COVID-19 Call for Seed Funding

The PLuS Alliance is a strategic partnership between Arizona State University, King’s College London and UNSW Sydney. The Alliance brings together the collective strengths and resources of these three leading international universities to develop sustainable solutions to society’s global challenges.

As an international alliance of highly ranked research-intensive universities, PLuS has both the opportunity and responsibility to harness our research expertise to support the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic (novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2). Our differing national approaches, settings and potential long run impacts offer the opportunity for comparative studies and/or research exploiting digital, big data and 21st century bioscience tools. In response, we are therefore launching a call to the PLuS community for proposals to support novel research to address this crisis.

Given alternative funding sources for research into the acute public health and biomedical response, this seed funding call invites proposals in the following domain:

**Systems resilience**

This term is deliberately broad and may cover any one or more of a range of areas including:

- Containment strategies (e.g. effectiveness, impact on population, etc)
- Health system capacity (e.g. responsiveness, robustness, equity, efficiency)
- Supply chain challenges (e.g. health, staples, global trade, transport, panic buying)
- Social consequences (e.g. isolation, support, aged care, social distancing/networking, virtual working, education, media)
- Economic reshaping (e.g. closures, employment, housing, stocks & liquidity, gig economy)
- Sustainability (e.g. environment, climate, air transport, government policy)

Projects will ideally focus on developing a clearer understanding of impact across multiple settings (e.g. multi-national comparison) and multi-disciplinary, multi-sector approaches are encouraged.

Downstream we are looking for transformative learnings from this pandemic, both to emerge as a better and more resilient society and to underpin global strategies for proactive management of future occurrences. The PLuS Alliance and its respective research leadership are committed to the importance of this initiative and will advocate with external funders and encourage partnership with the PLuS Alliance to extend the work of these seed projects through additional funding.
Who is eligible to apply?
All researchers at PLuS Alliance universities are eligible to apply; proposals must have participation from all three PLuS universities to be considered. Applications must identify a primary project lead (applicant) and a co-lead (co-applicant) from each of the other PLuS Alliance universities.

What is the project duration?
Projects should be conducted within a twelve-month timeframe, aiming for a commencement date of 1 June 2020.

What funding is available?
It is intended that one to two grants of up to £50,000 will be awarded. The funding levels will be determined by the quality and number of proposals submitted.

How will applications be assessed?
Applications will be assessed by a committee comprising the research leadership of the three PLuS Alliance institutions. The committee may also seek additional expert opinion on Proposals, as required.

All applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:
1. Alignment with the scope of the call
2. Potential global impact for developing strategies for future pandemic prevention and containment and/or a transitioning to a more sustainable, resilient society
3. Strength, relevance, and achievability (within timeframe)
4. Strength of the collaborating research groups, their multidisciplinarity and overall project team
5. Appropriateness of the budget in relation to project outputs, timeframe, scale and scope

Submitting an application
Applications are to be submitted via the ASU InfoReady portal by the project lead (applicant). If you’ve not previously used InfoReady, you will need to set up an account using your university email address - note that Google Chrome is the preferred browser. Once you have an account, go to the ‘PLuS Alliance COVID-19 seed funding’ option in the competition list (or can search using ‘PLuS’).

The application requires the following:
1. An online application form
   1. Details of project leads (applicant/co-applicants) and team members
   2. Project title (15 word limit)
   3. A brief project summary outlining the purpose of the project and expected
outcomes (100 words maximum)

II. A single pdf to be attached submitted through the portal that includes:
   1. Project proposal (two-page maximum, 10pt Arial font), including:
      i. Project title
      ii. Sections on: Aim and background; Approach and methods; Expected outcomes; and Contribution of team members and possible collaborators
   III. References (a maximum of four)
   2. Project budget (one-page using the template provided). Eligible items include:
      i. Salary support for research assistance/students (Faculty salaries are not an allowable expense)
      ii. Travel cost of project personnel
      iii. Workshops of other meeting costs
      iv. Living and hosting costs of visiting project personnel
      v. Materials and supplies (consumables) – not to exceed 25% of total budget

Please note the attachment must be submitted as a single pdf file that includes both the proposal and budget. Additional attachments/pages will not be accepted.

The closing date listed in the portal is in Arizona Mountain Standard time, so depending on the university of the project lead (applicant), the round closes:
- ASU: Monday 15 April 2020, midnight
- King’s: Tuesday 16 April 2020, 8am
- UNSW: Tuesday 16 April 2020, 5pm

Email notifications regarding the outcome of this funding round, will be sent by mid-May 2020.

If you have any queries, please contact your institutional PLuS contact:
- ASU  Sarah Jones (sarah.jones@asu.edu)
- King’s  Agi Hall (agnes.hall@kcl.ac.uk)
- UNSW  Tracey Bruce (info.PlusAlliance@unsw.edu.au)