## FAQs for SGC-FIRST

## What types of projects will be funded?

SCGC-FIRST is seeking to support innovative and imaginative projects at either a low or zero technical readiness (TRL) that demonstrate distinct advantages in cost and environmental footprint over competing approaches which are already available in the marketplace or opportunities for those to be adapted to the SCGC context (the SCGC context can be found in the Guideline [here](https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/files/internal-research-funding/scgcfirst_guideline_final.docx)). Projects need to be outcomes-driven, leading toward potential solutions or inventions.

## What types of activities will be funded?

Awards will be made only for the directly incurred (DIC) costs of research and DA Estates. Any unspent balances at the end of the grant period should be returned to the fund. For clarity, the following costs are allowable:

Directly Incurred costs (DIC) (staff and non-staff):

* student stipends
* salaries of postdoctoral researchers (full- or part-time)
* consumables
* minor equipment (equipment with a value of £10,000 or more would require clear justification)

Directly Allocated costs (DAC):

* estates costs

## What types of activities will not be funded?

The following will not be supported by the funds available: building costs, the salary of the Principal Investigator, new academic posts, honoraria, or travel to conferences. For clarity, the following costs are not allowable:

***Not Allowed****:*

* overhead costs
* DA infrastructure technicians
* Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator’s time
* honoraria
* travel to conferences

## What happens if I have unspent balances at the end of the grant period?

Any unspent balances at the end of the grant period should be returned to the fund.

## Will SCG approve or see my project proposal?

The Chief Innovation Officer and Executive Vice President - New Business of SCGC or his nominee will be a member of the SCGC-FIRST Prioritisation Panel. All applications will be marked confidential. The SCGC representative **will not have power of veto** on any applications to the Fund.

## Who will own the IP arising from funded projects?

The University will own any IP that arises as a result of support from the SCGC-FIRST. SCGC will have rights of first refusal to take an exclusive option of the arising IP generated by the SCGC-FIRST and to support further research under a sponsored collaboration agreement (FCA 2.0) within six months of the completion of the relevant project. Additional support will be subject to a separate collaboration agreement between Oxford University and SCGC.

## What happens to pre-existing IP that is relevant to the application for funding?

Applicants should work with Oxford University Innovation (OUI) to identify and protect any relevant background intellectual property that would form the basis of a project before submission to the Fund.

**Will SCGC Acknowledge the National Security and Investment Act (NSIA)?**

Yes. SCGC acknowledges that the Arising Intellectual Property from each Project and any licence granted further to the Arising Intellectual Property may be a qualifying acquisition within scope of the National Securities and Investments Act 2021 (the “NSIA”), under which the UK Government could exercise its powers to make an order to void and invalidate any licence granted. As the acquirer of such an asset, SCGC will comply with the NSIA and consider all steps necessary to mitigate the risk of an acquisition being called in, including where appropriate by making a notification to the Investment Security Unit of the UK Government ahead of any licence being concluded.

## How can I apply to the SCGC-FIRST?

Prospective applicants are encouraged to engage with the process early and to maintain ongoing engagement as follows:

1. Contact your departmental grants team to notify them of your intention to apply to the SCGC-FIRST. Inform departmental admin teams that the Fund only supports directly incurred costs and Directly Allocated (Estates) costs internal departmental approval will be required after submission. Your department will need to confirm their approval of the project by the deadlines set in IRAMS (12/1/2024).
2. Contact Gulcin Avul, Alliance Manager, in SCGC-Oxford Centre of Excellence by emailing [scgcfirst@mpls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:scgcfirst@mpls.ox.ac.uk) to discuss any aspect of the scheme.
3. Submit your application in IRAMS by the advertised deadline.

## Who is on the SCGC-FIRST Prioritisation Panel?

All proposals will be subject to confidential peer review. Decisions on whether the application is successful will be made by the SCGC-FIRST Prioritisation Panel, which includes:

* Prof Dermot O'Hare (Chair); Director of the SCG-Oxford Centre of Excellence (CoE)
* Chief Innovation Officer and Executive Vice President - New Business of SCGC or his nominee
* Head of Division (MPLS)
* Associate Head for Research (MPLS)
* OUI Representative
* Senior academic members of the University

The Panel reserves the right to seek additional expert opinion on a confidential basis if required. Oxford researchers supported by the SCGC Fund for Innovation and Research in Sustainability and Technology (SCGC-FIRST) will be invited to meet SCGC staff when they visit Oxford to outline and discuss their projects.

## Are there any priority areas for the SCGC-FIRST?

**SCGC-FIRST** is seeking to support innovative projects that demonstrate distinct advantages in cost and environmental footprint over competing approaches which are already available in the marketplace or opportunities for those to be adapted to the SCGC context below. Projects should be outcomes-driven, leading toward potential solutions or inventions.

Broad areas and topics of interest to SCGC include, but are not limited to:

Energy and carbon reduction

* carbon neutrality through reduction of GHG emissions, carbon capture, storage and utilisation, and emissions monitoring
* low cost, low carbon footprint hydrogen production
* materials for environmental sustainability
* sustainable supply chains and logistics
* novel approaches to utilisation of energy sources
* sustainable finance and carbon accounting tools for decision-making

Environmental impacts

* water and energy reduction, recovery, and reuse; wastewater and effluent treatment prior to discharge

Future plastics

* circular economy of plastics: up-cycling of polymer materials and the creation of markets
* new materials for sustainable outcomes
* client and consumer behaviour and novel interventions to influence change

Innovation

* open call for applications on any topic of innovation relevant to SCGC but not covered in the topics listed above.

**Who is eligible for the SCGC-FIRST?**

**You will need to meet the following criteria to apply:**

* PIs must be Oxford University academic staff holding a contract of employment extending to at least the end of the proposed project and be hosted by a department of the University.
* Applications from Early Career Researchers who hold independent externally funded fellowships must have their fellowship funding extending to at least the end of the proposed project.
* Applicants seeking to establish independent research careers are encouraged.

**You are not eligible to apply if you are:**

* Researchers holding honorary, visiting positions, and PDRAs.

**Additional notes on eligibility:**

Applicants should clarify their eligibility with departments and departmental approvers are required to check the eligibility of their applicants before advancing any applications.

## What are the assessment criteria?

Awards will be assessed against the following criteria:

* Excellence and intrinsic merit of the innovative idea or concept
* Potential for realisable outcomes and long-term impact to SCGC and society
* A clear science-based, time-bound plan to achieve the project aims
* Represent good value

## Is The SSCG-FIRST open to all divisions and disciplines across the University?

Yes. SCGC-FIRST is open to all Oxford University academic staff from across all disciplines.

## Does my department need to check my proposal for eligibility and finance?

Yes. All proposals must be accompanied by a proposed budget prepared using X5, with the budget details output onto the X5 Admin output (AO). In addition, the MPLS Division requires departmental approval by the Head of Department (or nominee) (this must be obtained for all the departments involved in an internal collaboration).

* All proposed investigator(s) need to seek approval from their respective Head of Department(s) (or nominee(s)).
* A trial costing should be created in X5, using the funder **SCGC-FIRST** (short name SCGC-F) and the **Generic** scheme. The Excel output must be attached. Investigator can be named in both proposal and X5 if necessary.

Please contact your department’s finance officer for a proposed budget prepared using X5. [**Download the SCGC-FIRST Costing Guideline for Finance Officers (Word document)**](https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/files/internal-research-funding/scgcfirstcostingguidelineforfinanceofficers.docx). You can also [**view the Costing Guideline on this webpage**](https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/research-funding/internal-research-funding/scgc-first/scgc-first-costing-guidelines-for-departments2019-finance-office)**.**

## When is the next deadline?

The next deadline is Wednesday, 20 December 2023, 4pm.

The prioritising panel will meet to make decisions on this round in January 2024. Applicants will be advised the outcome of their applications soon after. Applicants should ensure that they have obtained prior permission from their department before submitting their applications.

## Who do I contact?

To discuss your intention to apply to the SCGC-FIRST in your division, please send an email to the following:

* scgcfirst@mpls.ox.ac.uk

## Where can I find more information?

If you have general queries about the SCGC-FIRST please contact:

Ms Gulcin Avul, Alliance Manager via [scgcfirst@mpls.ox.ac.uk](mailto:scgcfirst@mpls.ox.ac.uk)

You can download the SCGC-FIRST documents here or you can visit the SCG-Oxford Centre of Excellence webpage [here](https://scgcoe.mpls.ox.ac.uk/) or MPLS Webpage [here](https://www.mpls.ox.ac.uk/research-funding/internal-research-funding/scgc-first).