Knowledge Exchange Seed Fund

Guidance Notes

Introduction

1. The Knowledge Exchange Seed Fund (The Fund) is a University of Oxford internal grant scheme to support **two-way Knowledge Exchange (KE)** activities and projects **between the University and one or more organisations outside of Higher Education**. Please see **Eligible Projects** below for details.

2. The Fund is supported by the University's Higher Education Innovation Fund ([HEIF](#)) allocation to '*support and develop a broad range of knowledge-based interactions between Higher Education Providers (HEPs) and the wider world, which results in benefits to the economy and society*'. The goal of the HEIF is to support and incentivise HEPs, such as the University of Oxford, "*to work with business, public and third sector organisations, community bodies and the wider public, to exchange knowledge and increase the economic and societal benefit from their work*".

3. There will be two funding rounds (provided sufficient funds remain after the first round) with fixed closing dates in the 2024/25 period, one in each of the Michaelmas and Hilary terms. **Closing dates will be advertised on the [KE Seed Fund website](#) when the Fund is open.** Please note, **the PI's Department or Faculty is required to approve the application on IRAMS in time for the closing date. Applicants should speak to their Department/Faculty to plan for this.** Eligible applications will be reviewed by a panel after each closing date and we aim to communicate decisions within 4-6 weeks.

4. Awards are typically between £2,000-£4,000, up to a maximum of £5,000. **All awards must be spent by Monday 30th June 2025 and project activities completed by Thursday 31st July 2025**.

5. **Applicants (PIs) can be academic, research or research support staff** from the University of Oxford or Oxford University Innovation. Research support staff applying as PIs must do so in conjunction with an Oxford academic or researcher as project partner. College-only post holders can apply, but awards must be held within a Department or Faculty, so college-only applicants need to seek approval from a Head of Department and their associated finance team before applying. Students, including post-graduate students, cannot be the PI on a KE Seed Fund award, but are encouraged to participate in KE Seed Funded projects.

6. **Potential applicants should read these Guidance Notes** and the **Case for Support** document and consult their Department or Faculty Research Facilitator, and/or contact the KE Seed Fund team, to help ensure that proposals are suitable before submitting an application to the Fund. Enquiries to the KE Seed Fund team (keseedfund@admin.ox.ac.uk) are welcome at any time.

7. **A University cost centre is needed to host an award**. College-based activities are eligible, but funds must be managed through a Faculty or Department.

Eligible projects

8. Funds can be requested to **conduct KE or KE-related activity**. The KE must be **two-way, with one or more non-HEP external partners**. Research England defines KE as the *'collaborative, creative endeavour that translates knowledge and research into impact in society and the economy'.*

9. **Projects or activities that ARE ELIGIBLE include**:

- **two-way KE** activities and projects between the University of Oxford and **one or more organisations outside of Higher Education**. KE with other HEPs is not eligible although other HEPs may participate as project partners.
- **developing or piloting new innovative early-stage KE activity**.
- **starting or further developing KE activities** in a research project.
- **exploring early-stage KE ideas with external partners** to ascertain whether the proposed activity/project has potential.
- conducting **collaborative assessment work** with partners in direct relation to an **identified KE opportunity** (e.g. stakeholder analysis).
- organising internal or external **KE secondments**.
- **initial meetings or activities to inform and develop coordinated external bids** to fund KE work.
- providing funding for a **doctoral student to begin or develop KE activity with external partner(s)**. This activity must be fully supported by the Department or Faculty, the Director of Graduate Studies and the KE Seed Fund PI must be the student's Supervisor.
- **producing a KE Seed Case Study** alongside a KE-orientated project, allowing the stakeholders to document a collaborative project as it happens. This funding can be applied for alongside another KE Seed Fund project. **Any such proposal must be discussed with the KE Seed Fund Manager in advance**.
- **other innovative KE projects**, beyond the suggestions above, are also very welcome.

Projects that are NOT eligible

10. **Projects or activities that are NOT ELIGIBLE include:**

- **Business as usual,** e.g., research-orientated events/workshops or **one-way dissemination** of research findings, publications.
- **Pure research or activities which are predominantly research-based**, and which do not further the application of research or related activities beyond the University or Higher Education in general.
- **Activities that do not involve collaborations with non-HEP external partners**.
- Projects that aim to **reach undergraduate students**, or those where the primary purpose is to **increase student applications** to the University of Oxford.
- Projects that aim to target **public engagement with research**. Such applications may be eligible for the University's Public and Community Engagement with Research (PCER) Fund.

Selection criteria

<u>Essential criteria</u>

11. **The aims and objectives** of the project and the **potential societal or economic benefits**.

12. Project is based on – or relates to - **two-way knowledge exchange** between Oxford University and external parties **that are not HEPs** and that this **KE is core** to the project. The KE must be founded on published academic research, best practice or evidenced potential for impact.

13. Appropriate **justification** for the project costs and value for money.

14. **Potential legacy** of the project, for example:

- Building staff capacity for KE projects
- Potential to contribute to future impact case studies for statutory University returns such as the REF, KEF or HE-BCI reporting
- To serve as a best practice case study for KE Activity

<u>Desirable criteria</u>

15. **Potential to develop partnerships** with external partners into **longer-term collaborations**/partnerships/consortia.

16. **Potential to continue related activity** beyond the scope and duration of the planned activity.

17. **Matched funding** from external organisations.

Letter(s) of support

18. A letter of support is required from each external project partner who will be involved in the project. This can be a short email or a digital document, addressed to the PI, from the PI's Partner or their partner organisation. In their letter the Partner should:

- demonstrate that they fully understand the project and its aims
- specify their commitment to the proposal
- explain what they hope the project will achieve
- say where they see the project leading

Reporting requirements

19. Summary details of the Awards made will be published via internal and external communication channels. Applicants are asked to provide a brief project summary for this purpose as part of their application.

20. Awardees are required to send a final project report to keseedfund@admin.ox.ac.uk by **Friday 5th September 2025**. The reporting template can be found on the KE Seed Fund webpage.

Application Process

21. Applications are submitted via the University's Internal Research Award Management System (IRAMS).

22. This is a five-part process:

   i)   Consult with your Departmental/Faculty approver prior to applying to ensure your application will be approved, and once submitted on IRAMS, that the application will be approved ahead of the deadline.

   ii) Complete the online application form on the IRAMS system.

   iii) Upload the Case for Support in PDF format (using the Word template available in the IRAMS system and on the KE Seed Fund webpage; your Case for Support should be saved to PDF before uploading). The Case for Support template can be found on the KE Seed Fund webpage.

   iv) Submit your application.

   v)   Email the Letters of Support from External Partners to keseedfund@admin.ox.ac.uk.

23. The online application form requires a financial breakdown of the project. For each budget line please describe the costs being requested in the corresponding 'Description' field, and if appropriate, provide a justification.

24. Once you enter the 'Purpose' for three budget lines – more budget lines will become available on the online form.

25. All direct costs required to develop, deliver and evaluate the project may be requested.

26. All funds must be spent by **Monday 30th June 2025**, so all costs must be attributed to 'Year 1' only on the form.

27. When you submit your application on IRAMS, it will go first to your Department or Faculty for approval. Subject to their approval, your application will then go to the KE Seed Fund Manager who will organize for it to be reviewed by an internal panel of Oxford researchers, academics and KE professionals. Outcomes will be communicated by email, hopefully with 4-6 weeks of the closing date.

28. Applicants are advised to consult with their departmental approver prior to applying to ensure their application will be approved, and once submitted that the application is approved in a timely manner to avoid unnecessary delay.

Contact & Further Information

29. For enquiries, please contact the Knowledge Exchange Seed Fund team: keseedfund@admin.ox.ac.uk.

30. For advice and support on the development of your proposal plans and ideas, please contact your Research Facilitator.