their specified funders for large platform grants by 31 March 2025. (Any variations to this time line must be discussed with the SSRP Senior Programme Manager).

Key Dates

Call issued	Deadline	Panel meeting	Decision to applicants (tentative)	Funds Disbursed	Latest external bid submission date
March 2024	05 June 2024 (by 12:00 pm)	TBC June 2024	TBC 03 July 2024	01 August 2024	31 March 2025

Review criteria

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

<u>Research Excellence:</u> Proposals for projects should be underpinned by excellent research.

<u>Problem and/or solution focus:</u> applications will be assessed on how the proposed project directly relates to addressing the challenges of sustainability while meeting the requirements of their nominated funders.

<u>Impact:</u> research should have high potential to achieve social, cultural, economic, and/or academic impact locally and internationally.

<u>Equitable partnerships:</u> Activity should promote strong, enduring and equitable partnerships between academic communities.

<u>Value for money:</u> Proposals will be assessed on the potential to dedicate the time required to submit high quality bids with the potential to achieve impact.

<u>Requirements of nominated external funder:</u> Does the project reflect the requirements of their nominated funder with the potential to progress to a strong bid for external funding?

How to Apply

Please complete the **Application Form** and return it to Sephora Imomoh by 12.00 pm Wednesday 05 Junne 2024. Late applications will not be accepted. For further information please contact Sephora Imomoh at S.M.Imomoh@sussex.ac.uk

Useful links:
https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/sustainable-development-goals_en
https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/

https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/our-vision-and-strategy/ukri-strategic-themes/
https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/