Pandemics and Cities

Further Particulars

The Urban Studies Foundation (USF) is pleased to launch a new funding initiative: **Pandemics and Cities**. Eligible research proposals may focus on either COVID-19 specifically, or on other major infectious disease outbreaks. The USF will provide up to £25,000 **seed-funding** for innovative interdisciplinary and **partnered** research that helps gain deeper understanding of the social, political, economic, cultural and/or environmental dimensions of pandemics on urban lives and places. **Projects must clearly demonstrate a meaningful research partnership between a minimum of two organisations. It is expected that applicants will be able to explain how they aim to develop these pilot proposals towards longer projects in the future, beyond USF seed-funding.** Research outcomes should deliver key learnings towards issues of local, national and/or global concern.

The USF seeks to make up to four awards, each up to a maximum of £25,000, provided suitable high-quality applications are forthcoming.

The deadline for applications to the funding is **1ˢᵗ November 2021**.

All prospective applicants should ensure that they have read this document in detail before contacting the USF to discuss, query or clarify any issues relating to this funding. If the answer to your query cannot be found within this document, please contact the USF Director of Operations, Joe Shaw, via email: joe.shaw@glasgow.ac.uk

Please note that a Frequently Asked Questions document may be made available on the USF website, and will be updated periodically during the call if required.

This document was last updated: October 4ᵗʰ 2021 (clarification on budget).

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1. Detailed application guidance

Further particulars on all sections of the application form may be found below, including guidance on content, eligibility, definitions, and other requirements. Some content from the public advertisement of this funding may be repeated below for the sake of clarity.

1.1. Principal applicants

Up to three individual co-applicants may apply to the funding. The first-named Lead/Principal Applicant will be the primary contact for the award, but all named co-applicants will be jointly responsible for delivering the proposal together as part of any USF funding offer. This includes submitting a final report at the end of the project, along with a tabulated summary of expenditure (supplied and verified by the host organisation).

At least one of the applicants must be based at the partner organisation nominated to host the grant funds (see Section 1.2.2 below regarding 'host organisation').

Applicants must be at or above the level of post-doctoral researcher, unless they are a PhD candidate applying along with their academic supervisor. At least one of the co-applicants must have a permanent position at a recognised higher education or research institution, or an equivalent fixed-term contract for the duration of the proposed project.

Additional team members who will take an active minor role in delivering the proposed project may be named, but this is entirely optional and only for added context where relevant. CVs for these additional team members are not required and should not be uploaded, but applicants should not list anyone in this field unless that person is aware that they have been listed in the application.

Contact details for two referees should be provided for the applicant(s), and each referee should be willing to provide a blind letter of reference if contacted by the USF awarding panel. Referees should be suitable senior colleagues of the applicant(s) (e.g. department heads, supervisors, ex-supervisors, etc.) who can vouch in their letter for the applicant's professional track record, capacity to deliver the proposal, and suitability for the award. The relationship of the referee to the applicant(s) should be stated clearly and succinctly, including which applicant the referee is named in relation to (if the proposal comes from two or three co-applicants). For example: PhD Supervisor to lead applicant Professor Smith, Postdoc supervisor for Dr Smith, Dean of Faculty and colleague of Prof Smith, etc.

Professional/institutional contact email addresses should be provided for each referee. The USF may only contact referees in the event that the proposal is short-listed, and referees should not contact the USF themselves.

1.2. Partner organisations

Projects must comprise significant collaboration between at least two partner organisations. Therefore, two or more partner organisations should be listed in this section of the application, along with supporting letters (one per organisation).

Organisations (and applicants) may be based anywhere worldwide, provided there is a viable and legal means for the USF to transfer project funds to the organisation hosting and administering the funding.

1.2.1. Partner organisations

Partner organisations may be any eligible and relevant organisations worldwide (based in any countries, and do not have to be in more than one country). Partner organisations may be **either** public or private entities, unless they are also hosting the funds in which case they must be a public/non-profit entity (see Section 1.2.2. below for host organisation requirements). To be eligible, partner organisations must provide (at minimum) clearly documented support for the project that represents a meaningful collaboration in terms of (a) partnership funding towards the project budget AND/OR (b) other essential in-kind material resources (e.g. use of office space, infrastructure, etc.).

There is no formal limit on how many organisations might collaborate for the funding, though naturally the partnership approach should be clear and coherent in terms of how many organisations are involved (see Section 1.2.3. below).

Documented support from **each** partner organisation should be provided at minimum via a supporting letter, but could also include any other documents if relevant (if providing more than one document, please collate all into a single pdf, maximum 5mb in size). Supporting letters and materials should be authored and signed on behalf of the partner organisations by individuals with the appropriate authority (e.g. organisation directors, partnership officers, research and funding staff, etc.). The contact details of these individuals should be provided in the application form, and they should be prepared to be contacted by the USF if necessary (for queries, verification of details, etc.). Under no circumstances should any supporting letters be authored by any of the applicants.

The letter from the partner organisation hosting the funds should also cover their willingness and capability to do so (see Section 1.2.2. below).

Partner organisations should be distinctly independent of one another, but in some contexts they may also be part of the same 'umbrella' group (e.g. two departments in one university). However, **in this case applicants should consider very carefully whether their proposal represents a high-quality partnership or not**. For example: are the departments sufficiently independent; does

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the partnership represent collaboration which might not have been possible otherwise; and what is different and beneficial about them working together as part of this proposal? Applicants with any doubt as to the clarity and strength of their partnership approach should therefore carefully consider whether their proposals are going to be competitive in these terms. The USF therefore permits such approaches as a technicality (two partner organisations within the same umbrella), but would not encourage them unless the partnership is clearly of a very high-quality.

Details regarding the nature of the partnership should therefore be clearly explained in the relevant section of the proposal ('Partnership statement'), in addition to a clear statement of the support in the partner organisation supporting letters (one per organisation). More information on partnership approaches can be found below in Section 1.2.3.

1.2.2. Host organisation

One of the partner organisations must be nominated as the host organisation for the purposes of receiving and administering the grant funds (this should be indicated via the check box in the online application form). The host organisation must be capable and willing to administer the funds for the project, and must be a **recognised public research body**, or other **non-profit institution**. The host organisation must also be suitably positioned and matched to the project in terms of research area, and/or otherwise be demonstrably capable of administratively supporting the proposed research.

The host organisation should express its willingness and capability to **host the funds** within its supporting letter. If useful and/or relevant, the letter should also detail experience in administering and hosting grant funding (but only if the host organisation is not already a recognised public/non-profit administrator of research grants). This letter should be signed on behalf of the host organisation by an individual with the appropriate authority (e.g. research officers, departmental directors, finance staff, etc.), and the contact details for this individual should be provided in this section of the application form (see below). The individual should be prepared to be contacted by the USF if necessary (for queries, verification of details, etc.), and under no circumstances should this letter be authored by any of the applicants.

Institutional overheads or management fees will **not** normally be covered as part of this funding.

For terms around funding (including payment) please see Section 3 regarding award terms and requirements.

It is acceptable for the host organisation to be involved in the project only/exclusively for the purposes of administering the funds, **provided there are still at least two other collaborating organisations** named in the application (see below). However, at least one applicant must still be based at the host organisation.

For example: it might be that two private research organisations are collaborating in the proposed project, but the funds are hosted by a University department where one of the applicants is based.

1.2.3. Partnership approaches

The clarity and quality of the proposed partnership approach will be one criteria for the assessment of applications. Proposals should therefore represent collaborative and innovative partnered research and activities where all applicants and organisations work together to address one or more of the following:

- Contribute to knowledge about cities and pandemics.

- Engage in capacity building e.g., building and strengthening networks around pandemics and cities research.

- Increase the relevance and impact of pandemics and cities research by:

  - collaborating with those most likely to use or benefit from the research;

  - connecting the supply of evidence with the demand for it;

  - mobilizing the talent, discoveries and expertise that fundamental research creates;

  - changing ways of thinking or raising awareness;

  - building the capacity of researchers /intermediaries to strengthen research uptake;

  - impacting upon policy and practice.

Partners should also ideally be organisations that already work to support the development of research on pandemics and/or cities. Key to successful partnerships will be a common understanding of a given problematic or research question, and compatible values which underpin the collaboration even if partners have different mandates. A framework for such partnerships means mutual commitment to the objectives of the collaboration, and a trust-based strategy that is compatible with each other's mission, values and goals. Applicants should therefore be very clear about what is needed from the partners, such as, for example, funding, time, facilities, equipment, analytical services, knowledge transfer, policy expertise or data, etc. Equally, it should be very clear what the partner gains from the applicants and project.

Partnership approaches and types of collaboration should ideally be based on one of the following examples:

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- **Disciplinary and interdisciplinary research partnerships:** inter-institutional research initiatives designed to make a significant contribution to advancing knowledge and understanding of pandemics within the discipline of urban studies.

- **Cross-sector co-creation of knowledge and understanding:** cross-sector (e.g. public-private sector) partnerships that use ongoing collaboration and mutual learning to foster innovative research, training and the co-creation of new knowledge on critical issues at the intersection of pandemics and urban studies.

- **Networks for research and/or related activities:** networks designed to advance the innovative co-creation of knowledge, as well as training and mobilization of research, on critical issues at the intersection of pandemics and urban studies.

- **Partnered knowledge mobilization:** partnerships designed to synthesize, apply and mobilize new and existing research knowledge relating to pandemics and cities in accessible ways. This could either build institutional capacity or increase the national and international impact and stature of the research.

- **Partnered research training initiatives:** partnerships designed to support the creation of innovative approaches that enrich research training experiences for students and postdoctoral researchers while enabling their transition to academic or non-academic workplace settings.

- **Partnered research centres:** partnerships to create or support a research cluster or centre designed to advance research and/or related activities at the intersection of pandemics and urban studies. Partner organizations might pool financial resources and suggest an amount of funds required from the USF.

1.3. Proposal information

Projects should begin within six months of the application deadline (by 1st May 2022), and be no more than twelve months long in total duration (unless they involve the creation of a research cluster or centre, in which case a report will **still** be required at the end of the first **twelve months**). A report on activities will be required at the end of the project under the terms of any grant funding offer (see Section 3, regarding award terms and requirements).

1.4. Proposal details

Page two of the application form (Sections 2.4-2.9 on the template) provides five free text fields in which applicants should detail the nature of the partnered research proposal, including the topic

area(s), objectives, nature of the partnership, proposed outputs and project timeline. The feasibility, planning and future directions of the project should also be carefully considered here, since this award is intended as **seed-funding** to enable initial pilots to develop into longer projects where possible or relevant. As stated above, the nature of the partnership should be clear and high-quality.

In terms of topic area(s), it should be clear that proposals involve partnered research lying at the intersection of pandemics and **urban studies**; and which should help gain deeper understanding of the social, political, economic, cultural and/or environmental dimensions of pandemics on urban lives and places. In this case 'pandemic' might be defined as any major infectious disease outbreak in the urban context, and the research does not have to relate to COVID-19 specifically. However, whilst the topic of pandemics and cities may be approached through a variety of relevant research angles (e.g. public health, medicine, infectious diseases, virology, history, social policy, population studies, etc.), it is necessary that the proposal's specific connection(s) to the field of **urban studies** should be **extremely clear**. In this case, applicants should ensure that they are adequately familiar with the wider urban studies discipline (including through relevant publications and journals such as the *Urban Studies Journal*), and that their proposal can clearly be identified (to a significant degree) as urban studies research. Applicants should therefore ensure that they understand this requirement very clearly before applying.

It is also expected that knowledge dissemination will be integral to the research project and that at least some of the results and outputs of the research will be made available within 12 months of commencing the research, for example through blogs and other forms of social media. If possible, the USF will welcome and support later collaboration in dissemination between successful awardees (e.g. through shared events, publications or other outreach activities). All such research outcomes should deliver key learnings towards issues of local, national and/or global concern.

The exact use of the free text fields on page two should be determined by each applicant according to their specific needs, but all content should be logically arranged under the relevant heading(s). A bibliography section is provided for references in the proposal text. All word counts must be adhered to as strict maximums, and any proposals which exceed the limits will not be considered. The limits for each field are as follows: proposal statement (1,000 words), partnership statement (500 words), project timeline and feasibility statement (500 words), outputs and dissemination (500 words), future directions and other comments (500 words), bibliography (750 words).

1.5. Budget details

The budget should be clear, reasonable, and well justified, and applications may apply for any amount up to GBP £25,000. All individual budget items listed at over GBP £500 must be accompanied with evidence, and all supporting documentation for budget items and exchange rates should be uploaded as a single pdf file, no more than 5mb in size. The specific evidence required

will vary depending on the particular cost item, but applicants should seek to provide relevant support accordingly (for example: quotes for services, travel prices, equipment purchase, etc.). The budget details, evidence, and statement should make it clear that the applicant(s) have carefully researched the costs and that the amount requested is both reasonable and justified according to the project requirements and risks.

Applicants must detail their budget in GBP only (i.e. UK Pounds Sterling), providing an evidenced and dated exchange rate via the exchange rate website Oanda. USF grants are **only payable in GBP**, and host organisations should be capable and willing to absorb any risk of shortfall in the event of currency devaluation. A tabulated record of financial expenditure should be provided to the USF by the host organisation at the end of the project (along with the awardee's final report), and no later than 13 months after the project has begun. Please see Section 3 for more information.

The table for budget items in the application form should only be used for funding requested from the USF. Any partner funding should therefore not be included in this budget section/table. Instead, this should be referenced and explained in the budget statement, and a supplemental 'complete' funding table (with USF funding and partner funding, broken down accordingly) should be uploaded separately as part of the budget evidence documentation (i.e. a full summary of project funding, that includes requested USF funding alongside any other sources relevant to the project – including their status, if not already guaranteed). If other funding sources are contingent upon the USF funding then this should be made clear in the budget statement and documentation.

The USF will **not** normally fund institutional overheads/management fees, honoraria, or the time of the applicants themselves (either as hourly or daily rates, or 'per diems'). However, one or more of the partner organisations may agree to release and/or cover the time of the applicants as part of their own contribution (the amount and value of this time should be indicated).

All other reasonable budget requests to support the partnered research will be considered, including but not limited to: equipment costs, training costs, research assistance (including the cost of hiring research assistants), travel and subsistence expenses, fieldwork, data collection, publication support costs, IT services/infrastructure, translation, research services, etc. If in doubt about the eligibility of a particular budget request, applicants should contact the USF to clarify (see contact details at the start of this document).

1.6. Supporting documents

Each application should include, at minimum:

- Applicant CVs (maximum two pages each, collated as a single pdf file, maximum 5mb in size).

- Research partner support letters (one per partner organisation, collated as a single pdf file, maximum 5mb in size). These may be collated with any other supporting documents from the partner organisations, as relevant. One partner organisation letter should also detail their willingness and capability to administer the project funding as the host organisation.

- Budget evidence documentation for all items above GBP 500 and exchange rates used (collated as a single pdf file, maximum 5mb in size).

Where relevant, applications may also include any additional supporting documents (collated as a single pdf file, maximum 5mb in size).

Additional supporting documents must **not** be used as a means to increase the word limits on page two (Sections 2.4-2.9 on the template). They must only be used as evidence to support the statements made in the main proposal text, and will only be evaluated as such. The USF therefore reserves the right to discard applications that contain significant additional text in any supporting documents that are uploaded, especially if that text is perceived to elaborate and extend upon the proposal text. If in doubt as to whether specific additional information should be included, please contact the USF to enquire (see contact details at the top of this document).

1.7. Other terms

Candidates should be aware of other general terms in relation to USF funding schemes, including:

- USF Trustees, staff, and/or assessors may not be named as either referees or co-applicants.

- Individuals may not submit more than one application per funding call.

- The USF reserves the right not to make any awards if suitable applications are not forthcoming.

- Applications (and proposals) must be completed in English language (even if publications and other outputs may be in other languages).

Further general terms can be found in the USF Code of Practice, available on the USF website (About > Aims and Practice).

2. Application process and assessment

2.1. Application process

All applications to the funding must be received by the advertised deadline, and extensions will not be granted under any circumstances. All applications must include:

- A completed application form with applicant and proposal information, made via the USF website.

- Supporting documents according to section 1.6, above.

In addition, all applicants will be requested to voluntarily complete an anonymous Equality & Diversity Monitoring Form after the application deadline. This form and any information volunteered with it is not used in the assessment process and will be separated from individual applications. It is only used for monitoring who applies to USF awards on aggregate, so that the USF may regularly assess and improve how it advertises and administers its grant funding.

Decisions will normally be made within eight weeks of the closing deadline for this award, and all applicants will be contacted regarding their application outcome. The USF regrets that it cannot offer any feedback on applications, and all decisions are final.

Applicants wishing to discuss their proposal informally, or with questions regarding the online application process, should contact USF Director of Operations Joe Shaw: joe.shaw@glasgow.ac.uk

2.2. Assessment

General USF assessment practices and methods are detailed in the USF Code of Practice, available on the USF website (About > Aims and Practice). This includes information about the standards of transparency by which the USF abides in administering applications for research awards and other proposals for support, and embodies the principles of equity, integrity and confidentiality for all who are involved in the assessment of proposals. Content here includes data protection and monitoring practices, equal opportunities, research ethics, the assessment process itself (including conflicts of interest and appeals), and information for assessors.

Specific criteria upon which applications will be assessed include the following:

- The academic value and potential impact of the proposal in terms of contemporary national, regional and global developments in pandemics and urban studies. This includes a wide range of considerations such as originality, innovation, and proposed outputs; but proposals should also clearly detail potential future plans post-USF funding, since this grant is explicitly intended as seed funding that can lead to larger initiatives.

- The clarity, quality and strength of the research partnership. For example, what kind of partnership is it, what benefits does it bring to the research, and how strong is the relationship and/or match between applicants and partners?

- The credibility and feasibility of the proposal's delivery, including in terms of the specific proposed outputs. For example, what risks have been considered?

- The justification, value and detail of the budget requested. For example, is it clear that the applicant(s) has researched and considered the budget carefully, and provided a proposal that makes good use of the resources available?

3. Award terms and requirements

The USF typically makes all offers of funding on the following conditions:

- Funding is only to be used for the purposes outlined in the application. If changes to budget allocation are required then written permission must be requested from the USF. The USF reserves the right to refuse such requests without providing any reason; and may request the return of funds if they are not to be used for the original stated purpose.

- Funding periods are to be strictly adhered to, and written permission must be requested from the USF for any amendments, postponements, extensions, etc. If requests are reasonable they are likely to be accepted, but the USF reserves the right to refuse such requests without providing any reason.

- All outputs from this grant funding must fully and clearly acknowledge USF support, and this acknowledgement must be at least equal to any other partner funders. A communications guidelines sheet is provided to awardees along with their offer letter.

- A full report on the project must be provided to the USF within one month of the project end date. For projects continuing beyond the initial period of 12 months, this must therefore be within 13 months of the start. A pro forma report template is provided to awardees along with their offer letter. A tabulated record of financial expenditure should be provided to the USF by the host organisation along with the awardee's final report.

- Funding is normally payable in two transfers: 75% at the start of the project and the final 25% (less unspent funds) upon provision of a satisfactory final report (as per above). Any unspent funds at the end of the project must be returned to the USF by the host organisation.

- Funding can only be provided in GBP currency according to the requested budget. Host organisations should be capable and willing to absorb any risk of shortfall in the event of currency devaluation.

- By applying to this funding, applicants agree to these terms and requirements, including the USF Code of Practice.