

The Mastercard Foundation and University of Cambridge Climate Resilience and Sustainability Research Fund Guidance for Applicants 2025

1. Eligibility

The purpose of the Mastercard Foundation and University of Cambridge Climate Resilience and Sustainability Research Fund (CReSus RF) is to develop innovative, integrated and interdisciplinary responses to sustainability and climate challenges, and shape the African continent's responses to these challenges through research, innovation and skills development for the next generation. This fund is part of the Africa Climate Collaborative – a partnership between the Mastercard Foundation and the University of Ghana, Makerere University, University of Cape Town and University of Cambridge. Together, the partners are empowering young Africans to lead climate resilient and sustainable futures.

In CReSus RF, applicants from Cambridge apply jointly with applicants from universities/ research institutes in Africa and co-create the projects. It is important that the funding is not simply used to provide services that will be carried out at one institution on behalf of the other, and that true collaboration is demonstrated in the application. All applications must justify how the research is relevant to climate resilience and sustainability. This may be broadly interpreted. Funding is not restricted to science departments but is open to all disciplines and departments. Multi-disciplinary and inter- disciplinary applications are particularly welcomed as are innovative approaches.

Research proposals that engage with young people on the African continent (aged <36 years) and /or are of benefit to young people will be prioritised. Principal Investigators (PIs) are encouraged to consider how young people might be involved in the research team in Africa. Workshop proposals should be designed to enhance the skills of young people in Africa.

Both applicants should be at post-doctoral level or above although due consideration will be given for equivalent experience. Please contact us if one of the applicants does not have a PhD.

By completing an application, it is understood that both applicants are doing so with support from their Head of Department or equivalent. Both applicants should have a formal link to a research group/department/faculty in their home institution. It is also expected that both applicants remain employed beyond the end date of the awards. The awards are not intended to support post-graduate students, however, limited support for students (e.g. as part of a research project or internship) is encouraged.

The Cambridge- based applicant must be working at the University of Cambridge. In this round, we will also consider Research Catalyst Grant applications from NIAB. The Cambridge applicants will act as the lead applicants, for administrative purposes, as the awards will be managed by their Cambridge Departments/Faculties/Institutes. The Africa-based applicant must be in a University or Research Institution of comparable standing to a University on the African continent.

2. Awards Available

In this round, applications can only be made for a Research Catalyst Grant for up to £20,000 or a Workshop Grant for up to £50,000. We do not cover salaries of either PI, overheads or grant administration costs. Most awards will be for a period of 12 months or less although longer timescales may be considered if well justified. For queries on eligible costs, please contact cresusrf@cambridge-africa.cam.ac.uk

Research Catalyst Grants

The aim of the Research Catalyst Grant is to act as a **seed fund/catalyst** to enable the development of new research activity. Priority will be given to applications that build new partnerships (or expand existing ones) with the potential for long-term collaboration. Applications should clearly articulate how the collaboration adds value beyond that which could be provided by the individual groups/organisations and describe how the collaboration will operate. The funding is for research projects relevant to Climate Resilience and Sustainability. There is a broad interpretation of relevant research but within the application, the relevance of the research needs to be justified. Applications may include equipment; noting that all equipment purchased using the CReSus RF must be for use in Africa and must remain with the collaborating African partner institution/university upon completion of the project. Only one application will be considered per collaboration. Multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approaches are encouraged with the same funding limits regardless of the disciplines involved. We anticipate that Research Catalyst Grants may lead to further joint applications for larger grants.

Workshop Grants

The aim of the Workshop Grant is to support high-quality workshops delivered in Africa in collaboration between African universities/institutes and the University of Cambridge. The workshops should focus on developing skills and knowledge relevant to research on climate resilience and sustainability with a particular emphasis on early career researchers. The workshops will be co-created by researchers in African institutions and Cambridge, with the expectation that workshops will be delivered in Africa. Furthermore, this grant aims to build the capacity of participants by providing access to resources, mentorship, and networking

opportunities that can contribute to their professional development and career advancement.

3. Application

The Cambridge-based Principal Investigator must register and complete a savable online application form, available on the Cambridge-Africa website. Final submissions should include the following documents:

- Case for support, including details of how the collaboration is expected to work
- An itemised budget (template provided)
- A lay summary
- A letter of support from the department/faculty of the Cambridge-based PI. (For the Department of Engineering, a letter of support from the Head of Division is needed). An email from an institutional email account is also acceptable.
- A letter of support from the department/institution of the Africa-based PI. An email from an institutional email account is also acceptable.
- CVs (maximum 2 pages) for both the Cambridge-based and Africa-based PI

The details of two suggested referees are also required. **These should be individuals who have no conflicts of interest with the applicants (e.g. they should not be from the same Department).**

The deadline for submission is **15th January 2026** and applications can be submitted at any time before this. Any queries should be sent to cresusrf@cambridge-africa.cam.ac.uk

4. Award Administration

Awards will be administered by the Department/Faculty of the Cambridge PI.

4a. Pre-award administration

A member of staff with responsibility for grant administration within the Cambridge department/faculty must be named in the application form and applicants must confirm that prior discussion has taken place with this staff member.

Please note that a Worktribe is not required at the application stage. However, if the Cambridge department wishes to use the Worktribe Project module to draft project costs before submitting an application, they can create the costing on Worktribe. The Worktribe project costing should remain in "Bid Development" and should not be approved or submitted to the Research Operations Office, as only project costs for awarded projects are to be submitted to the Research Operations Office. Full instructions will be provided to successful applicants and

departmental Research Grant Administrators after funding decisions are made.

All enquiries should be directed to cresusrf@cambridge-africa.cam.ac.uk; please do not contact the Research Operations Office directly about your application.

4b. Post Award Administration

Successful applicants will receive an Award Letter to be signed and returned by the Cambridge PI and an appropriate agreement, (a Research Collaboration Agreement Letter or a Workshop Collaboration Agreement Letter) that must be executed by the delegated legal authority at the partner Institution, prior to the transfer of any funds. Copies of the standard Award Letter to the Cambridge PI and the Collaboration Agreement Letters are available [here](#).

Please note that the Collaboration Agreements/Award Letters issued under this Call are not negotiable.

Research Catalyst Grants will only be activated and assigned a project number by the Research Operations Office at Cambridge University on receipt of:

- (i) a signed Award Letter from the Cambridge PI
- (ii) a fully signed Research Collaboration Agreement Letter from the Partner Institution and PI

It is expected that the Cambridge University department will **advance** the proportion of funds required for use by the collaborating institution on execution of the Collaboration Agreement Letter and receipt of a valid invoice and will subsequently reconcile expenditure against the advance.

Workshop Awards are not set up by the Research Operations Office. The Cross-School Initiative Hub will transfer funds to the relevant departments once the following have been received:

- (i) a signed Award Letter from Cambridge PI
- (ii) a fully signed Workshop Collaboration Agreement Letter from the Partner Institution and PI
- (iii) Name and email address of the Cambridge department/faculty finance manager
- (iv) Cambridge department code and GL Cost Centre

Please ensure that the GL Cost Centre is set up and activated **before** the transfer to avoid any delays.

We also recommend that you choose a start date for your project not earlier than 1st June 2026

to allow enough time for your grant to be activated.

The collaborating institution must acknowledge receipt of any items of equipment bought by the Fund with the administering Cambridge department and in the final report.

5. Research conduct and standards

All research and equipment transfer must be in accordance with national laws and institutional policies and guidelines. This includes the policies of both the University of Cambridge and the African Institution and the import and export laws of both the UK and the African country.

All projects should consider:

- Ethics and sensitive data including the need for ethical institutional review board approval
- Material transfer
- Any requirements to ensure compliance and timescale associated with the Nagoya Protocol
- Transport of scientific materials
- Other safety considerations and codes of practice

For health-related research projects which involve humans, their tissue and/or data, please refer to further guidance [here](#).

6. Reporting and Extensions

An End of Grant report is required to be submitted to cresusrf@cambridge-africa.cam.ac.uk within 45 days of the award end date, as stated in the Award Letter. A report template will be sent to you for completion.

Please consider the necessary timescale for your project when applying; most grants will be less than 12 months duration. Normally and if there are valid reasons, we will consider no-cost extensions of up to 6 months. Please contact the CReSUs Research Fund coordinator before the original end date of your grant if an extension is required.

The End of Grant report should detail achievements so far, including:

- Details of the collaboration between the Cambridge and African institutes/universities
- Outputs of the project/collaboration, including publications, presentations, awards and further grant applications. Please acknowledge the Mastercard Foundation and University of Cambridge Climate Resilience and Sustainability Research Fund in publications or presentations related to your project
- Examples of publicity generated by the project (where applicable)

- Photographs of activities are encouraged. We would wish to use them for publicity purposes, or include them in our reports to the Mastercard Foundation
- Financial statement indicating how the award was used

At the end of each award, the department /faculty's finance representative must confirm that the grant has been fully reconciled and all expenditure posted within three months of the end date of the award.

Informal updates and sharing of news, photographs and publicity outside of the specified reporting times are also encouraged, **as are any longer-term or subsequent outcomes**. Please send all to cresusrf@cambridge-africa.cam.ac.uk. For those who tweet, please tag @CambridgeAfrica

7. Timelines for the 2025 Call

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| 15 th October 2025 | Applications open |
| 15 th January 2026 | Applications close |
| January – February 2026 | Referees contacted Panel meeting held Further information may be requested from applicants by the Panel |
| March 2026 | Application outcomes confirmed |