



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute

Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute 2021 Seed Funding Round Guidelines & Call for Applications

Context

The [Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute](#) is calling for applications to our 2021 seed funding round, that will support a number of sustainability-focused, engaged research projects up to \$20k each exploring themes around:

- Health, wellbeing, and care
- Place-based transitions
- Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (land and sea)
- Future cities (in collaboration with the [Melbourne Centre for Cities](#))

With the recent elevation of two key university-level initiatives focused on Cities and Climate – namely the evolution of the Connected Cities Lab into the [Melbourne Centre for Cities](#), and the establishment of [Melbourne Climate Futures](#) – MSSSI is utilising our 2021 seed funding round to explore broader sustainability-related themes across the University, to enhance their interdisciplinary profile and partnership, engagement, and impact capacity.

Four projects of up to \$20,000 each will be awarded across the identified themes, which are expanded on further in the [Appendix A](#). The Future Cities-themed project, a collaboration between MSSI and the University's new Melbourne Centre for Cities, has a specific focus on doctoral researcher engagement, and applicants must involve at least one current PhD researcher as a co-investigator in their proposal.

All projects will need to be feasible within current and reasonably anticipated constraints relating to the local and broader COVID-19 context. Guidance on managing research activity during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found [here](#).

Cross-faculty representation from a minimum of two faculties is required, as is early career researcher involvement in the research team. Projects developed in partnership with local stakeholders, with strong engagement and translation elements, will be viewed favourably, as will those that incorporate explicit early career research and engagement opportunities within project activities.

Full applications to be submitted on the requisite template [\[available here\]](#) to janine.campbell@unimelb.edu.au by **COB on Monday 18 October 2021**, in line with the scope and eligibility criteria outlined below:

Scope

Themes and Framings: Project proposals should be framed around one (or more) themes of:

- [Health, wellbeing, and care](#);
- [Place-based transitions](#);
- [Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity \(land and sea\)](#); or
- [Future Cities](#)

See the [Appendix A](#) for summary details relating to each thematic area.

Projects that are attentive to cross-cutting themes of **First Nations reconciliation**, **climate change**, and **resilience** will be prioritised, and proposals that map meaningfully against the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) will also be reviewed favourably.

We are keen to receive proposals that extend beyond incremental research project paradigms and have a strong focus on socio-environmental transformation. For example, engagement-focused projects that facilitate strong and inclusive participation by local stakeholders and are geared toward positive outcomes for communities or society more broadly will be viewed favourably. Project design should be stakeholder-informed in addition to drawing on research knowledge and theory, and project outputs and outcomes should reflect principles of reciprocal knowledge sharing with partner communities. If you have queries regarding the alignment of your proposed project, please contact janine.campbell@unimelb.edu.au for further advice.

Budget and Timeframe: Up to \$20,000 will be available for four projects across the identified themes that have a firm commencement plan by early-February 2022 at latest. Funding will be disbursed in 2021, with the requirement that all funds to be spent by the end of 2022 (with extenuating circumstances taken into consideration). **A brief, itemised budget is required as part of the project proposal.**

Impact: We are seeking projects that have a strong focus on engagement and impact, including clear rationales for engagement of strategic audiences (for example participants, end-users, policy, media, and decision-makers). Strong translation outputs will be anticipated from successful projects, with articles in *The Conversation* and similar fora encouraged, alongside tailored translation pieces relevant to the partner communities, organisations, or sector participants, and in line with the project's engagement and impact strategy. Impact through outreach to share and activate research findings is also encouraged. Funds should be apportioned in the budget for communication, engagement, and translation activities, and proposals must constitute research projects; stand-alone events such as conferences or symposia will not be funded.

Interdisciplinary collaboration: Projects that bring together different disciplinary lenses to address the identified key themes and research problems will be viewed favourably, both within and beyond the multi-Faculty Chief Investigator requirements set out below. Proposals are encouraged to leverage other funds where possible (for example, Faculty or project-based resources), with the aim of developing foundations for larger research opportunities. Where this is not possible, please identify potential funders that could be approached in the future. Examples of projects from MSSI's previous seed funding call can be viewed at [here](#).

Early Career engagement: We seek projects that value and engage with early career scholars from across campus, supporting the career trajectory and development of emerging voices at the University of Melbourne. The '[Future Cities](#)' award is designed explicitly to develop leadership by University of Melbourne doctoral researchers in interdisciplinary collaboration. To this extent, proposals under the [Future Cities](#) stream must involve one or more PhD researchers focusing on a City-related theme, who will in turn be expected to take part formally from 2022 (and at a minimum for the duration of this project) in the new Melbourne Centre for Cities' Doctoral Group, which will provide additional career development support.

Eligibility

- Proposals must be submitted by a nominated project lead that holds a minimum 0.4FTE position at the University for the life cycle of the project
- Proposals must be discussed with the Lead CI's Head of the Department (HoD), and HoD sign off must be included with the submission
- Proposals must include cross-faculty participation
- Proposals must include Early Career Researcher participation
- Proposals for the '[Future Cities](#)' theme must involve at least one current PhD researcher as co-investigator in the submitting project team

Format for project proposal submissions

This call is restricted to internal University of Melbourne staff, and should be submitted in the format provided in Appendix B, encompassing the following points:

- Project Chief Investigator
- Project title

- Project start date and completion date
- Project team
- Project partners (as relevant)
- Project aims
- Project plan
- Budget
- Project milestones and deliverables
- Return on Investment details
- CI and HoD sign off

Please email your project proposal on the relevant template [\[available here\]](#) to Janine Campbell, Executive Officer, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute by COB Monday 18 October 2021 to janine.campbell@unimelb.edu.au.

Please feel free to email Janine in advance if you have questions or need clarification on any of the above.

Appendix A

Health, wellbeing and care

Health and wellbeing: This theme encompasses a focus on the complex, interdependent relationships between human health and wellbeing and sustainability. Health inequities are shaped by a broad range of 'social determinants of health' - the conditions in which we are born, grow, live work and age. Indigenous Australian conceptions of health are holistic encompassing environmental, spiritual and cultural factors. First Nations peoples' have asserted the relationship between a healthy country and a healthy community, through concepts of connection to country, kinship and reciprocity. Attention to health and wellbeing is consistent with MSSI's focus on a socially-embedded understanding of sustainability that is grounded in principles of equity and justice, and projects are welcome that reflect this approach.

Care: How we value care and extend care to those species (human and non-human) in need is a critical related challenge for building a sustainable society. Indigenous ethics of care for diverse cultural landscapes are central to processes of knowledge building and adaptation. MSSI will sponsor work that sets out a vision for sustainability that puts care at the centre of our relationship to the natural world, the built environment and communities, state and economy. The goal is to locate care as a key organising principle at every scale of environmental governance

Place-based transitions

Sustainability transitions studies recognise the importance of place, scale, and the differentiated spatial contexts across which transitions unfold. There is now increased focus on where transitions occur, why they occur with greater momentum in some places and not others, whether transitions unfold differently in different geographical contexts, and how actors relate across spatial scales and transition levels.

The human impacts of environmental shifts have pronounced distributional expression as well as distinctive geographic manifestations – this includes institutional responses programs such as those designed to assist low income and rental households to access cleaner, cheaper energy. Biosecurity is a further important consideration, in terms of land use planning, managing the interfaces between human and wild species, competing land uses, and circular economy considerations regarding end of life energy and related waste and consumption considerations. Without such interventions, environmental transition will steepen social and economic gradients. Climate change will bring stressors and transitions that have clearly recognised if not fully understood distributional and generational impacts. Access to basic resources will be affected by climate change and resource depletion and transition processes with distributional welfare impacts and consequences for the community. Implications for business and industry will similarly be deeply felt, presenting opportunities for private sector investment and collaboration in assisting transitions and transformation issues and needs. Projects are welcomed that address innovation in research and practice in urban design and urban planning practice; regional development and governance; community readiness (personalised responses to disadvantage); place-based supports for child and family development; and local service integration.

Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (land and sea)

Biodiversity and ecosystems underpin our existence in very real and immediate ways, be it the provision of natural medicines and drugs that are derived directly or inspired by natural systems and processes. Recognition of the fundamental role that ecosystems play in supporting human wellbeing is a cornerstone of many Indigenous peoples' belief systems and has been reflected in traditional knowledge systems for centuries. Progress towards Sustainable Development Goals on land and water (SDGs 14 and 15) remains poor and transformative change is needed. The UN Decade for Ocean Science was launched in 2020, and Ocean Health has now intersected with the Climate Change Agenda. Interest in the 'blue economy' is growing rapidly in recognition of future trajectories of development in marine contexts.

Efforts to address biodiversity loss (land and sea) and sustainable use of resources tend to be dispersed, sectorally or thematically-based, and within distinct regulatory frameworks including climate, biodiversity, fisheries or the law of the sea. The result is a fragmented approach to challenges that require an integrated approach to fully realise a healthy ocean and planet. Universities have a critical role to play in the production and assemblage of the scientific and socio-economic and cultural knowledge, and developing the technologies and social infrastructures required to rebuild biodiverse land and sea life. Addressing biodiversity loss and rebuilding marine life are both an ethical obligation and can also generate significant economic benefits, and there is a major global focus on investment in biodiversity (natural capital) by the finance sector. Projects are welcome that reflect the role universities can play in developing the evidence base for, and the benefits of, action on biodiversity and ocean health and the costs of inaction.

Future Cities

The way cities contribute to addressing global and local challenges, is key to ensuring the long-term sustainability of humanity. Cities are now confronted with complexity and uncertainty in environmental change, international politics, interconnected infrastructures, shifting economies and society. Cities can no longer be thought of in isolation from each other or their natural environments, and the business of deciding who gets what, when, and how in urban development has become a global affair. Understanding how changes in the governance and development of cities can better address today's most pressing societal challenges, not least in sustainability, is essential for all levels of policymaking as much as for community action and industry business. Urban resilience to a range of known and unknown shocks and stresses is also a key challenge for city leaders, citizens and urban professions. This will require interdisciplinary solutions able to step beyond scholarly and policy silos, but also tangible approaches that reconcile scholarship and innovation with practical changes on the streets of our ever expanding and changing cities.

Projects are invited that link to the outlined themes, and seek to investigate and generate best practice, policy-relevant evidence, and to understand and effectively respond to the challenges facing urban environments.