###### *Swinburne Research Institutes*

###### *Interdisciplinary Seed Funding Guidelines*

*Expressions of Interest*

**Closing date: 5pm last Friday of each month**

1. **About the Swinburne Research Institutes** 
   1. The Swinburne Research Institutes are a core component of the University’s Research and Innovation Strategy 2020. The five Research Institutes work at the frontiers of research and innovation enabling and facilitating collaboration. They link faculties, research centres and researchers with industry, business and community to maximise research impact. Their approach is outward oriented, and outcomes and impact focused.
   2. In 2017, the five Swinburne Research Institutes became operational. They are:

* Iverson Health Innovations Research Institute
* Swinburne Manufacturing Futures Research Institute
* Swinburne Smart Cities Research Institute
* Swinburne Social Innovation Research Institute
* Swinburne Data Science Research Institute
  1. Further details about the Institutes are available [here](http://www.swinburne.edu.au/research/our-research/institutes/).

1. **The Swinburne Research Institutes Seed Fund**
   1. The Swinburne Research Institutes Seed Fund is a university wide seed-funding scheme providing preliminary funding for interdisciplinary projects aligned with Institute objectives to develop an external partnership and collaboration agenda. Funds are available between 2017-2020. The available funding is **$400,000** annually in total across all five Institutes. These funds will be allocated to successful projects until spent down. Approximately equal funding will be allocated for activities relevant to each Institute, ie $80,000 for each Institute.
   2. The seed funding program provides a mechanism for engaging the Swinburne research community in Institute activities, providing incentive funding to partner with external organisations and developing a community of interest amongst researchers. Increasing priority is also placed on interdisciplinary research by funders including the Australian Research Council, which has recently issued a Statement of Support for Interdisciplinary Research[[1]](#footnote-1) in their funding programs.
   3. The seed program is focused on addressing complex, societal challenges of relevance to each Institute. It supports developing genuine interdisciplinary projects and high impact partnerships. It demonstrates to external partners that Swinburne researchers working in priority areas on ‘end-user’ challenges can make meaningful contributions leading to economic and social impact.
   4. Seed funding is used to initiate and develop new projects across the university that establish and/ or build on external relationships with key stakeholders and end-users of outcomes from Swinburne research and innovation. Successful projects must have a path to further research partnering opportunities through direct funding or leveraged funding schemes (e.g. ARC Linkage).
   5. The seed program has two elements:
   6. **1. Institute-initiated projects**
      * + - Enable Institutes (Directors et al) to develop projects with external partners and identify best capability within Swinburne;
          - Enable structured conversations and alignment with Institute priorities;
          - Institute Directors will directly contact researchers with relevant capability or run special calls.
   7. **2. Researcher-initiated projects**
      * + - Enable participation of the research community (part of Institute engagement process);
          - Regular expressions of interests called for on a monthly basis. EoIs focus on the project and partnering concept;
          - Enable timely feedback and where required, fast fails;
          - Outcomes will include better partner engagement.
   8. **Key elements of the Expressions of Interest (EoI) call.**
   9. The EoI call provides the opportunity for researchers to develop initial project concepts. EoIs are required to identify a *potential* partner(s) but there is no requirement to have formal sign-off by the partner. Program leaders and business development personnel will then work with researchers and possible external partners to improve proposals identified as having potential.
   10. If permission is granted to submit a revised proposal, the revised version will be submitted for review and endorsement; however, this should be a relatively straightforward process as the proposal has been developed with the Institutes.
   11. The goal is for turnaround of 4 weeks from submission of EoI where a partner is identified to final decision. For projects that are formative, this timeline may be longer.
2. **Role of Institute leadership in the Seed funding scheme**
   1. While the projects are researcher-developed, they will be facilitated, influenced and guided by the relevant Institute Director, Deputy Director or Program Leader. This will ensure projects are aligned with Institute themes and priorities. The Institute leadership team will work with the research community identifying and developing areas of opportunity. In many cases, Directors have already engaged with external partners and are aware of external needs. They will run workshops or meetings with researchers, help guide proposed projects and work with business development personnel to match researchers with potential external collaborators.
   2. Directors and Deputy Directors are **not eligible** to apply for seed funding.
3. **Seed project requirements** 
   1. Seed funding up to a maximum of $20K will be provided per project.
   2. Projects that receive seed funding must have at least one external industry, government or not-for profit “end-user” partner. Note that other research organisations, medical research institutes and universities may participate in the project but are not considered end-user partners. Cash contributions provided by research organisations will, therefore, not be considered part of an end-user cash contribution. These organisations will also not be eligible to receive seed funding.
   3. It is expected that end-user partner(s) **will provide** **cash contributions** for the project of at least one to one, that is, at least $1 seed funds: $1 partner. In exceptional circumstances, cash contributions may be waived - this situation may apply for end-user partners that are non-government organisations (NGOs) or not for profit (NFP) enterprises. However, substantial in-kind contributions must be provided. Partner support must be confirmed in writing prior to submission of the final version of the proposal.
   4. If a potential partner(s) has been a previous partner of the university or researcher, the EoI must clearly explain how the partner(s) involvement is different from previous project(s) in which they have participated.
   5. Applicants that have novel or exploratory projects are encouraged to apply.
   6. The Projects are also open to the participation of researchers from the Swinburne Sarawak campus. However, it is expected that Melbourne-based researchers will lead the project.
   7. Projects that receive seed funding:
      * + - Must demonstrate their alignment with the relevant Institute priorities.
          - Must be multidisciplinary as defined by involving at least two researchers in different [Fields of Research](http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/1297.0Contents12008?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=1297.0&issue=2008&num=&view=) at the 2-digit level. Multidisciplinary does not involve working only with people from the same Department or Centre. Applicants may receive feedback on additional researchers from other disciplines who can add value to the project.
          - Must have an early career researcher (ECRs) involved whose active contribution is clearly outlined. ECRs are encouraged to lead projects.
          - Must be new and not previously funded from internal or external sources. This includes past projects that are variants of the proposed project or similar projects with the same partner.
          - Must demonstrate a clear path to i) further activity with the external partner; ii) impact; iii) further funding.
          - Must have in place all ethics or other approvals before the project can commence. Applicants are encouraged to discuss their application with a Research Ethics Advisor or the Swinburne Ethics and Integrity team before submitting their application.
        1. Must enter into a collaboration or letter agreement with external partners prior to project commencement. Swinburne Research will provide the agreement.
4. **Relation to other University support programs**
   1. The University has other internal funding programs applicants may also wish to consider that in some cases may be more appropriate. Click [here](https://www.swinburne.edu.au/intranet/research/research-start-up/funding-opportunities/swinburne-internal-grants/) for further information.
   2. Projects already receiving support from a Swinburne internal scheme are not eligible.
5. **Details of Funding**
   1. All requests for funding are to be made through the Application Form. Requests for funds outside of this process will not be considered.
   2. Projects are expected to generally be of up to **six-month duration** from the date of notification of award. Funds will be awarded for a period of 12 months from notification of award. Funds may not be carried forward beyond this period. Unexpended funds must be returned.
   3. While students may be involved in the project, project funding cannot be used to pay a scholarship stipend to the student to undertake research as part of their course of study.
   4. Projects may not apply to receive further funding from the Seed Fund initiative. Further project funding is to be sourced from other funding.
   5. All funding allocations are subject to final approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Development.
   6. Applicants will be required to provide a financial acquittal.
6. **Applicant and proposal Eligibility**
   1. In addition to the above requirements:
   2. Applications will be prepared by a proposing Team. Each application must nominate a Lead Chief Investigator (LCI). The LCI must hold a salaried academic or research appointment at Swinburne University of at least 0.5 EFT for the duration of the project and the reporting period. If the LCI leaves the University, this responsibility will be transferred to another member of the team. The LCI will have oversight for delivering the project and its financial management.
   3. All project team members must have consulted appropriately within their Faculties and have the time and basic infrastructure resources to pursue the project concerned, within the context of their workload. Sign-off by Department Chair or Centre Director (i.e. relevant supervisor) is required.
7. **Project Delivery and Reporting**
   1. The entire project Team (including the ECR) must actively participate in the project delivery, i.e. undertake the program of research in accordance with the roles and responsibilities as set out in the proposal.
   2. The Team will actively engage and communicate with the relevant Institute(s) that the project is related to through the Institute Director, Deputy Director or Program Leader or Institute support staff.
   3. The Institute may request interim project reports or presentations throughout the project.
   4. The Team is responsible for delivering a final report within one month of completing the project.
8. **Evaluation and Assessment**
   1. Selection process
   2. Proposals that have not met eligibility criteria or have not completed the EoI Application Form in full will not proceed through the selection process.
   3. Applications will be assessed competitively through a two-step process:
      * 1. i. **EoI Review:** Each Institute’s Leadership team in conjunction with relevant personnel from Swinburne Research (ie business or research development staff) will review the EoI and provide feedback as to whether the project concept has merit and is aligned with Institute objectives;
        2. ii. **Final proposal review:** on a regular basis, a smallSeed Funding Selection Committee will make the final assessment and selection of successful projects. Normally, if a proposal has been through the development process to final submission, it will be successful.
   4. The Selection Committee reserves the right to discuss applications with Executive Deans, Deans, Associate Deans (Research), Department Chairs, Centre Directors or other senior colleagues, and reserves the right to seek further information from applicants before making a final recommendation.
   5. The value of project funding may be reduced where not accurately or appropriately justified or clearly aligned with project activities or outcomes.
   6. Selection criteria for projects that receive seed funding
   7. Alignment with relevant Institute thematic/ program priorities and the Research and Innovation Strategy 2020.
   8. Quality and innovation of the proposed research and the potential for quality publications.
   9. Clear focus on external research engagement and collaboration.
   10. Clear, well-articulated pathways for research impact and further external funding.
   11. Ratio of the value of partner contributions (cash/ in-kind) relative to seed funding cash request (see section 4).
   12. Involves a genuinely multi-disciplinary Team with appropriate and complementary expertise for the project.
   13. Involves at least one ‘end-user’ partner from industry, government or not-for-profit sectors.
   14. Budget expenditure is appropriate to the proposed activities and is well-justified.
9. Research **should** be conducted in Victoria/Australia and not wholly conducted in other states/countries when it can be conducted in Victoria/Australia. If the research is to be conducted outside of Victoria/Australia, a clear articulation of the justification for the chosen country is required. (see also below)

If the proposed research involves overseas collaboration and activity, it **should** be aligned with Swinburne priority countries: China/Hong Kong, Germany, India, Israel and Malaysia. If not aligned, a clear articulation of the justification for the chosen country is required.

1. **Application process and key dates**
   1. Proposals must be submitted via the application form. The deadline for submitting will be the last Friday 17:00 of each month.
2. **Conditions of Grant**
   1. Grant Offers must be accepted in writing by the Lead Chief Investigator (LCI).
   2. The LCI will be the contact person for all administrative matters in relation to the project and is responsible for financial administration and internal reporting requirements.
   3. The LCI must ensure the research is conducted in accord with University policy, including compliance with the Code of Conduct for Research and policies on human research ethics, animal experimentation ethics, requirements of the Office of Gene Technology Regulator, health and safety and intellectual property. No project may proceed unless the appropriate ethical or other required clearances have been obtained.
   4. The LCI must ensure compliance by the Team in relation to any instructions or conditions in the Offer of Grant relating to approved items of expenditure. This includes entering into a Collaboration Agreement with external parties involved in the project. A draft Collaboration Agreement will be provided.
   5. The Team will be required to provide written reports and presentations on the progress and outcomes of the project as requested from time to time, with a formal final report required on the outcomes of the project within 1 month of the project’s completion. Summaries of projects funded and project final reports may be published.
   6. Successful applicants are expected to provide appropriate acknowledgement of University support when communicating project outcomes.
3. **Further Information**
   1. Prospective applicants should contact the following Institute leaders to discuss their project further.

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| **Institute** | **Name of Contact** | **Email contact:** |
| Iverson Health Innovations | Professor Gavin Lambert | [glambert@swin.edu.au](mailto:glambert@swin.edu.au) |
| Swinburne Manufacturing Futures | Professor Bronwyn Fox | [blfox@swin.edu.au](mailto:blfox@swin.edu.au) |
| Swinburne Smart Cities | Professor Mark Burry | [mburry@swin.edu.au](mailto:mburry@swin.edu.au) |
| Swinburne Social Innovation | Professor Jane Farmer | [jcfarmer@swin.edu.au](mailto:jcfarmer@swin.edu.au) |
| Swinburne Data Science | Professor Timos Sellis | [tsellis@swin.edu.au](mailto:tsellis@swin.edu.au) |

For general information, please refer to <http://www.swinburne.edu.au/research/our-research/institutes/> or contact the above contact for each Institute. General enquires may be sent through to [aacampbell@swin.edu.au](mailto:aacampbell@swin.edu.au); subject header “Institute Seed Grant enquiry”.

1. <http://www.arc.gov.au/arc-statement-support-interdisciplinary-research> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)