Vanderbilt University- University of Liverpool
Joint Research Seed Fund Call Guidance 2026

Vanderbilt University (Vanderbilt University) and The University of Liverpool (UoL) are committed to developing global research collaborations leading to long-term impact.

Objectives

The Joint Research Seed Fund aims to support new initiatives by providing joint bridge-funding between ideas and the first grant and/or impact. It is designed to enable individuals/groups to identify complementary strengths and co-produce ideas for new joint activities (funding, publications and research) that cannot be achieved by either side alone.

The Fund's objective is to support new initiatives by providing seed funding for:

- Research workshops.
- Short-term research visits for both early-career and established faculty members.
- Targeted experiments/activities to generate relevant data aligned to one or more of the outcomes below.

Applications **must** aim to deliver one or more of the following outcomes during the 12-month funded period:

- Joint proposals for funding from national funding agencies.
- Joint proposals for funding and engagement with business/industry/cultural organisations.
- Joint submissions to high impact academic journals.
- Joint research and/or activities leading to new IP, development of prototypes for commercialisation, or large-scale studies/datasets with social impact.
- Joint proposals to city/ regional government/other entities for civic/social/creative impact and engagement.

Details of these outcomes and how they will be achieved will be assessed during the application review process.

Funding and research themes

The Fund has an annual total budget of £40,000 for the UoL and $50,000 for Vanderbilt University for the current year. This is the second year of a three-year partnership.
We expect to fund 4 - 6 projects, depending on the number of applications received. Each funded project will receive up to £6,000 from University of Liverpool and up to $10,000 from Vanderbilt University.
Funds from each institution allocated to successful proposals will stay with the funding institution for use by the institution's own faculty members; that is, there is no transfer of funds between institutions.

The fund will support the development of collaborations in areas of complementary strength. The specific priority themes (eligible areas) will be announced each year

with the call for proposals, with a focus on encouraging research projects that are multidisciplinary across the themes.
The priority themes for 2026 are:

- Music and creative industries- music, museum studies, film
- Defense and security - cybersecurity, intelligence, data & algorithms, defense & secure systems engineering
- Healthcare and life sciences - drug discovery, therapeutics, infection health data science, precision medicine, biomedical and assistive technology
- Energy, climate, and sustainability- climate change mitigation & adaption, infrastructure resilience and risk, clean energy systems, environmental modelling, carbon capture & storage
- Slavery studies - North American Slavery, French Slavery, British Slavery, modern slavery, Abolition studies, Haiti Studies
- Other areas of mutual expertise

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible, the lead applicants (Principal Investigators) must:

1. Be a current academic staff member (faculty member) at either the University of Liverpool or Vanderbilt University.
2. Hold an employment contract that covers the full duration of the grant, with the contract end date falling on or after the grant end date.
3. Be named as a Principal Investigator or Co-Principal Investigator on only one application per funding round. However, faculty members may participate as a team member on multiple applications.
4. Not have previously received funding as a PI or co-PI from this seed fund. Applicants who applied in previous rounds but were unsuccessful are welcome to reapply.

If University of Liverpool applicants have questions about eligibility to apply, please contact Kerry McElroy (kerry.mcelroy@liverpool.ac.uk).
If Vanderbilt University applicants have questions about eligibility to apply, please contact Rebecca Doom (Rebecca.doom@vanderbilt.edu).

Application guidance

The University of Liverpool application form can be accessed here from Friday 2 October: University of Liverpool and Vanderbilt University - joint seed fund application form

The Vanderbilt University application portal can be accessed here: Vanderbilt application portal

Each proposal must include one Co-Principal Investigator from UoL and one Co-Principal Investigator from Vanderbilt University. Applicants must submit a written project proposal within the application template.

The application template has the following sections. Applications will be assessed based on how they meet the criteria shown in this table.

Project overview (maximum 500 words) Provide a summary of the proposed collaboration suitable for non-specialist audience, which outlines:

- The challenge or opportunity being addressed.
- Relevance to the programme thematic area(s).
- The aims of the collaboration and why the partnership is needed.

Within this section, you **must highlight at least one** of the following deliverables which will be achieved within the period of funding:

- Joint proposals for funding from national funding agencies.
- Joint proposals for funding and engagement with business, industry or cultural organisations.
- Joint submissions to high-impact academic journals.
- Joint research and/or activities leading to new IP, prototype development, or large-scale studies/datasets with social impact.
- Joint proposals to city, regional government or other external organisations for civic, social or creative impact.

Timeline and deliverables (maximum 500 words)

Provide a high-level timeline of activities that will be undertaken during the award period which will lead to the outcomes identified in the previous section, including:

- Key collaborative activities and approach.
- Key milestones and deliverables.

Deliverables should be measurable, for example funding applications submitted, datasets created or analysed, industry, civic or stakeholder engagement activities completed, prototype or proof-of-concept development.

Impact and future funding (maximum 500 words)

Use this section to describe:

- How the project will position the partnership to achieve one or more of the required 12-month deliverables listed above.
- How the partnership will continue beyond the seed grant and the intended pathway beyond the seed grant.
- Specific larger national or international funding opportunities that will be targeted in the future (including indicative timelines where applicable).

Team and wider impact (maximum 500 words)

Use this section to provide a brief overview of:

- Roles of and contribution to the project from each partner.
- Contribution from early career researchers and details of any researcher mobility which will arise from the project.

Other notes:

- Applicant CVs are **not** required. A link to bios of primary applicants should be provided in the project overview.
- Letters of support are not required and will not be evaluated during the application review. Indication of support is required only in the form of a signature from each of the primary applicants' Department Chair or Faculty/School/Institute Head in the signature section of the application form.
- Responses to each section of the application should be concise as possible and not exceed 500 words**.**
- In addition to the two Co-PIs, applications may include other UoL or Vanderbilt University faculty members or post-doctoral trainees as team members.
- Third party universities non-profit institution organizations may join an application, on the condition that it/they bring matching funds.

Eligible expenses

Eligible expense budget items include:

- Travel and accommodation costs, in accordance with the travel guidelines of each university (economy class airfare only).
- Visit and workshop costs e.g. meeting rooms, refreshments/ hospitality, materials.
- Laboratory consumables related to the project.
- Other related **non-pay** costs for the project.

All eligible expenses MUST occur within the dates set for the funding of the project.

The budget and milestones will be carefully evaluated, and a lesser amount may be awarded to a successful project than that which was applied for.

Extensions are not automatic and will be subject to the approval of both institutions.

How to apply

University of Liverpool candidates must submit application forms via email as a single PDF file as follows:

- UoL PI must submit applications through this online form: University of Liverpool and Vanderbilt University application form. With any queries or difficulties, please contact Kerry McElroy kerry.mcelroy@liverpool.ac.uk.
-
- Vanderbilt University PI must submit their applications through the InfoReady application portal, accessible here: Vanderbilt-Liverpool Joint Research Seed Grant.

Applications **must be received by both institutions** to be considered.

The deadline for applications is 30 October 2026.
We expect to communicate outcomes during week commencing 30 November 2026.

Selection process

Funds will be awarded on a competitive basis. Funding decisions will be made by a review panel made up of representatives from UoL and Vanderbilt University with each partner selecting appropriate representatives.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome following the joint review, with funding available as soon as possible within the capacity of each organisation's administrative processes.

All Committee decisions are final and may not be appealed.

Reporting

Successful Co-PIs will be required to provide an evaluation to the Panel Secretaries of both University of Liverpool and Vanderbilt University within two months of the project end date. The criteria for judging the success of the partnership will be the

project outcomes (relative to the project plan) and future direction of the research including attraction of external funding awards.