

Cambridge Africa Climate Collaborative Research Fund 2026/27

Guidance For Applicants

1. Eligibility

The purpose of the Cambridge Africa Climate Collaborative Research Fund 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.

To apply for funding from the Cambridge Africa Climate Collaborative Research Fund, applicants from the University of Cambridge co-create a joint project with applicants from universities (or research institutions of comparable standing to a university) on the African continent. 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. Applications are welcome from all disciplines. 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 < 35 years) and /or are of benefit to young people will be prioritised. Applicants 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 in advance 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. A letter of support from both Heads of Department is required when submitting an application. Both applicants must be formally employed and working at their respective institutions. 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 applicants will act as the lead applicants, for administrative purposes, as the awards will be managed by their Cambridge departments/faculties/institutes.

2. Awards Available

In this round, applications can be made for a Research Catalyst Grant for up to £25,000, a Research Project Grant for up to £80,000 or a Workshop Grant for up to £50,000. We do not cover salaries of either investigator, institutional overheads, indirect costs or grant administration costs. Most awards will be for a period of approximately 12 months (in the case of a Research Catalyst Grant and a Workshop Grant) or 18 months (in the case of a Research Project Grant). We discourage applicants from making multiple applications per funding round. For queries regarding eligible costs, please refer to the [FAQs](#) or contact africaclimatecollaborative@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. Applications may include equipment purchase noting that all equipment purchased using the fund must be for use in Africa and must remain with the collaborating African institution upon completion of the project. We anticipate that Research Catalyst Grants may lead to further joint applications for larger grants.

Research Project Grants

With awards up to £80,000, this new funding category is intended to support larger-scale and more ambitious collaborative research projects. To be eligible, applicants are required to provide evidence of a successful prior collaboration and tangible research outcomes, either through a previously funded Research Catalyst Grant or through support received from another funding body, including the Cambridge-Africa ALBORADA Research Fund. In addition, Research Project Grants will be expected to incorporate an internship opportunity for graduating scholars ideally

from the Mastercard Foundation–Cambridge Scholars Programme or another partner programme. Where a graduating scholar is not available, applications proposing an internship opportunity for another young person may also be considered. While most funded activities are expected to be completed within 12 months, Research Project Grants may extend to a duration of up to 18 months.

Workshop Grants

The aim of the Workshop Grant is to support high-quality workshops delivered in Africa in collaboration between African universities 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. 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 applicant must register first then invite the Africa-based applicant to jointly 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/institute of the Cambridge-based applicant (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 applicant. An email from an institutional email account is also acceptable
- CVs (maximum 2 pages) for both the Cambridge-based and Africa-based applicants

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

The deadline for submission is **15th January 2027** and applications can be submitted at any time before this. Any queries should be sent to africaclimatecollaborative@cambridge-africa.cam.ac.uk

4. Award Administration

Awards will be administered by the department/faculty/institute of the Cambridge investigator which will be responsible for ensuring that the grant is fully reconciled and that all expenditure is appropriately accounted for.

The department/faculty/institute should agree an appropriate payment arrangement with the African Collaborating Institution, taking into consideration the requirements and financial needs of the project. Grant funds may be transferred in advance, in tranches, or in arrears, as appropriate to the nature and circumstances of the award. Where advance funding is provided, the department/faculty/institute should ensure that the amount transferred is proportionate to the anticipated expenditure and project requirements.

The department/faculty/institute will be responsible for recovering any unspent funds from the African Collaborating Institution and will be liable to the Cambridge Africa Climate Collaborative Research Fund for any funds that remain unaccounted for.

For Research Project Grants, departments/faculties/institutes should not transfer 100% of the award to the African Collaborating Institution in advance.

4a. Pre-award administration

A member of staff with responsibility for grant administration within the Cambridge department/faculty/institute 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 africaclimatecollaborative@cambridge-africa.cam.ac.uk. Please do not contact the Research Operations Office directly about your application.

4b. Post-award administration

Successful applications will be subject to due diligence checks carried out by the Research Operations Office. Due diligence checks help ensure the stability and financial probity of any organisation we are sub-awarding funds. As part of the due diligence process, we ask for details of the

organisation's governance arrangements, financial management, and policies and procedures in place.

Once the due diligence process has been satisfactorily completed, successful applicants will receive an Award Letter to be signed and returned by the Cambridge investigator, together with the appropriate agreement (either a Research Collaboration Agreement Letter or a Workshop Collaboration Agreement Letter), which must be executed by the delegated legal authority at the Collaborating Institution prior to the transfer of any funds. Copies of the standard Award Letter to the Cambridge investigator and the Collaboration Agreement Letter are available [here](#).

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

Research Catalyst Grants and Research Project 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 investigator
- (ii) A fully signed Research Collaboration Agreement Letter from the Collaborating Institution and African investigator
- (iii) An approved Worktribe project costing record

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 investigator
- (ii) A fully signed Workshop Collaboration Agreement Letter from the Collaborating Institution and African investigator
- (iii) Name and email address of the Cambridge department/faculty/institute's finance manager
- (iv) Cambridge department project 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 2027 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 africaclimatecollaborative@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. Normally and if there are valid reasons, we will consider no-cost extensions of up to 6 months. Please contact the scheme's 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 universities/institutes
- Outputs of the project/collaboration, including publications, presentations, awards and further grant applications. Please acknowledge the Cambridge Africa Climate Collaborative 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/institute'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 africaclimatecollaborative@cambridge-africa.cam.ac.uk. For those who tweet, please tag @CambridgeAfrica

7. Timelines for the 2026-27 Call

15 th October 2026	Applications open
15 th January 2027	Applications close
January – February 2027	Referees contacted Panel meeting held Further information may be requested from applicants by the Panel
March 2027	Application outcomes confirmed