Flexible Research Fund: **Guidance for Applicants**

Contents

Note: Please carefully read this Guidance Document, the Grant Specification document, and the FAQs before completing the Grant Application Form; they will provide valuable information for your application. This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government; however, the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

1. Introduction

The Climate Compatible Growth (CCG) programme's Flexible Research Fund (FRF) has four main objectives:

- To respond to new research opportunities within the CCG programme's remit;
- To expand CCG's research capacity and impacts;
- To diversify participation in the CCG research programme via new institutions, perspectives, locations; and
- To strengthen the role of researchers from low- and middle-income countries

The Fund is demand-led, and is designed to respond to new opportunities identified through the CCG programme's engagement with national stakeholders in partner countries; international organisations; the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO, the funder of the CCG programme); and the CCG programme's research strategies. The CCG programme is led by Loughborough University and implemented through partnerships with academia, business, and non-government organisations. The FRF is a funding mechanism for research that will provide tangible and impactful benefits in CCG countries. The topics in this first FRF call are tailored to focus on four of CCG's current priority countries: Kenya, Lao PDR, Ghana and Zambia.

- The CCG programme welcomes applications from individuals and organisations engaged in independent research. This includes universities, think tanks, consultancies and independent researchers. Consortium applications are eligible, but a lead organisation must be identified.

- The programme welcomes applications from organisations based in any part of the world. A minimum of 40% of funding available will be directed to researchers and/or organisations in low- and middle-income countries.

- Organisations that fund grant-making schemes of their own are not eligible to apply.

2. Call Topics

Below is a list of the seven call topics for this call. Each proposal should only focus on one of these topics. Further information on the topics, including timescales and budgets, can be found in the grant specification document:

1. **The energy system implications of transitions to clean cooking in Zambia**

2. **Financing energy efficiency and conservation in Lao PDR**

3. **Incentives for private investment into climate-friendly projects in Zambia**

4. **Renewable energy policies in Kenya**

5. **The impact of low energy demand on the sustainability of electricity systems**

6. **Macroeconomic implications of the Green Growth Strategy in Zambia**

7. **Low carbon transport futures in Zambia**

3. How to apply

Carefully read this Guidance document, the Grant Specification document, and the FAQs.

3.1 Eligibility

- To apply to the CCG-FRF initiative you may be:
    - Individuals and organisations engaged in independent research. This includes universities, think tanks, consultancies, and independent researchers. Consortium applications are eligible, but a lead organisation must be identified.
    - The competition welcomes applications from organisations based in any part of the world.
    - Organisations that fund grant-making schemes of their own are not eligible to apply.

- In addition to meeting the criteria above, your project must be innovative and related to one of the seven call topics.

- A lead applicant, who will be the Grant Recipient, should be clearly identified. This organisation/ person will be responsible for producing the deliverables agreed upon in the contractual agreement.

- A minimum of 40% of the funding available through this FRF call will be directed to researchers and/or organisations in low- and middle-income countries. Applicants will need to clarify which FCDO-supported country the project applies to, as per the guidance for each call topic. You should describe the roles played by all partners, especially the organisation that is based in the country supported by FCDO.

3.2 How to apply

- Please note you can only apply for research on a single call topic. Please choose the topic that best fits your idea. All the call topics will be considered equally, no call topic is ranked higher than the others.

- If you wish to apply to more than one call topic, you must complete separate applications and ensure you have the resources available to complete each projects successfully.

- Only applications submitted using the Grant Application Form will be accepted. Only the information provided in your Grant Application Form (including a gantt chart and any relevant diagrams/figures) will be assessed. Additional documents attached will not be considered.

- The Due Diligence Questionnaire (DDQ) applicable to your application must be completed honestly and in full. A Due Diligence Questionnaire (DDQ) will be requested if your application is successful, however, in the interest of faster processing of contracts it is recommended that DDQs are submitted with your application. Due Diligence (DD) checks will be undertaken on the lead organisation or, lead consultant in the case of an application by individual consultants. Any applicants found to be clearly misleading or dishonest will be disqualified from the application process or deemed out of scope.

- Only use the latest CCG-FRF documents for your application. The documents are available on the University of Loughborough Electronic Delta Procurement System for download. If you apply using any other form the application will not be considered.

- Applications must be submitted by 23:59 hours UTC on 5th December 2022. Late submissions will not be considered. Extensions will not be granted under any circumstances.

- Keep within the maximum word counts noted in each of the sections of the Grant Application Form. Applications exceeding the word counts will not be considered.

- You will be requested to sign the following statement: *Having examined the Guidance Document, Grant Specification, FAQs and Grant Disbursement Agreement with Funding Agreement template, I hereby submit our application on the full understanding that any resulting Grant Offer shall be subject to the provisions of the Funding Agreement and I accept these terms and conditions.*

3.3 Notification of assessment outcome

- Once all applications have been assessed, you will be informed of the final decision by email from Loughborough University. If you are the lead applicant, you will be responsible for informing the other collaborators and partners about the decision.

3.4 Successful applications

- A project kick-off meeting will be held to allow the potential Grant Recipient to discuss the details of the project. The kick-off meeting will take place shortly after project inception. You will be asked to discuss your application and how you will deliver the project effectively. You must be able to satisfy Loughborough University that your methodology is likely to deliver the results sought. Loughborough University shall have the right to request any reasonable changes to the project.

- You will be sent a conditional Grant Offer Letter complete with a funding agreement that you must sign and return.

- Any additional finance documentation that you are asked for will need to be completed and returned within the stated timelines.

- We will review your project costs to check that they meet our funding rules and that the project will provide value for money. You will need to complete a Statement of Grant Usage Form at each deliverable stage. This will reconcile your projected costs in your application against actual costs. There should be electronic copies of original invoices, staff time etc provided as evidence for an audit trail. These expenses will need to be verified by a Senior Financial officer in the company such as a Financial Director. You may be asked to provide further information on the detail in your finance forms.

- If you have any questions on the mechanics of the CCG-FRF programme, finance issues etc. Please address these to the CCG programme email provided: **CCG@lboro.ac.uk**

4. Project Reporting

- You will provide regular updates to demonstrate that progress is in line with the expected milestones and that the research will meet its objectives, a milestone reporting document will be distributed at the project inception. If at any point you discover that the project is no longer viable and/ or if external factors make it unviable, you must inform Loughborough University in writing as soon as possible.

- Upon final completion of the project a final reporting form should be filled in to summarise the key findings, outputs, and impacts. It will be in plain English. Payment of the Grant will be on the condition of the approved final outputs (as per specified in the contractual agreement).

- All projects will be required to publish their results- e.g., as academic journal papers, policy briefings and working papers etc. These will be disseminated by the CCG programme via our networks and key stakeholders.

- Policy briefings and working papers should use the CCG programme style guide and be written and presented to a professional standard and suitable for non-specialists, with all acronyms and unavoidable technical language clearly explained.

5. Finance Summary

- Payments for successful projects will be made as follows:
  - 30% will be paid on contract signing, a further 20% each at reporting stage one and two and the final 30% with the approval of the final reporting form.

- When claiming payment, you will be expected to complete a Statement of Grant Usage Form to explain the costs incurred. This should detail staff time utilised, cost of materials, sub-contracting charges, travel expenses and other costs. You must provide receipts or invoices for ALL CLAIMS and include values in both local currency and GBP.

- Rates for staff time should already include overhead costs and therefore no further overhead charges should be made. However, the salary rates must be appropriately justified, reflecting market or existing FCDO benchmark values. To demonstrate value for money the panel will be looking at the number of project days offered at different skills levels.

- All invoices should be based on costs only. There should be no profit margins added to the costs. The Grant is paid to research a concept or technology, not provide profit. Therefore, the only claim that can be made is for costs incurred in the research of this concept.

- Only costs incurred for the project duration (the period from the initiation meeting up to the delivery of the final approved report and Statement of Grant Usage) will be paid. All claims made in the Statement of Grant Usage Form will be closely scrutinised.

- All travel costs or associated costs, such as transport and accommodation, will be scrutinised very rigorously and all relevant evidence will be required.

- Only the purchase of standard economy class tickets will be acceptable if travel is involved. If you need to buy another class ticket, i.e., special offers where higher class tickets are cheaper, then you will need to get written approval from the CCG team.

- You can invoice Loughborough University for the instalment payment once you have confirmation from Loughborough University that they are happy with your deliverable, and you are given permission to submit an invoice.

- When you invoice Loughborough University, the amount must be noted in Sterling Pounds (GBP). Also, include your bank account details that you want the transfer made into. If your account will not allow you to accept income in GBP, USD, or Euros, you will be subject to the conversion costs.

6. Dates and deadlines

- Please note the dates and deadlines for the competition below. These are indicative timings. We will adhere to this schedule as best as possible. The closing date for Applications is fixed and will be 23:59 hours UTC 5th December 2022.

- Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered and extensions will not be granted under any circumstances.

Competition Deadlines	
Competition opens	14th November 2022
Briefing webinar for all call topics	23rd November 2022 between 12:00-13:00 hours UTC
Availability of webinar recording	23rd November 2022
Competition closes, application deadline	23:59 UTC 5th December 2022
Decision to successful applicants	Mid December 2022
Deadline date for Due Diligence Questionnaire and supporting documents	December 2022 – 5 working days after notification of application outcome

7. How your application is assessed

- After the deadline, only applications that meet the eligibility criteria and scope of the competition will be assessed. You will be notified if your application is out of scope, Loughborough University reserves the right to declare applications as out of scope.

- This initiative will operate on an open and transparent basis; applications will be assessed against the assessment scoring criteria, detailed in this Guidance document.

- Applications will undergo a full independent assessment. Successful applications will have 5 working days to produce a full and comprehensive Due Diligence Questionnaire on their lead organisation or, lead consultant in the case of applications by individual consultants.

- Even if a proposal scores highly, passing the due diligence check is a prerequisite for working with Loughborough University.

- All applications will be reviewed by a minimum of two expert evaluators. Evaluators with knowledge in a cross-cutting range of areas will assess and mark your application. You should therefore write clearly in plain English, avoiding acronyms and jargon.

- Successful applications are all required to meet a quality threshold which is relative to other applications received.

7.1 Assessment Criteria

- This section contains the assessment criteria for Applications. You should refer to this section to help write good quality Applications and to maximise your score. Applications will be assessed to ensure you have all the appropriate skills and expertise to successfully carry out the project.

Assessment Criteria
Research design and methodology
• Are the objectives clear?
• Is the methodology appropriate to meet these objectives?
Alignment with the call
• Does the proposal address the key questions and/or requirements set out in the call?
Impact
• Does the research have a clear pathway to impact on decision-making?
• Have the right stakeholders been identified?
• Does the proposal give confidence the research team will work with key stakeholders and decision-makers?
Application and partnerships
• Do the applicants have the necessary skills and capabilities to carry out the research?
• Are the project governance arrangements appropriate?
Project Finances
• How much will the project cost to deliver and how will this be spent to ensure value for money?
• Are the requested resources appropriate for carrying out the proposed research?