****

**STRATEGIC INNOVATION FUND GUIDANCE NOTE AND APPLICATION FORM**

1. **Introduction**

The Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) supports the development of new strategic innovation projects that will accelerate impact of the excellent research by growing innovation activities at Oxford and attracting substantial external funding.

The aim is to unlock significant opportunities either by pump-priming new or sustaining strategic and critical activities. It is aligned to the local and global (priority 4) of the emerging strategic plan (2025-30) – *Supporting society and the local and national economy by further developing a world-leading and inclusive innovation ecosystem*.

More specifically, the SIF is designed to:

1. develop a world-class innovation ecosystem,
2. support entrepreneurship in line with the outcomes of the spin-out review
3. enhance our local and global impact
4. **Selection Criteria**

The SIF is open to receiving projects from any source across the University and successful projects will need to meet most of the following criteria:

* **Strategic Alignment**: alignment with the University’s emerging Strategic Plan and SIF objectives as outlined above.
* **Transformational Impact**: demonstration of a potential for significant and measurable economic or social benefits through cross-institutional collaboration.
* **Scalability and Sustainability**: a clear plan for outputs, outcomes, and sustained impact beyond the funding period.
* **Leveraging Opportunities**: an outline of how the project could unlock larger opportunities, such as substantial external investment or expanded regional/global influence
* **Strong Foundations**: projects that are supported by robust partnerships and governance structures, including clear deliverables and monitoring plans
* **Complementary Funding**: where other funds have been secured, demonstrate no duplication, and provide an outline how SIF funding complement these sources

**STRATEGIC INNOVATION FUND APPLICATION FORM**

 *(Max. length is 5 sides of A4 for the completed form)*

*NOTE: Title of Project, Applicant’s name, award total, a description of the project, and a project report focussed on outcomes, may be published*

1. **Contacts and Funding Details**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| PROJECT TITLE: (Max 50 words)  |  |
| **Department/Faculty/Unit/Division** |  |
| **TIME SCALE** | **Start Date**  | **End Date** |
| **Lead Contact Details** | **Name:** |  |
| **Role/Job Title:** |  |
| **Email Address:** |  |
| **Lead Academic**  | **Name**  |  |
| **Email Address** |  |
| **Partner/Co-Funding Organisations** **(if relevant)** |  |
| **Partner contacts (If appropriate)** |  |
| **Project Cost*****(Please break these down if appropriate)*** | Hiring (Consultants) |  | Total |  |
| Training- to acquire skills related to project development e.g. economic evaluation  |  |
| Enabling works  |  |
| Piloting/Pre-planning requirements etc. |  |
| Other e.g. Staff costs, travel, subsistence, (please justify these in the form)…  |  |  |  |

## Project Summary (500 – 800 words)

|  |
| --- |
| Section Notes (please also read the guidance notes). The SIF intends to support the development of innovative project concepts into investable proposals suitable for presenting to external funders. It is important to distinguish the objectives and outputs of this application (or the SIF project), from those of the ultimate or the “externally investable project proposal” (i.e. the project that the SIF seeks to develop). This section is about the ultimate project or the “post-SIF investable proposal.”Using non-technical language, please use this section to briefly explain the overall project. You can include things like: * The background to the bigger concept (i.e. the post-SIF project you plan to develop for external funders)
* A narrative of the overall vision of where the project could lead to.
* The wider objectives of that externally fundable project
* The strategic importance of the project to the University and beyond (also see strategic alignment below).
* The innovation or commercialisation potential of that wider project (please note that the innovation or commercialisation potential are core aspects of this fund).
* The anticipated or potential outputs/outcomes, if “post-SIF external funding” were to be achieved.
* Any relevant timeframes to the wider project delivery
 |
| **Please outline the summary of your project here (500 words).**  |

## Rationale (300 words Max)

|  |
| --- |
| Section Notes (please also read the guidance notes). This section is about the SIF project, or the activities that are to be funded by the SIF only. Please briefly explain the rationale for your application to the SIF. You could include things like: * A narrative of how your project meets the strategic objectives of the SIF funding (refer to the criteria).
* The reasons your project needs SIF funding
* How will SIF funds be used to move the project concept into an investable proposal?
* Who are the ultimate target funders/partners and how can the SIF help the project to meet their requirements?
* Are there specific areas that the project is failing to meet in relation to what the funders want? And how could those be met by this funding.
* You can also cite examples of the barriers you are facing in accessing funding due to these barriers.
 |
| **Please outline the rationale for applying to the SIF here (300 words).**  |

## Objectives of the SIF project (300 words Max)

|  |
| --- |
| This section is about the SIF project. Please include:* The objectives of the SIF project (rather than the wider one)

Please check that your objectives are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound (SMART).  |
| **Please list the objectives of the SIF project here (300 words).**  |

## Strategic Alignment (300 words Max)

|  |
| --- |
| Section Notes (Please also refer to the Terms of Reference)This section is about the SIF project and how it fits the strategic priorities of the University. The SIF intends to support projects which are well aligned to the University’s emerging strategic priorities around innovation and commercialisation. The key criteria for assessing project applications are as follows: * Strategic Alignment: projects must align with the University’s emerging Strategic Plan and SIF objectives as outlined above
* Transformational Impact: Demonstrate potential for significant and measurable economic or social benefits through cross-institutional collaboration
* Scalability and Sustainability: Present a clear plan for outputs, outcomes, and sustained impact beyond the funding period.
* Leverage Opportunities: Indicate how the project could unlock larger opportunities, such as substantial external investment or expanded regional/global influence
* Strong Foundations: Be supported by robust partnerships and governance structures, including clear deliverables and monitoring plans
* Complementary Funding: Where other funds have been secured, demonstrate no duplication and outline how SIF funding complement these sources.
 |
| **Please describe how your project fits the strategic objectives of the SIF here. (300 words).**  |

## The case for investment and Project costing

|  |
| --- |
| Section Notes (Please also refer to the Terms of Reference)This section is about the financial case for your project, and it will help the panel evaluate the viability of your project. Please outline the following: * A brief recap of the project (no more than a paragraph).
* A project plan – i.e. a timeline of the project activities and outputs and when they are expected
* The costs of the planned activities
* The costs of the project’s overheads and consumables.
* A narrative of anticipated or potential risks and proposed mitigation
* A financial appraisal – i.e. the anticipated benefits in relation to the costs and when they are expected
 |