USyd-IIT Madras Ignition Grants
Guidelines for Applicants

Purpose

As strategic partners, the University of Sydney (USyd) and the Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) are committed to achieving impact through collaboration in research and education.

The Ignition Grants are an initiative to support researchers from USyd and IITM to facilitate and support collaborative projects that develop cutting-edge research to create academic and societal impact.

These grants are designed to provide researchers, in particular Early and Mid-Career Researchers (EMCR)[1], 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 final project reports.

In this round, up four proposals will be funded (each with two Chief Investigators; one from USyd and one from IITM). We anticipate that the maximum award for a successful proposal will be AUD 12,500 from each institution for a total award of AUD 25,000.

Preference will be given to teams which include PhD or masters by research students, postdocs, Early and Mid-Career Researchers (EMCR) and researchers on sabbatical leave, rather than one-to-one research projects. Projects which seek to address the UN's Sustainable Development Goals are highly encouraged.

1.   Eligibility

1.1.   Proposals are invited from academic staff from all disciplines at USyd and IIT Madras and their affiliated Research Centres and Institutes.

1.2.   Applicants from affiliated Research Centres and Institutes must be University Title Holders.

1.3.   Chief Investigators 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.

1.4.   PhD and masters by research students, post-docs, and research assistants/associates are not eligible to apply as Chief Investigators but they are welcome to join the applications.

1.5.   USyd recipients of other funding from the USyd Office of Global & 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.

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[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.

1.6. Previous USyd recipients of other funding from the USyd Office of Global & 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

Funding from USyd is available from award until 31 March 2025.
Funding from IIT Madras is available from award until 31 March 2025.

3. Important Dates

Applications open	Friday 20 October 2023
Applications close	25 January 2024, 23:59 AEDT/18:29 IST
Successful applicants notified	1 March 2024
1st Progress report due	1 June 2024
2nd Progress report due	1 September 2024
3rd Progress report due	1 December 2024
Latest date for projects to end	31 March 2025
Final reports due	31 March 2025
Update to final reports due	31 December 2025

4. Eligible Grant Activities

4.1. Expenses/activities that **will be considered** for funding include:
- Airfares: Only travel on economy class will be considered
- Other travel expenses (e.g. train, rental car)
- Costs for hosting seminars/conferences or workshops
- Accommodation and subsistence
- Consumables
- Publications and printing costs

USyd applicants should familiarise themselves with the guidance and resources on international collaborations available on the intranet.

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.smartraveller.gov.au for the latest visa and travel advice.
- **IIT Madras –** All IIT Madras travel must comply with its relevant travel policy.

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
- Website development
- Salaries or salary supplementation, and honoraria
- Scholarships for students
- Course fees for international students
- Bench fees
- Mobile phone cards
- Entertainment costs

- 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
  - 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 IIT Madras 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)
- **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.
- A brief letter of support in English on official letterhead from any additional institution/organisation (other than USyd or IITM) that intends to formally collaborate.

6. Scoring and Selection Criteria

6.1. Priority is given to applications that align with the strategic research areas of both universities. Applications in other fields showing good prospect of sustainability are also welcome.

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	• 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. (Note: Proposals should use clear writing appropriate for non-specialists and make a strong case for the importance of the project to reviewers outside the discipline. It is strongly advised that the proposals avoid jargon and unexplained abbreviations). • 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	• 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. Proposals must include a specific and concrete plan for how the project will become sustainable. Elaborate on why the project will be competitive for future external funding. (There is a separate section in the application form in expected outcomes to list the extramural funding which will be targeted). • 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)[2], 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	• 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, Sustainable Development Goals, etc). • Explain how the project activities and results will be communicated to different target audiences. • 300 word maximum

7. Expected Outcomes

It is expected that the selected proposal will result in the following outcomes:

Category	Outcome
Research quality and influence	The research: - will advance knowledge in the field which addresses an issue of importance - may result in fundamental outcomes

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	- is innovative in concept - will use well established approaches to good effect
Publications	**At least one** (1) referred publication in a nationally/internationally recognised scholarly journal
External funding	**At least one** (1) Category 1-3[3] 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. Proof of submission is required in the final report.
Optional	
Training & education	Supervision and mentoring of visiting PhD students/postdoctoral researchers/ECRs
Joint Workshop	Organise at least one (1) joint workshop at either institution. This may be in-person, virtual or hybrid.
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

Award selection will be made by a joint committee formed by members of both universities, which reserves final authority over the selection of projects taking into account university and faculty strategic priorities, and the availability of funds.

9. Application Submission

9.1.   All applications must be jointly submitted by a Chief Investigator from USyd and a Chief Investigator from IIT Madras.

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.

All IITM faculty must in parallel also submit the application form via Application Form Link

9.4.   Applications can only be initiated by the Chief Investigator from USyd using their UniKey and password. Chief Investigators from IIT Madras may only access and edit the applications after invitation from USyd Chief Investigators to be a "Collaborator" on the application.

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[3] 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).

9.5. All applications require the endorsement by the relevant USyd Head of School. A pre-filled Endorsement Coversheet will be sent to the Chief Investigator by email after completion of the online application form. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to upload the signed Endorsement Coversheet 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

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

12. Extensions

Only under exceptional circumstances will extensions be approved. Requests for extensions must be submitted to the Program Coordinators in writing at least 2 months before project end date and include a revised budget and timeline of activities for consideration.

13. Forfeiture of Grants

Grants must be spent by 31 March 2025.

USyd Chief Investigators
- Each month, funds matching actual expenditure from the previous month will be transferred into the Chief Investigator's university account by Corporate Finance. The transfer of funds will cease when the awarded amount is reached or 31 March 2025, 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).

IITM Chief Investigators
- For IITM researchers, the fund can be claimed as per allotted budget, from ICSR project account created for this mobility program. The funds can be claimed post travel by submitting relevant bills.

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 **progress reports** to the Campus Coordinators by email according to the following schedule of dates. This should be no more than 2 pages long, including figures, and indicate progress against the milestones (Outcomes) indicated in the application Project Timeline.

1 June 2024
1 September 2024
1 December 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 completed by 31st March 2025 and an **update to the final report** must be submitted before 31 December 2025.

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. 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.

14.7. The activation of research funding accounts is 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 by University of Sydney Marketing and Communications / Office of Global Engagement publicity/social media team IITM for the purposes of promoting their successful funding application and informing others of their research.

16. Publications

Any publications (e.g. abstracts, articles) or dissemination (e.g. public presentations) arising from activities supported by the Ignition Grants should acknowledge assistance received and copies or notification should be submitted to the Office of Global & Research Engagement at USyd and the Office of Global Engagement at IIT Madras. The standard acknowledgment is "USyd–IIT Madras Ignition Grants".

Further Information
For further information please contact the Program Coordinators:

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