



SCOTLAND BEYOND NET ZERO SEED FUND

Call for proposals

Scotland Beyond Net Zero seed fund launched to support net zero research collaborations and partnerships across Scotland – awards up to £15,000.

Key dates:

Deadline: 5pm, Friday 23rd May 2025

Webinar: Wednesday 23rd April 12.00 - 13.00

Expected project start dates: On or any time after 1st August 2025

About the Scotland Beyond Net Zero Seed Fund scheme

Scotland Beyond Net Zero is a collaboration of Scotland's universities who have agreed to pool resources to collaborate on high-impact research to address Scotland's climate and net zero challenges. Our mission is **to catalyse high-impact research, partnerships and collaborative activities that respond to Scotland's climate and environment challenges.**

The goal of the seed funding scheme is to foster collaborations and partnerships which develop co-created research in support of net zero in Scotland. We are focussed on six priority research themes: built environment, food, finance, energy, natural systems and transport, though the fund is open to researchers working in a cross-thematic way (for example, on issues of climate justice or circular economy which cross all these research themes).

We are interested in funding interdisciplinary projects which:

- Align with the core ambition and research themes of Scotland Beyond Net Zero as described above.
- Involve close collaboration across at **least two university members of SBNZ**, and clear plans for engagement or partnership with at **least one other organisation** (e.g. community group, third sector organisation, local or national government or industry). In



particular, we will award projects which show evidence that the research proposal has been *co-created* across the project team.

Examples of suitable projects include, but are not limited to:

- Cross-disciplinary workshops/sandpits or research visits which address a specific policy and/ or research challenge, with an emphasis on co-creation with external partners.
- Network/ consortium building activity (for example towards a collaborative funding opportunity), with an emphasis on co-creation with external partners.
- Projects which pilot or trial new technologies, methods, data or approaches, or that promote adoption and take-up of such technologies, methods, data or approaches across the public, private and third sector.
- Projects that augment or maximise the impact of existing research and innovation on responding to Scotland's climate and environmental challenges.

The scheme is open to all disciplines, and we welcome interdisciplinary applications. We are therefore open to various methodologies and research designs. We are particularly interested in funding interdisciplinary projects (across all academic disciplines including arts and humanities, social and physical sciences) which address research challenges that have been co-created across project partners, and which lay foundations for further high-impact collaboration.

For more information on projects we funded under last year's scheme, please visit:

<https://scotland-beyond-net-zero.ac.uk/seedfund/>

What we are looking for

Projects will be assessed against the following criteria. Each criteria carries equal weighting in the scoring process.

- **Quality and relevance**

Your proposal should clearly explain the objectives of your research or collaboration activities, how you will go about fulfilling them, and likely results and insights. Your proposal should strongly align with Scotland Beyond Net Zero strategic priorities and the goals of the seed fund. Research should also align with one or more of the Scotland Beyond Net Zero themes, and this should also be clearly described in the proposal. Your proposal will be assessed on overall alignment with the seed fund's priorities, along with the soundness of the research concept and its potential to lead to future high-impact collaborative research.



- **Impact**

We would like to know how your proposed research or collaboration activity would contribute to the relevant field of research and to Scotland's transition to net zero. We also want to know about your pathways to impact - if your research and collaboration were to be scaled up, what contributions would you make to Scotland's transition net zero (and beyond), and how would you achieve that impact? We understand this is a relatively small award so are also interested to hear about potential future impact were your collaboration to continue.

Your proposal should also explain how the findings will be communicated to different audiences (e.g. blogs, workshops) as well as any proposed academic outputs. If your application is successful, we will ask you to write short summary of the research for SBNZ communications along with other proposed dissemination.

- **Co-creation of research**

We aim to support collaborations between academia and society. Your application must propose a partnership between **at least one other participating SBNZ university member plus a partner from a non-university organisation** (e.g. industry, community group, local or national government). This can be a brand-new partnership, or can be new activity between partners who have worked together before. You should set out how your partnership will work together to co-create relevant research challenges and activities.

You should explain and provide evidence for the proposed partnership arrangements, and explain how the partnership relates to research goals. Evidence for partnership arrangements with non-university partners can range from letters of support and commitment to participate in the research, to commitments to contribute to funding the research – this will be assessed on the basis of appropriateness to the specific proposal. You should outline the partnership arrangements in the application form and attach additional information (such as letters of support) if you wish.

You should also explain how the project will develop or strengthen a durable collaboration across SBNZ, for example a brief overview of any long-term plans for any further engagement, plans to scale up the research, or plans to attract further funding.

- **Project plan and costs**

The proposal should provide a credible project plan with milestones that are achievable with the budget and timeframe available. The application should explain the role of each partner in the delivery of the project, and each partner should have a valid role which is supported by resources allocated in the budget. The proposal should include a realistic and detailed timeline and budget which is deliverable by the end of the project (no later than July 2026). The budget



should clearly set out the resources requested by each university partner, as well as the total award requested.

We expect to award funds of between £5,000 and £15,000. Please note that we particularly welcome proposals which demonstrate **balance** in the amount requested from each university – for example, a project which requests £5,000 from two universities to make up a total request of £10,000 would demonstrate an even split of work across university partners.

In addition to ensuring compliance with your own university's policy on sustainability in research (for example, your own sustainable travel policies), we invite you to set out how your research will comply with priority areas of **Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice** <https://wellcome.org/who-we-are/positions-and-statements/environmental-sustainability-concordat> where those areas are relevant to your proposal.

Who can apply

Proposals should include researchers from at least two participating Scotland Beyond Net Zero members, along with at least one partner from outside higher education in Scotland such as local or national government, industry, charities or community groups.

The list of participating Scotland Beyond Net Zero members for 2025 are:

- University of Aberdeen
- University of Dundee
- University of Edinburgh
- Edinburgh Napier University
- University of Glasgow
- Glasgow Caledonian University
- Heriot-Watt University
- University of St Andrews
- Robert Gordon University
- University of Strathclyde

Projects should have a Principal Investigator (PI) from each participating university. This is because funds will be awarded as a split across academics from each university. Each application should therefore clearly state the amount of funding requested from each



university. PIs need to be academic staff within their university and have responsibility for research. Postdocs can be part of research teams but cannot lead in this round.

If you received funding from the SBNZ seed fund last year you are eligible to apply again, either for a new project or a follow-on piece of work from your current project. If you are applying for follow-up work, please describe the outcomes from the previous application and how this second application will generate different outputs and outcomes to deliver new impacts e.g. a potential new impact route that has been identified from undertaking the previous project.

Application process and form

We will be holding a webinar on **Wednesday 23rd April 12.00-13.00**. This webinar will be recorded and made available after the event. If you would like to sign up to attend the webinar, please email sbnz@ed.ac.uk noting 'webinar' in the subject line. Or you can note the time and date in your diary and [join using this link](#).

You can contact the Scotland Beyond Net Zero Senior Research Partnership Manger, Dr Kate Symons on k.symons@ed.ac.uk with any questions. Kate may also put you in touch with a local contact in your institution.

We will maintain a Q and A on our website which will be updated with commonly-asked questions. Please check back to this link throughout the application process: <https://scotland-beyond-net-zero.ac.uk/funding-opportunities/>

Please apply using the attached form. This form should be completed and emailed to k.symons@ed.ac.uk and sbnz@ed.ac.uk by 5pm on the deadline given above. **Your email must contain the phrase 'seed_fund_application_2025' in the subject line.**

Selection process

Projects will be selected by a panel convened by Scotland Beyond Net Zero and made up of representatives from participating universities.

Projects will be judged on their alignment with the criteria given above.

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their submission in June 2025.

We anticipate that projects will run from date of award (or another date chosen by the project team) to no later than 31st July 2026. Projects should have a start date of 1st August 2025 or later.

What you can apply for

Projects will be awarded at 100% full economic cost. Funding must not be used for indirect or estates related costs at the institution you are based in. Eligible and ineligible activities include:

Activity/Cost	Eligibility
Travel expenses: Train, rental car, lodging, meals etc. Please note we will not fund any air travel within the UK or where a reasonable rail alternative is present (for example, London to Paris), and expect researchers to travel in the most sustainable way possible in line with their institutions' sustainable travel policies.	Eligible
Costs for hosting seminars/conferences or workshops (e.g., venue rental, catering, lodging, etc.)	Eligible
Conference registration (related to collaborative research)	Eligible
Consumable materials and supplies (we expect this to be as sustainable as possible and would like researchers to consider the environmental implications of any supplies requested)	Eligible
Publications and printing (related to collaborative research)	Eligible
Hiring research assistants and associates to help with research project (subject to each institution's recruitment policies).	Eligible
Replacement teaching buyout	Check with your university
DA (directly allocated) staff time	Not eligible, but in-kind contributions of staff time welcome.
General teaching or instructional programs	Not eligible
Stipend payments to non-Edinburgh or non-partner individuals	Not eligible
Student scholarships	Not eligible
Website development	Not eligible
Mobile phone cards	Not eligible
Entertainment costs	Not eligible



Computers, laptops, printers, standard software, basic computing accessories (access to high-performance computers or other specialised applications that are justified by the project are allowed)	Not eligible
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A note on sustainability: You must abide by your own institution's policy on sustainability, for example any relevant sustainable travel and/ or catering policy. In keeping with the ethos of the fund, we welcome applications which go beyond local policies where appropriate.

Communications

We require successful applicants to provide a short summary of their project on award, a short mid-point review report, and a summary of key findings and impact on completion. This will be used for communications purposes across the Scotland Beyond Net Zero network.

Awardees will also be invited to take part in networking events throughout the grant period. We will also stay in touch after the grant period to find out about any further successes as a result of the collaboration.

Payment arrangements

Payments will be made to each university's researchers via internal transfer. On award, you will be advised the specific arrangements for your own institution.