Seed fund for collaborations with priority partners in the regions

Terminology and frequently asked questions:

1. **Who can apply for the seed fund?**

This call is aimed at **academic staff** at Leiden University and LUMC, with an appointment until at least 31/12/2026. Colleagues that were granted the fund in 2024 are not eligible to participate, as their projects are currently ongoing.

2. **How many proposals can I send in?**

You can send in **one proposal per call round**. This means that you can be either the main applicant or co-applicant on one application form. It is **not** allowed to be the main applicant for one proposal and co-applicant for another. Colleagues at the partner institutions are exempt from this rule, but we may ask projects to merge if the same colleague is co-applicant.

It is allowed to be involved in other project proposals, but you should not be mentioned on the application form and cannot be the main beneficiary.

Proposals that have similar content but different applicants, or proposals with the same applicants will be considered not eligible and will be excluded from the lottery.

3. **What is the difference between main-applicant and co-applicant?**

The main applicant is the **first contact point**, **project coordinator** and the **one to receive the funding** on their SAP number. The funding entity will communicate first and foremost with the main applicant, after the proposal is granted the funding. Co-applicants are colleagues from another faculty at Leiden University (in order to underscore interdisciplinarity) or colleagues from priority partners. The role of these colleagues should be properly described, but they are not accountable for the project. This accountability lies with the main applicant

4. **What is a priority partner?**

A priority partner is an **academic institution** in one of the focus countries within Leiden's appointed regions. These partners are selected as preferred or priority partners for seed funding activities. Academic staff (research or education) at these partners should be involved in your projects in a way that allows the partnership to deepen or widen over time. The dedicated list with priority partners is leading and upheld without exceptions.

5. **Can I involve other partners than listed?**

Other academic and non-academic partners can be involved in the project. However, **they cannot be co-applicant**. You can list up to 4 additional academic partners and up to 4 additional non-academic partners on the application form. We highly recommend looking at including more parties, as it could support an eventual scale-up after the first project phase.

6. How were the priority partners selected?

We aim to build a worldwide network of close partnerships to accommodate the global ambitions of Leiden University. Priority partners are selected to grow into long-term strategic partnerships. The list is drafted based on the input from the region groups, the region coordinators, internationalization staff at faculties and at SOZ and SAZ. Priority partners are **academic institutions** with which at least 2 faculties already collaborate and that show great potential for wider/ deeper collaboration. Priority partners can also be partners where collaboration already exists extensively. The idea behind the list of priority partners is that our investment could be directed at a limited number of collaborations, and that we're able to bundle ongoing activities, looking for synergies and institutionalising the partnership if needed. For this call, priority partners are regional, i.e. in one of the focus regions. Europe is not part of this call, therefore European partners are not on the list. This does in **no way** imply that EU partners are not priority partners to the university. They are not **for this seed funding call.** Every faculty has its own partner preference, and every researcher may in their turn focus on other partners than listed by either the faculty or by us, for this call. Colleagues are free to do so, however for this call we exclusively focus on the selection made.

Two exceptions are made to the above: The Chinese Academy of Sciences and BRIN in Indonesia are not universities, but funding and research institutes. We have close connections with these institutes, as they have their own research groups around multiple subjects. This, and the fact that they may be able to co-fund initiatives, makes them two of the priority partners.

7. Why can't I select a European partner as co-applicant?

This call is aimed to invest in relationships with non-EU partners in the priority regions. While Europe is also a focus area for research and education collaboration and several European partners are of great value to the university, they fall outside the scope of this call. We do encourage involving European partners alongside the preferred partners in the regions, as it encourages wider possibilities for follow-up. Think for instance of involving Una Europa-partners or linking your proposed activities to colleagues in Birmingham or Edinburgh. For this call, they can be additional partners.

8. Why should two faculties be involved in the proposal?

In our university's strategy, it's stated that we aim for interdisciplinarity whenever possible. This is therefore also a core requirement of this call. An easy way to achieve this interdisciplinarity is to require researchers from two (or more) different faculties to have a clear role in the project. An additional reason is that we aim to build partnerships that involve the whole university. In many cases, we are not there yet. Therefore, involving multiple faculties in these proposals can help widen the existing partnership.

9. What is considered interdisciplinary?

For this call, interdisciplinary means that the involved colleagues (main applicant, co-applicant 1 and co-applicant 2) are from distinctly different academic fields. Preferably, these disciplines are at different faculties, with clear other focus (for example: social sciences combined with archaeology; natural sciences combined with humanities; law combined with health, etc.). We do appreciate that a faculty is home to many disciplines that are distinct and unique, but we encourage you to look beyond the faculty boundaries to create university-wide initiatives.

10. What defines an early career researcher?

For this call, we adhere to the definition of the Young Academy Leiden to describe an early career researcher: a person who obtained their PhD a maximum of 8 years ago. Criteria for extension, as set by NWO, do apply, but please explain.

We encourage you to include PhD-candidates in the projects. If this is the case, please mention so in the proposal. Even though they do technically fit the definition above, they are eligible to be included. PhD-candidates cannot be main or co-applicants.

11. My proposal does not fit with the enlisted themes.

The themes that are listed were decided by CvB and are in the process of being implemented as the university's profiling themes. They should encompass the university in its entirety. This means that your proposed subject should be matchable to one of the themes. If you don't feel like this is the case, you cannot apply to this call. You will not be able to send in the application form without selecting a theme.

12. What does the selection process look like?

After the call closes on 30 September 2025 at midnight (23:59), the applications will be checked for eligibility. This means that 5 main points will be examined:

1) Involvement of a priority partner, and clear explanation of the role of the partner in the project;
2) Interdisciplinarity: are two faculties involved, and if not, is there a decent explanation to make an exception?;
3) Involvement of early career researchers and their role in the proposed project;
4) Thematic focus: the selected theme should match the content of the proposal;
5) A correct and completed application form: the abstract, outline and budget fields are filled out and the terms and conditions are accepted, the applicants have only sent in one application and the content is not copied in multiple proposals.

If the project does not comply with the requirements, or is sent in after the deadline, it is not eligible to participate in the lottery. We will also check if last year's winners are involved as main or co-applicants. They are not eligible to participate in this call round and their proposals will be excluded from the lottery.

After the first eligibility check, all eligible abstracts are published online in preparation for the lottery. This lottery will take place on 22 October. We will select three proposals per region by rolling numbered balls out of a bingo machine.

13. Why are winners chosen through a lottery?

We don't want to add to the workload of the researchers by creating a detailed call that is carefully evaluated. By only setting five criteria, we hope that many colleagues experience a low threshold for participation. These criteria are either a "yes" or a "no", so we feel that extensive evaluation based on academic merit or strategy is not fitting. A lottery is a fair way to decide the outcome of this call, as so many proposals will be equally eligible.

14. When will the lottery take place?

The lottery will take place on XX October and will be livestreamed so the applicants can virtually join the event. Eligible applicants will receive the link in due course.

15. What is required of me when granted the fund?

Post-awards requirements are:

a. Execution of the project as proposed
b. A mid-term progress report and a final report on the project and its results
c. Participation in the evaluation
d. An article about your project on your faculty website (to be shared in a newsletter)
e. You will be contacted by the coordinator of the region you work with to discuss potential scale-up and long-term strategies.

These can be read in the terms and conditions. You will receive a tentative planning with your award letter.

16. What can I spend the grant on?

You will receive a lumpsum at the start of the project. This fund is to be spent according to the budget on your proposal. This could entail: travel costs, costs conferences or meetings, costs for organizing events, hiring student-support for the project or events, student or staff mobility, etc.

The grant does not cover investment in shared (research) infrastructures or appointment of academic staff and the grant does not exempt the main or co-applicant from teaching obligations.

17. Can I hire support with the grant?

You can use the grant to hire a student-assistant or similar to support in the implementation of the project. This should always be on a temporary basis.

18. Who should I contact with questions?

For questions about the call, the application form, the selection process or the terms and conditions, please contact globalfund@bb.leidenuniv.nl.

If you want to connect to the region coordinators to discuss options for your proposal, you can find their details below:

Africa: Ms. Maaike Westra m.a.westra@asc.leidenuniv.nl
Latin America: Ms. Mara Constantinescu m.v.constantinescu@bb.leidenuniv.nl
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