

WUN Research Development Fund 2021

Introduction

The WUN Research Development Fund (RDF) provides grants of up to £10,000¹, for one year to foster research collaborations among academic staff (faculty) at WUN member universities. Grants from the RDF are intended to help stimulate larger collaborative projects that will strengthen WUN and make the collaborating partners competitive for major awards.

The RDF supports research projects that the partnership can pursue with distinct advantage. In line with the WUN Strategic Plan 2020-2023, those will generally fall under the network's principal research theme of *sustainable development*.

WUN RDF 2021: Mobilising for a Sustainable Future

As the world invests to overcome and move beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, there are major opportunities for research to inform national and international priorities in building a sustainable future. WUN's capacity to assemble diverse teams of researchers gives it distinctive advantage in tackling some of the major emergent challenges in research areas where comparative analysis is important.

Following discussion with the WUN Global Challenge Steering Group Chairs Committee and the WUN Academic Advisory Group, we encourage proposals that address problems in one or more of the following areas, informed by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:



For information on what each goal encompasses (detailed by the targets that accompany them), click the corresponding icon above.

What are the attributes of a strong project?

1. Projects should be academically rigorous, and address problems of consequence within the domain of *sustainable development*, specifically in one or more of the areas covered by the SDGs listed above.
2. Projects should establish or strengthen collaborative linkages among member universities, and should engage at least three member universities across at least two regions². The collaboration may include non-WUN universities and external partners but must have an active core of WUN member universities. Projects that include newer member universities of WUN as collaborative partners, and those whose teams include (or are led by) early career researchers, are especially encouraged.
3. Projects should help enlarge the impact and global recognition of WUN. Projects that have the following attributes are especially encouraged:
 - They address problems that are aligned with major international funding initiatives from national governments and/or international agencies and foundations.
 - Their outcomes are likely to attract broad public interest.

¹ Currency converter (set on 15 July 2021): GBP£1 = BRL7.27; CAD1.73; CHF1.26; CNY8.96; EUR1.17; GHS8.18; HKD10.73; MXN27.55; NOK12.04; NZD1.98; TWD38.71; UGX4901.10; USD1.38; ZAR19.71

² WUN regions are defined as North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania.

4. Projects should be aimed at problems that the partnership can pursue with distinct advantage. WUN is likely to have special advantage when the research problem:
 - Requires distinctive constellations of talent that are best assembled (or can only be assembled) by drawing on multiple partners.
 - Presents opportunities for comparative analysis, stemming from member universities' locations in different geographical and cultural contexts.
 - Requires access to unique environments/resources possessed by one or more partners.
5. Project plans should demonstrate the responsible use of resources, including a sensitivity to the environmental impact of their implementation.

In the past, awards made from the RDF required matching support from the applicants' home universities. Recognising the financial stress that universities are currently experiencing, matching cash contributions are encouraged but not required in the 2021 round.

How are applications assessed?

Applications are reviewed and ranked by a committee made up of at least six members of the WUN Academic Advisory Group, including its Chair, the Chairs of the Global Challenge Steering Groups and the WUN Executive Director.

Applications will be assessed against the following criteria:

- **Objectives** – the project falls within the scope of the RDF 2021 Focus Area, is of high academic quality, and addresses a new research problem or takes an existing WUN research program in a *significantly* new direction.
- **Teamwork** – the program involves a team of researchers drawn from a range of relevant regions, disciplines and career stages.
- **WUN Advantage** – the set of individuals involved, and/or the environment and resources available to them, confers a distinctive advantage in tackling the research problem.
- **Breadth of Impact** – the outcome of the project is likely to be of significant public interest.
- **Project Sustainability** – the research problem chosen lies within the scope of funding initiatives from national or international agencies, and project completion is likely to make the applicants competitive for such funds.

What can RDF funds be used for?

Eligible expenditures are detailed in the Permitted Uses of WUN Funds annex.

How do I apply?

The RDF is open to academic staff (faculty members) at WUN member universities. Applications must first be approved for submission through an internal review at the principal investigator's university and submitted to WUN with the sign-off of the local WUN Coordinator. Each member university may submit up to two applications on which its academic staff (faculty) are principal investigators. There is no limit on the number of applications on which a member university or individual can be a co-investigator.

Applications, submitted online through the WUN online application portal, are due by Friday, 22 October 2021 at 21.00 UK time. Internal deadlines at many member universities will be earlier. Web access to the online application will open on 28 July 2021.

Prospective applicants considering a submission should contact their Coordinator well before the application deadline. The Coordinator will be able to provide advice about eligibility, preparing the application, internal deadlines, and the university's internal review.

Applications must be accompanied by:

- Program budget outlining key areas of expenditure (a common template will be provided).
- CV of the principal investigator (1 page maximum) with URL links to partner investigators.

Applications that are incomplete or received after the closing date will not be considered.

The outcome of the review will be announced on 17 December 2021. For successful applicants, award funds in GBP will be deposited in February 2022 via bank transfer to the principal investigator's nominated university account after receipt of an invoice from the university, the establishment of the project page on the WUN website, and the enrolment of the team on WUN's researcher networking platform the WUN Hub.

What are my financial, reporting and acknowledgement obligations?

Award funds should be expended within 12 months. Funds unspent at the conclusion of the 12-month award period may be recalled by WUN.

Principal investigators are required to

- Establish, with the help of your local WUN Coordinator, a simple project page on the WUN website.
- Register researcher accounts for project team members on the WUN Hub.
- At 12 months, produce a short video (approximately five minutes in length) that can be shared publicly and details the project and activities/outcomes to date.
- Acknowledge support from WUN on any publications and presentations that result from the RDF-funded project.
- Submit a brief report after the initial year of the project and annually for the life of the project³

³ Annual reporting, mandated by the WUN Partnership Board (member university Vice-Chancellors/Presidents/Rectors), is essential to tracking outcomes and the return on investment for WUN. WUN will send a reminder to the online survey annually via your local Coordinator. Investigators who fail to submit satisfactory reports will be ineligible for future WUN funding.

Annex: Permitted Uses of RDF Funds

Please note that, should you identify categories of expenditure that would benefit the success of your project and are not listed here, the WUN Secretariat would be happy to respond to your queries.

- A maximum of one in-person event that requires air travel (for example planning workshops, international project team meetings or conferences). Costs associated with virtual meetings are not subject to this restriction.
- Exploratory research initiatives
- Formation of collaborative networks
- Engagement of students through remote guest lectures and master classes
- Assistance from individuals where critical to the project (see “what expenditures are not funded by the RDF for further detail)
- Access to necessary software
- External project website or other multimedia production and development
- Data collection
- Development and implementation of survey instruments
- Access to online databases
- Access to general samples from panel survey companies
- Contribution to open access fees of up to £1500
- Primary data collection costs
- Activities related to other data collection (Costs of /acquiring/copying policy documents and literature where these are not available via institutional libraries/databases)
- Transcription costs
- Consumable equipment costs for the sole use of the project such as primers, probes, reagents, pipettes etc.
- Prototype production
- The development and production of dissemination reports
- Up to £500 to support the cost of a short project video at the end of the year

What expenditures are not funded by the RDF?

RDF funds may not be used to support an applicant’s salary, or to supplant the salary or scholarship of any assistant or student who is already funded from another source. Funds may be used only to pay for assistance from other individuals when critical to the project. The RDF may not be used to cover the costs of equipment depreciation. Funds may not be used to cover general management/overhead fees.

Where funds are to be used for air travel, only economy class fares are permissible. In the interest of the environment, while also recognising the value of face-to-face interaction, RDF funds may support no more than one in-person event that requires air travel (for example an international project team meeting or conference). When planning your project, we recommend that you consider potential travel restrictions due to the pandemic that could remain into 2022. WUN encourages the use of deploying virtual alternatives to assemble the project team whenever possible.