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Imperial's Societal Engagement Seed Fund

Guidance Notes

Imperial's Societal Engagement Seed Fund will support staff to engage the wider public with our research and education, for mutual benefit.

There is no closing date. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. Guidance information on the scheme can be found below.

Imperial's objectives for the Societal Engagement Seed Fund

The Societal Engagement Seed Fund aims to:

1. Encourage and enable a wider range, and greater number of, Imperial staff to develop and deliver new societal engagement initiatives.

2. Enhance the diversity of engagement initiatives across Imperial. In particular two-way engagement – where information, experiences, skills or ideas are shared between participants and researchers.

3. Engage a range of patients, publics, schools and local communities with Imperial's research and/or education in a creative and mutually beneficial way.

4. Increase the number of collaborative approaches to engagement, involving partners from outside of Imperial.

5. Fund initiatives that have potential to strengthen research impact and culture; leading to new applications for external funding and supporting Imperial's strategic goals.

Desired seed fund proposal outcomes

Seed Fund proposals could include a discrete project or a pilot activity to be further developed, and should provide tangible benefits for the public audience involved as well as including one or more of the following outcomes:

- Develop high-quality engagement with research activities that strengthen research impact.

- Extend previous successful societal engagement activities (e.g. reach a new audience group or develop a new collaboration).

- Undertake pilots of pioneering and innovative engagement activities to evaluate what works, ideally with a view to future development including securing external funding.

- Develop the engagement skills and learnings of the wider Imperial Community.

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Funding and eligibility

Proposals can request funding in the range of £500 - £2,500. The funding will be used to support projects that involve innovative, two-way, creative approaches to public engagement with Imperial's research.
Please be aware that funds are limited and therefore we may need to close applications before the end of the financial year. We therefore encourage applicants to apply for funding as early as possible, to avoid disappointment.

To be able to support a variety of projects and audiences through this opportunity, funds will be ring-fenced to ensure we are able to support a range of projects targeting the following three groups:
- Public and community audiences (a non-academic audience, composed of individuals and/or groups)
- Schools (primary or secondary school students and/or their teachers and staff)
- Patients and/or their networks (often referred to as PPI, patient and public involvement, this could include audiences such as carers or service users)

We will update the webpage once/if funds for a particular audience have been exhausted for this financial year.

Eligibility

The Principal Applicant must be an Imperial staff member, but proposals can involve a team made up of students and/or external partners.

Proposals can have international reach and can involve international collaborators, partners and/or audiences.

Existing engagement activities will not be eligible for funding, unless the proposal demonstrates that a significant new/different element is being introduced, such as a new collaborator, audience or approach.

Exhibiting at the Great Exhibition Road Festival and Lates should not be the sole objective of the proposal, although proposals can incorporate the Festival or Lates events as one output among others.

Projects need to engage one or more of the following audiences – schools, local community groups, patients and the wider public*.

Projects can involve the engagement of other stakeholders, such as from industry, government or the media, however projects that only engage these stakeholders and not the audiences listed in point 5, are not eligible.

Funding is for engagement activities in addition to what is essential to your research. For example, engagement activity that is central to you carrying out your research ethically and responsibly is not eligible for this fund, whereas engagement that enhances your research is eligible.

*In this context, the public includes "individuals, groups, young people and their families, who do not currently have a formal relationship with a HEI through teaching, research or knowledge transfer, but who may have an interest in these activities or upon whom the research or its application could impact." – Research Councils UK.

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Eligible costs	Internal	External
Staff costs	Not eligible	Students and/or freelancers are eligible costs (i.e. a day rate)
Travel	Eligible	Eligible
Subsistence	Eligible	Eligible
Consumables/equipment	Eligible	Eligible
Training costs	Eligible	Eligible
Indirect and estate costs	Not eligible	Not eligible
Bench costs	Not eligible	Not eligible

How to apply

Please complete the online application form provided on the [Seed Fund webpage.](#)

For any queries please [contact the Public and Community Engagement team](#). Please be aware that we also offer [1-to-1 advice sessions](#) throughout the year, via Teams, where you can discuss your project ideas, ask questions, and receive feedback before submitting your funding proposal.

Review of applications

In the interests of speed, proposals will be reviewed by a small panel from the Public and Community Engagement team. Specialist guest reviewers (internal or external) will be invited where appropriate, such as where technical advice is needed on a particular platform or where others have experience with the proposed approach or target audience.

Applications will be judged against the following six criteria:

Quality	The engagement activities encourage creative two-way engagement. *For example, audiences and/or collaborators are involved in the development of the engagement process and/or involved in an Imperial research process – rather than solely being a recipient of the dissemination of our research and/or engagement activity.*
Targeted	Targeting of specific audiences with a clear rationale for why those participants, collaborators, and/or partners have been targeted, and evidence that there is sufficient means to reach those audiences. *Detailed descriptions should be included rather than broad terms such as 'the general public' e.g. specific research beneficiaries, ethnic minorities, socioeconomic groups, school key stages, geographically isolated communities, independent adults, families with under 5s.*

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Impact and benefit	What is the need for the project and how will it benefit all those involved. For example participants, audiences and collaborators, as well as meeting Imperial's research and strategic goals. *Relevance of the project or research to the target audience(s). The potential to impact research and/or researchers. Timelines – Why is this needed now? E.g. linking to external events or agendas e.g. National Science Week, local festivals, or anniversaries of key people/events.*
Evaluation	Evidence of realistic evaluation commensurate to the project.
Achievability	Clear and realistic objectives and timelines with a clear plan for delivery of the project and the right expertise involved to make the project a success.
Legacy and learning	The extent to which the project leaves a legacy and learning beyond the life of the project. *This could be skills developed (internally and/or externally), relationships/collaborations developed and/or maintained, new avenues for funding being sought or lessons learnt to inform future engagement projects.*

Accessing funds and reporting

- A degree of evaluation commensurate to the project scale will be required from you.

- A brief final report will be required to summarise achievements and findings from your evaluation. Final reports should be sent to societal_engagement@imperial.ac.uk by the agreed project end date.

- Project activities will need to be documented in some way, with the relevant audience consent e.g. by photography, AV (including video or audio recordings) or illustrations, to capture the process and the outcome, which may be shared with the wider Imperial community through the Societal Engagement webpages and/or internal news stories.

- For successful projects, please contact your Finance Officers for advice on setting up an internal G account code linked to the relevant departmental cost centre. Once your code is established, please inform the Public and Community Engagement team via email who will arrange for the funds to be transferred to you.