

# BIRMAC Project and Ideas Fund Application Guidelines

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## Background

In October 2021 the University of Birmingham and McMaster University signed a formal agreement to create a framework for collaboration and partnership between the two institutions.

McMaster University and the University of Birmingham have historic similarities, shared interests and recognize that to achieve exceptional research outcomes and the best possible student experience, constant nurture and support is necessary and cannot be done in isolation.

While several areas of collaboration have already been identified, we are convinced that many new and future partnerships are yet to be uncovered. To help bring these to the fore, we have established the **Projects and Ideas Fund**: a seed fund created with matching funding from each university designed to identify, establish and develop first-rate research projects and student outcomes.

## Fund Overview

The fund's objective is to support new initiatives by providing bridge funding between ideas and the first grant, or academic initiative. The funding is designed to enable individuals to identify complementary strengths, leverage synergy, and design new outstanding research and education projects and opportunities for academic excellence across all disciplines.

The funding will seed and enable the development of deep partnerships through joint initiatives, which for example could include (but is not limited to):

- Intensive academic research and/or education workshops leading to future long-term collaborations.
- Short-term visits for both young and established academics, or senior staff, enabling new and innovative long-term collaborations.
- Research-oriented teaching opportunities, such as for instance the development of new experiential seminars, bringing together PhD Candidates and Post-Doctoral Fellows.

## Application Process and Guidelines

Faculty (academics) and professional services staff wishing to access funding must submit an application using the [online BIRMAC Project and Ideas Fund Application Form](#) and provide the following information:

- a) Identified UoB and McMaster Principal Investigators. Find an academic to support your project:
  - i. [University of Birmingham](#)
  - ii. [McMaster University](#)
- b) Purpose and timescale of visit/programme activity.
- c) Anticipated total cost and itemised budget for the proposed activities.
- d) Statement: (1200 words max.) including the motivation for the collaboration; the identified synergy; the short- and long-term objectives and anticipated outcomes; which SDGs will be advanced by the project (see: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> ). Applications need not be restricted to addressing the UN's SDGs, but preference will be given to those that do).
- e) Academic rationale for support:
  - i. What is the strategic importance or added academic value of the collaboration for your home department and University?
  - ii. What are the anticipated shared outcomes and benefits for the collaboration?
- e) Anticipated means of sustaining the collaboration. What funding is available from other sources and what potential is there for future external investment (e.g., Horizon Europe)?
- g) Confirmation of Department/Faculty/School Support:
  - For UofB: Letter of support from UoB lead applicant's Chair or Head of Department/Faculty/School. Please send via email to Mary Elliston at [m.e.elliston@bham.ac.uk](mailto:m.e.elliston@bham.ac.uk)
  - For McMaster: completed [Grant Application Approval](#) form from McMaster lead applicant (approved by Chair and Dean, or delegate). Please send via email to [roadsadm@mcmaster.ca](mailto:roadsadm@mcmaster.ca)

**Please submit one application per project.**

Note: Applications should, to the degree possible, include a teaching/seminar component, such as a lecture, compact seminar, or workshop open to students, and if possible to the public, at the hosting university.

The primary applicants must hold full-time, permanent positions at their respective universities.

Third-party universities, or institutions, for-profit, or not-for-profit organizations may join an application, on the condition that it/they bring matching funds to the project.

Further information can be found by contacting Lindsay Avery, Head of Global Engagement, at the University of Birmingham ([l.c.avery@bham.ac.uk](mailto:l.c.avery@bham.ac.uk)) or by contacting Van Nhan, Associate Director, Research Administration & Support at McMaster University ([nhanvt@mcmaster.ca](mailto:nhanvt@mcmaster.ca)).

The grant review panels at UoB and McMaster will liaise to jointly determine which projects will be funded.

Final funding decisions will be made by a committee co-chaired by the Vice-President Research (McMaster) and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) (Birmingham).

## Budget Guidelines

Eligible expense budget items include:

- Travel costs (economy-class airfare only)
- Accommodation costs
- Per-diems, or expenses by individual receipts in accordance with travel guidelines
- Hosting (meeting rooms, food and beverage, etc.)
- Workshop, or seminar materials (hand-outs, etc.)
- Funding will not normally support staffing, students, or research equipment costs, although such requests will be considered if a compelling argument is made

Expenses incurred should conform to the expenses policies of the respective universities. All eligible expenses MUST occur within one calendar-year of the date of the award from the Projects and Ideas Fund.

There is no set funding-level for an application, however, the budget and milestones will be carefully evaluated. As a guide, the maximum amount of funding each award could receive is up to £10k (Birmingham) and \$15k CDN (McMaster), however a lesser amount may be awarded to a successful project than that which was applied for.

Funding from the Projects and Ideas Fund is intended to seed joint initiatives and is therefore limited to one year of activities from the date of award. It is the expectation of the evaluation committee that reasonable opportunities for continued funding be identified in each application. Funds will be awarded on a competitive basis.

## Final Reports

Co-PIs must submit a combined brief (1-2 page) written report of BIRMAC activities and anticipated next steps 60 days following the project end date.

To be eligible for future BIRMAC funding, researchers who have been awarded BIRMAC funds previously must submit a final report 60 days following the project end date.

## Key Contacts

<b>BIRMAC Strategic Leads and Contacts:</b>	
<b>University of Birmingham</b>	Professor Robin Mason Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) Email: <a href="mailto:r.a.mason@bham.ac.uk">r.a.mason@bham.ac.uk</a> University of Birmingham Edgbaston Birmingham B15 2TT  Lindsay Avery Head of Global Engagement (North America and Australia) External Relations Email: <a href="mailto:l.c.avery@bham.ac.uk">l.c.avery@bham.ac.uk</a> University of Birmingham Edgbaston Birmingham B15 2TT

<b>McMaster University</b>	<p>Dr. Gianni Parise Vice-President, Research McMaster University Hamilton ON L8S 4L8 <a href="mailto:yprsrch@mcmaster.ca">yprsrch@mcmaster.ca</a></p> <p>Van Nhan Associate Director, Research Administration &amp; Support Research Office for Administration, Development and Support (ROADS) McMaster University Hamilton, ON L8S 4L8 Phone: 905.525.9140 ext. 23111 Email: <a href="mailto:nhanvt@mcmaster.ca">nhanvt@mcmaster.ca</a></p>
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### **Application Deadline**

The deadline to submit the application is 31 March 2026 at 11:59pm EST/ 04.59am GMT.  
The outcome of all applications will be announced on or after 15 May 2026.

**Please submit one application per project.**