

USyd-U of T Ignition Grants Guidelines for Applicants

Purpose

As strategic partners, the University of Sydney (USyd) and the University of Toronto (U of T) are committed to achieving impact through collaboration in research and education.

The Ignition Grants are a new initiative to support researchers from USyd and U of T to facilitate and support collaborative projects that develop multidisciplinary cutting-edge research to create academic and societal impact.

These grants are designed to provide researchers, in particular early- and mid-career researchers, with the opportunity to work with our strategic partner in developing joint research projects.

It is expected that all funded projects will evolve into larger scale projects, sustained by leveraging external funding. Evidence of external funding submissions will be required in project progress and final reports.

In the first round, up to five (5) projects may be funded:

- Each project will have two teams led by chief investigators, one from USyd and one from U of T
- Projects may start from 1 December 2023 and run until 30 September 2025.
- The maximum award will be AUD 50,000 per project with AUD 25,000 from USyd and the equivalent of AUD 25,000 in CDN from U of T.
- Funding would be allocated in two tranches, each to the amount of up to AUD 25,000. The release of the second tranche is dependent on the review of a progress report and milestones from the first 9 months being met.

Preference will be given to teams which include PhD or masters by research students, postdocs, early- and mid-career researchers and researchers on sabbatical leave, rather than one-to-one research projects.

Projects which are multidisciplinary in nature and seek to address the UN's [Sustainable Development Goals](#) or have a focus on research related to the following thematic areas are strongly encouraged:

- Climate-positive energy and sustainable mobility,
- Sustainable and inclusive cities and communities, vulnerable populations,
- Public health and health policy, rehabilitation and health aging,
- Indigenous studies

1. Eligibility

- 1.1. Proposals are invited from academic staff from all disciplines at U of T and USyd.
- 1.2. Applicants from U of T must hold a continuing faculty appointment.
- 1.3. Applicants from USyd affiliated Research Centres and Institutes must be USyd Title Holders.
- 1.4. Applicants from USyd and its affiliated Research Centres and Institutes must be employed on a full-time, part-time (appointed at least 0.5 FTE), fixed term or continuing basis. If on a fixed term contract, the end date must be beyond the funding period.

- 1.5. PhD and masters by research students, post-docs, and research assistants/associates at USyd and U of T are not eligible to apply as Chief/Principal Investigators but may be included as collaborators in applications.
- 1.6. Current recipients of other funding from the USyd Office of Global and Research Engagement whose project is still ongoing and will not have finished by the application close date may apply for concurrent grants but are required to submit a progress report of their current project when submitting their application. The progress report should be an attachment to the application – single page, narrative update on project progress to date and unexpended award balance.
- 1.7. Previous recipients of other funding from the USyd Office of Global and Research Engagement whose projects have finished or will have finished by the application close date may only apply for consecutive grants if they have submitted their final report.

2. Duration

First tranche funding is available from 1 December 2023 until 30 September 2024.

Second tranche funding is available from 1 November 2024 until 30 September 2025.

3. Important Dates

Applications open	Thursday 15 June 2023
Applications close	Thursday 31 August 2023 (11:59pm AEST / 9:59am EDT)
Applicants notified	By 1 November 2023
Projects can start from	1 December 2023
First tranche funding available	1 December 2023
Progress report due	1 September 2024
First tranche funding ends	30 September 2024
Second tranche funding available	1 November 2024
Second tranche funding ends	30 September 2025
Latest date for projects to end	30 September 2025
Final reports due	30 December 2025
Final reports update	30 September 2026

4. Eligible Grant Activities

- 4.1. Activities that **will be considered** for funding include:
 - Airfares: See 4.2 for guidelines
 - Other travel expenses (e.g. train, rental car);
 - Costs for hosting seminars/conferences or workshops (should not exceed 50% of total budget);
 - Accommodation and subsistence;
 - Consumables; and
 - Publications and printing costs.
- 4.2. All travel activities must comply with the guidelines of the respective universities.
 - **USyd** – All USyd travel must comply with the [Travel Policy 2018](#) and follow all relevant processes and policies, including travel insurance as outlined on the [Travel intranet page](#). USyd researchers should refer to www.smarttraveller.gov.au for the latest visa and travel advice.
 - **U of T** – All U of T travel must comply with the [Travel and Other Reimbursable Expenses Policies and Guidelines](#)
- 4.3. Activities that **will not be considered** for funding:
 - General teaching;

- An individual staff member's research projects, unless as catalytic funding for the establishment of an international research collaboration with the prospect of external funding;
- Event registration fees;
- Venue hire if event held on campus (for USyd only);
- Website development;
- Salaries or salary supplementation, and honoraria;
- Scholarships for students or course fees for international students;
- Bench fees;
- Mobile phone cards;
- Entertainment costs; and
- Computers, including laptops (excluding access to high-performance computers or other specialised applications that are justified by the project) and basic computing facilities such as printers, word processing and other standard software.

5. Submission Requirements

All proposals must be submitted online and include the following elements:

- Ignition Grants Application Form (online)
 - Details of team involved and the role and contribution of each member
 - Project details (title, abstract, description in layman's terms)
 - Expected outcomes
 - Selection criteria (see point 6)
 - Project timeline
 - Project budget
- CV of the USyd Chief Investigator (maximum two pages in length) which should include:
 - Qualifications, current position, and employment history
 - 10 career-best publications
 - Awards and relevant presentations
 - Current grant income
 - Collaborative track record (limited to 200 words)
- CV of the U of T Chief Investigator (maximum two pages in length) which should include:
 - Qualifications, current position, and employment history
 - 10 career-best publications
 - Awards and relevant presentations
 - Current grant income
 - Collaborative track record (limited to 200 words)
- A brief letter of support in English on official letterhead from any additional institution/organisation (other than USyd or U of T) that intends to formally collaborate.
- Endorsement by the relevant USyd Head of School. A pre-filled Endorsement Coversheet is automatically generated by the application system after completion of the Ignition Grants Application Form (online) and sent to the USyd Chief Investigator's email for this purpose. The signed coversheet must be uploaded before submission.
- Endorsement by the relevant U of T Vice Dean Research. A pre-filled Endorsement Coversheet is automatically generated by the application system after completion of the Ignition Grants Application Form (online) and sent to the U of T Chief Investigator's email for this purpose. The signed coversheet must be uploaded before submission.

6. Scoring and Selection Criteria

- 6.1. Priority is given to applications that align with the strategic research areas of both universities (for U of T please see [Institutional Strategic Initiatives](#)) and address the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).
- 6.2. Criteria do not have weightings; proposals are assessed holistically. Each proposal will be assessed according to the selection criteria described below.

Score	Category	Justification
4	Excellent	Proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor
3	Very Good	Proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present
2	Good	Proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present
1	Weak	Criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses

Selection Criteria	Description
Quality & Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly describe the objectives and methodology to be employed with the project. The alignment with strategic priorities and the objectives of the funding scheme will be considered in combination with the soundness of the concept and credibility of the proposed methodology. Explain how the participants in the research team will bring together the necessary expertise to carry out the project. The 2-page CVs of the Chief Investigators will be taken into consideration. 300 word maximum
Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaborate on the workplan and milestones outlined in the timeframe (there are separate sections in the application form for an outline of activities in the Timeline and Budget). Proposed timeframes and budget estimates should be realistic and appropriate. The long-term plan for engagement to attract research funding and produce publications will be taken into consideration. This section should also address the appropriateness of the allocation of tasks, ensuring that all participants [including PhD or masters by research students, postdocs, Early and Mid-Career Researchers (EMCR)¹, and any researchers on Sabbatical Leave] have a valid role and there are adequate resources in the project to enable them to fulfil that role. 300 word maximum
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline what the participants will gain from the project and how it will contribute to the discipline and field of research. Explain how the project will establish or strengthen a durable cooperation between the universities and participants. Explain how the project will impact beyond the academic sphere (i.e. benefit society, address global challenges, UN Sustainable Development Goals, etc). Explain how the project activities and results will be communicated to different target audiences. 300 word maximum

¹ Early-Career Researchers are defined as those within 10 years of award of PhD and Mid-Career Researchers are defined as those between 10-15 years of award of PhD.

7. Expected Outcomes

Capturing the outcomes of successful projects is vital in helping to measure the overall success and impact of the Ignition Grants. Expected outcomes could include one or more of the following:

Category	Outcome
Research quality and influence	The research: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- will advance knowledge in the field which addresses an issue of importance- may result in fundamental outcomes- is innovative in concept- will use well established approaches to good effect
Publications	At least one (1) refereed publication in a nationally/internationally recognised scholarly journal
External funding	At least one (1) Category 1-3 ² national/international competitive grant submission. Details of the external funding bodies to which you plan to submit applications must be identified within the application form, and evidence of external funding submissions will be required in project progress and final reports.
Joint Workshop	Organise at least one (1) joint workshop at either institution. This may be in-person, virtual or hybrid.
Optional	
Training & education	Supervision and mentoring of PhD students/postdoctoral researchers/ECRs
Conference	At least one (1) conference presentation. This may be online.

Industry engagement is encouraged, but not expected. If proposals include industry engagement, then details should be provided in the timeline/activities section of the online application.

8. Assessment Process

Applications are received and forwarded to a respective internal review committee for review and ranking.

A Joint Committee formed by members USYD Office of Global and Research Engagement and U of T Office of the Vice-President, International convenes for final selection, taking into account the reviews and rankings by the internal review committee, university and faculty strategic priorities, and the availability of funds. The decisions of the Joint Committee are final.

9. Application Submission

9.1. All applications must be jointly submitted by a Chief Investigator from USyd and a Chief Investigator from U of T.

² Category 1: Australian Competitive Grant Research Income. For example, the ARC, NHMRC, MRFF, etc.

Category 2: Other Public Sector Research Funding. Other Australian Government schemes and business enterprises and State and local governments and partly government-owned or funded bodies.

Category 3: Industry and other Funding for Research. Research grants or contract research with Australian or international industry or non-Australian Government agencies. Funding through donations, bequests, charities and foundations (both Australian and international).

- 9.2. A copy of the questions included in the online application form (including budget) is available for preview from the USyd Funding Schemes Site at <http://sydney.edu.au/award-schemes>
- 9.3. All applications must be submitted online via the USyd Funding Schemes Site at <http://sydney.edu.au/award-schemes>.
- 9.4. Applications can only be initiated by the Chief Investigator from USyd using their UniKey and password. Chief Investigators from U of T may only access and edit the applications after invitation from USyd Chief Investigators to be a “Collaborator” of the application.
- 9.5. All applications require the endorsement by the relevant USyd Head of School and U of T Vice Dean Research. The Chief Investigators must complete their respective Endorsement Coversheet and upload it to USyd Funding Schemes Site before final submission. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigators to upload the signed Endorsement Coversheets to USyd Funding Schemes Site **before** final submission. It is highly recommended to provide Head of School with the Endorsement Coversheet and a downloaded copy of the completed online application well in advance of the application deadline to ensure sufficient time for endorsement.
- 9.6. Only complete submissions will be considered.
- 9.7. Late applications will not be considered.

10. Notification of Application Outcomes

Successful applicants will receive a letter of award outlining the process to accept the award including payment. Feedback on individual applications will not be provided.

11. Change of Investigator

Applicants should contact the Program Coordinator at each institution. Such changes will need to be approved and documented.

12. Forfeiture of Grants

- 12.1. First tranche funds must be spent by 30 September 2024.
- 12.2. Second tranche funds must be spent by 30 September 2025.
- 12.3. It is recommended that you use your awarded funds within your allocated timeframe and spend as much as possible upfront. Any unspent funds at the end of each tranche funding period will be retrieved.
- 12.4. For USyd Chief Investigators, each month, funds matching actual expenditure from the previous month will be transferred into the Chief Investigator’s university project account by Corporate Finance. The transfer of funds will cease when the awarded amount is reached or the end of each tranche period, whichever comes first. Any expenditure above the awarded amount will need to be cleared to another Faculty/School account (such as consulting or other as appropriate).

13. Extensions

Under exceptional circumstances if there is a need for extension Chief Investigators should approach their Program Coordinators to discuss their circumstances.

14. Financial and Reporting Obligations

- 14.1. The funding should only be used for the approved project and in accordance with the proposal and the budget plan. It must not be used for any other purposes and prior approval from both universities is needed for any variation in the budget items. Request for variations from original proposals must be submitted to both universities for approval.
- 14.2. Awardees must adhere to the purchasing guidelines of the respective universities to which reimbursement is to be sought. Reimbursement of each expenditure item will be capped at the approved amount.
- 14.3. Awardees must submit a **progress report** using the report pro-forma online through the [Funding Schemes Site](#). The progress report must be submitted by 1 September 2024.
- 14.4. Awardees must submit a **final report** using the report pro-forma online through the [Funding Schemes Site](#). The final report must be submitted by 30 December 2025 and an **update to the final report** must be submitted by 30 September 2026.
- 14.5. In consultation with their Finance Manager, the USyd Chief Investigator must complete an acquittal statement and upload this with their final report. An acquittal statement template is provided with the report pro-forma online through the [Funding Schemes Site](#) which is linked to your application.
- 14.6. U of T recipients must submit a final report on activities, including expenses to the U of T Office of the Vice-President, International Research Officer.
- 14.7. Failure to submit a completed report will result in all members of the project team being ineligible to submit future funding applications and mention of the Ignition Grant will be removed from their University of Sydney online Academic Profile.
- 14.8. The activation of research funding accounts are not tied to ethics/other approvals being obtained. It is the responsibility of Chief Investigators to ensure that no work requiring approval is commenced until such approvals are in place.

15. Marketing and Communications

Awardees may be contacted for the purposes of promoting their successful funding application and informing others of their research.

16. Publications

- 16.1. Any publications (e.g. abstracts, articles) or dissemination (e.g. public presentations) arising from activities supported by the Ignition Grant should acknowledge assistance received. The standard acknowledgment is "USyd–U of T Ignition Grants".
- 16.2. Publications should appear in internationally recognised scholarly journals and should be published within 18 months after the end of the project.
- 16.3. Copies or notifications should be submitted to the Office of Global and Research Engagement at USyd and Office of the Vice President International at U of T.

Further Information

For further information please contact the Program Coordinators:

The University of Sydney
Matthew Louie
Partnerships Officer
Office of Global and Research Engagement
Email: jp.ipdf@sydney.edu.au

University of Toronto
Alicja Sobecka
Regional Lead for Oceania
Office of the Vice-President, International
Email: alicia.sobecka@utoronto.ca