
MIT-Imperial Seed Fund: Climate Solutions / Towards Zero Pollution

Guidance for Applicants – Application Year 2020

Applications: <https://mistiqsf.fluidreview.com/>

Contacts

Imperial College London

globalseedfunds@imperial.ac.uk

International Relations Office

Imperial College London
Faculty Building Level 2
London, SW7 2AZ
United Kingdom

MIT

Stephen Barnes
barness@mit.edu

MIT International Science and Technology
Initiatives (MISTI)

MIT

1 Amherst Street, E40-419
Cambridge, MA 02139
United States

1. Purpose

1.1 As universities renowned for their scientific contributions that benefit society, both MIT and Imperial College London share a commitment to address key global challenges. For 2020, the MIT-Imperial College London Seed Fund promotes early-stage collaboration between faculty and researchers at MIT and Imperial College London focusing on our linked strategic themes of: 'climate solutions' and/or 'transition to zero pollution.' Focusing on these two themes for this year's seed fund is part of a larger effort at [MIT](#) and [Imperial](#) to organise research and teaching to have a positive impact on these global challenges. We encourage applications from researchers from across all disciplines of both institutions that address these important global issues. The following are some of the possible areas covered in the two themes:

- 'Transition to zero pollution' seeks to take a systems level view of pollution (including Carbon-related pollution), from its source to its impact on human and planetary health. The aim is to build a future that is free from human-made pollution, and this will require a complete change in almost every aspect of the modern economy e.g. manufacturing, transport, resource utilisation, business models, and public policy. This transition must be underpinned by truly interdisciplinary scientific collaboration. Research covered in this theme includes but is not limited to fundamental engineering and physical sciences research, the water-food-energy nexus, environmental and human health, and innovative economic and business models.
- 'Climate solutions' - The world lacks the climate solutions that will be required to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in the coming decades affordably, and to adapt equitably and efficiently to the impacts -- environmental, economic, social and political -- that will occur even if that goal is met. Finding these solutions will require coordinated global efforts to develop the science and develop and deploy the technologies and policies that are needed. We aim to harness the research community to deliver a stream of innovations to help prevent the worst consequences of climate change and to adapt effectively and equitably to the changes that will inevitably occur.

The Fund aims to help kick-start early-stage, ambitious 'blue skies' research ideas that might not otherwise be pursued. The funding may be used to support travel costs for exchange between the Imperial and MIT teams.

1.2 Applicants will need to demonstrate how the funding will be used to enable researchers at MIT and Imperial to develop or reinforce lasting collaborations between the very best researchers in their field. Collaborations can therefore be new or existing, providing that the application demonstrates a strong development of the proposed collaboration.

1.3 Activities that could be covered by the Fund may include, but are not limited to:

- Exploratory research, travel costs and other activities that often do not receive financial support at the earliest stages. Imperial funds can also be used to support small-scale experiments or the development of prototypes.
- Visits between the teams at MIT and Imperial for academics/faculty, research staff and students to investigate the potential for, initiate, follow-up, or work on a collaborative project or training opportunity.
- 'Hackathon' or other collaborative day or week-long events involving staff and students from both institutions to explore novel research directions and ideas.
- Networking events such as international workshops and seminars to bring together researchers to strengthen existing collaborations and foster new links.
- Longer stays for students or research staff (up to maximum 2 months) to learn new techniques, analyse results or undertake other activities in line with the seed fund goals.
- Set up of new networks to promote the exchange of ideas, best practice, and other research goals.

1.4 This list is not exhaustive, and applicants are encouraged to propose new and creative activities to explore and promote new ideas and directions for collaboration. Given the carbon footprint of travel, researchers are asked to consider which components of the proposed collaboration might be accomplished effectively via video, phone or other creative technology solutions.

1.5 Priority will be given to projects that:

- present a balanced exchange between the participants
- demonstrate complementarity between the teams
- involve students (undergraduate and/or graduate)

2. Funding

2.1 The Seed Fund's indicative overall annual budget is up to a total of \$100,000 / £66,000. There is no upper limit to individual Seed Fund Grant requests, though this is **not** expected to exceed \$30,000-\$50,000 / £20,000-£35,000 per application.

2.2 Funds will be managed as follows:

- Approximately half of funds to be managed by the MIT team for:
 - the MIT team to travel to London and/or
 - workshops and meetings conducted at MIT
- Approximately half of funds to be managed by the Imperial College London team for
 - the ICL team to travel to Cambridge, MA and/or
 - workshops and meetings conducted at ICL

2.3 Funds can only be spent on activities which fit the purpose of this call. Funds will be available for use for a period of up to eighteen (18) months. Any unused portions of grants shall be returned to the Fund and distributed in equal shares to MIT and Imperial.

2.4 Use of funds

Eligible (Y/N)	Imperial	MIT
Salary	N	N
Limited Research Consumables	Y	N

Travel	Y	Y
Accommodation	Y	Y
Subsistence	Y	Y
Equipment	N	N
Bench fees	N	N
Indirect and estate costs	N	N

- Funding may be used to cover travel and meeting costs to facilitate projects and collaboration between Imperial and MIT.
- At Imperial, Grants may be used to fund small-scale experiments or the development of prototypes. Funds **cannot** be spent this way at MIT.
- Funds may not be used to cover salaries.
- Funds are not intended to be used for long-term stays (over 2 months) at Imperial or MIT.
- Funds may not be used to cover MIT Visiting Student fees.
- Funds will be made available to Imperial applicants via the International Relations Office and the applicant's department. For MIT applicants, please see [here](#).

2.5 Imperial: Travel Expense Guidelines

For funds awarded by Imperial, travel and other expenses must follow the [College's Expenses Policy](#).

2.6 MIT: Travel Expense Guidelines

For funds awarded by MIT, awards may cover up to 75% of the [US Department of State maximum per diem rate](#) for the proposed travel abroad plus a reasonable estimate of the economy-class airfare. See [here](#) for further information.

3. How to Apply

3.1 Applicants must submit their proposals jointly using the [online application portal](#) administered by MIT International Science and Technology Initiative (MISTI). Both teams (from MIT and Imperial) have access to the online application portal, and any of the teams may take the lead in completing the application. Both teams must be identified in the proposal.

3.2 Applications should include:

- Brief abstract of the proposed project written for an audience of non-experts (250 words)
- Brief history of the collaboration, if relevant (250 words)
- Description of the proposed project (1500 words)
- Description of the exchanges and activities planned, including student participation (250 words)
- Additional activities planned outside of the seed funding, if relevant (250 words)
- A note on the sustainability of the project after the seed funding (250 words)
- Proposed budget for the projects, with spending by Imperial and MIT.

3.3 Applicant Eligibility

Applications to the MIT-Imperial Seed Fund must be submitted jointly by Imperial and MIT. At Imperial, applicants must be staff with an academic contract. At MIT, applicants must be faculty members or research staff with principal investigator privileges (principal research scientists and senior research scientists). Although staff are encouraged to involve students in their proposed activities, applications must be led, developed and submitted by staff or faculty.

3.4 Student Involvement

Applicants are encouraged to involve students in their projects by including them in visits, workshops or other opportunities. MIT students participating in projects will be expected to attend country-specific training through MISTI. Please note that student housing is not offered as part of this programme, though Imperial and MIT will advise regarding housing options for visiting students at both institutions.

4. Deadlines

4.1 The deadline for the 2020-2021 grant cycle is **14 December 2020 (23.59 Boston, USA time)**. Applicants will be notified of results by mid-March 2021.

5. Review and Selection of Applications

5.1 All eligible applications will be considered for funding jointly by MIT and Imperial.

5.2 At MIT, applications will be reviewed first by a committee of MIT faculty knowledgeable about the field within which the proposal lies.

5.3 At Imperial, applications will be considered first by the Vice-Provost (Research) with the Cross-College Research Proposal Review Group with guidance from the Associate Provost (Academic Partnerships) and the International Relations Office.

5.4 MIT and Imperial will then jointly review applications to make a final decision on which applications will receive funding.

5.5 Selection Criteria

Following eligibility criteria and fit to call, priority will be given to projects that:

- Are likely to make an important contribution to the field
- Are new or are entering a new phase
- Include a balanced exchange between participating teams
- Demonstrate complementarity between participating teams
- Involve students in a meaningful way
- Are likely to be sustainable beyond the grant period.

5.6 Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application via email in March 2021.

5.7 At MIT, applicants will be contacted by MISTI. At Imperial, applicants will be notified by the International Relations Office.

5.8 Feedback on unsuccessful applications will be limited unless the joint committee decides that additional feedback is necessary or useful.

6. Accessing Funds

6.1 Grants will be jointly awarded by MIT and Imperial College London. MIT will transfer the portion of the grant allocated to the MIT team directly to the MIT PI; Imperial College London will transfer the portion of the grant allocated to the Imperial team directly to the Imperial PI.

7. Reporting

7.1 Grantees who are successful in receiving an award are required to provide a narrative report by the end of the grant period directly to MISTI, as well as a brief mid-project report nine months after the award is granted.

7.2 A report template will be provided and should include details of the funding provided, the relevant activities completed, how these have addressed the objectives of the call and possible next steps in developing the collaboration further.

7.3 MISTI will collect the final and mid-project reports from grantees and share them with Imperial.