

2025 Edinburgh-Toronto Collaborative Research Initiative

Guidelines to engage with the initiative

Vision for the initiative

The Universities of Edinburgh and Toronto are launching an exciting new initiative to foster international collaborative research on (1) AI and Health, and (2) Data for Environmental Sustainability, two broad research areas that align with the [University of Edinburgh Research & Innovation Strategy](#) and [University of Toronto's Institutional Research Plan](#).

The initiative will facilitate collaborative project development through a series of online meetings and pitches culminating in an in-person 2-day sandpit at the University of Edinburgh in June 2025. The ambition is to facilitate new conversations that spark ideas across disciplines and approaches and create a platform to support major collaborative projects that are well-positioned to attract external funding.

We will build a range of academic and professional support to target Horizon Europe schemes, as well as relevant funding opportunities in Canada and the UK. More detail on the external funding dimension will be shared on a phased basis as the initiative progresses.

Key Components of the Initiative

1. **Initial proposal:** We invite brief written proposals that present ideas aligned with the thematic focus areas of this call and that have the potential to develop into external funding application. Selected applicants will have the opportunity to pitch their ideas during the Online Workshop stage.
2. **Online Workshop (half-day):** Qualified applicants from wide range of fields will convene in an online setting to pitch their innovative ideas and begin the process of team formation based on shared interests and expertise. This session will initiate discussions and allow participants to explore connections with others within the same university, as well as between the two universities. This collaborative environment will facilitate the formation of larger consortia with shared interests in similar research areas, potentially leading to an external funding application. We will collect these ideas as part of a streamlined application process for the in-person sandpit event.
3. **In-Person Sandpit Event in Edinburgh:** Selected teams will further develop the competitiveness of their collaborative research proposals seeking substantive funding streams, e.g. Horizon Europe, through a dynamic and interactive 2-day event in Edinburgh. This event will focus on proposal writing and intensive project design.
4. **Seed Funding:** The teams participating in the in-person event in Edinburgh will have the opportunity to apply for seed funding up to \$20,000 (CAD)/£11,500 (GBP) to support the preparation of robust proposals aimed at securing further funding.

Eligibility Criteria

Open to faculty at all stages of their career across the University of Edinburgh and the University of Toronto, with a special emphasis on mid-career academics aiming to expand their scope in international and collaborative research.

U of T: U of T faculty members who meet [the University's definition of a Principal Investigator \(PI\)](#) are eligible to apply. PIs must hold an appointment for the full duration of the grant's funding period plus one year. Successful status-only PIs must hold grant funds at an account within the University.

Important Dates

Call for Proposals Open	26 February 2025
Submission Deadline for Online Workshop	24 March 2025
Notification of Acceptance for the Online Workshop	10 April 2025
Online Workshop (half-day)	22 April 2025
Submission Deadline for In-Person Sandpit in Edinburgh	2 May 2025
Notification of Acceptance for the In-Person Sandpit in Edinburgh	15 May 2025
In-Person Sandpit in Edinburgh	24-25 June 2025
Seed Funding Proposal Deadline	29 August 2025

Application & Selection Process

- 1. Initial Proposal Submission:** Applicants are invited to submit a summary of up to 100 words outlining their 'big research idea,' which must align with the thematic focus areas in AI and Health, and Data for Environmental Sustainability. The summary should emphasize the innovative and interdisciplinary aspects of the proposed research.
- 2. Participant Selection for Online Workshop:** Approximately 30 participants will be selected based on the potential impact and innovation of their proposed ideas. Preferences for potential collaboration will be solicited prior to the workshop to aid in effective group formations.
- 3. Participant Selection for In-person Sandpit in Edinburgh:** After the workshop, participants submit a 2-page application outlining their bio, their connections/network, and general research interest. Approximately 3-6 researchers per institution will be invited to the in-person workshop. Note, applicants must participate in the online workshop to be eligible for the in-person sandpit.
- 4. Seed Funding:** Participants will further develop their ideas to concrete collaborative research proposals. Participating universities will jointly fund 2-3 projects that have the potential to lead for external funding proposals.

Submission Requirements

Online workshop

Initial Proposal

Applicants must submit an initial proposal to be considered for the online workshop **by 24 March 2025**.

The proposal must be comprised of the following elements:

- Submissions must include the applicant's name, institutional affiliation, and a detailed 100-word summary of the proposed idea.
 - All applicants must address the following points: What is the idea and how can it be applied to global challenges within the theme?
 - Why is it important, what kind of research collaborations and resources would be required?
 - What opportunities/impact will the idea deliver?

The Initial Proposals should be submitted to:

- University of Edinburgh – [UoE Application](#)
- University of Toronto - [OVPI Application Portal](#) (upload your initial proposal under section 7A)

Survey & Pre-Prepared Presentation Slides

Selected researchers for the online workshop will be required to submit additional details prior to attending the workshop. Participants must complete a brief survey to indicate their top choices for potential collaborators based on provided profiles and summaries. Additionally, participants are required to prepare a short presentation consisting of 2 slides that highlights the key aspects of their research idea.

Application for In-Person Sandpit in Edinburgh

After the online workshop, researchers are required to submit a 2-page application that includes their biography, connections or network, and general research interests. The Private Investigators (PIs) will form teams consisting of at least one researcher from each university. These teams will jointly apply for an in-person Sandpit event scheduled for June 24-25, 2025, in Edinburgh. Further instructions for the application process will be provided to the selected researchers who participated in the online workshop.

Priority will be given to teams that identify potential collaborators outside Edinburgh-Toronto-partnership.

Seed Funding

Participants in the sandpit will be invited to submit a light touch seed funding application that builds on the collaborative proposal developed during the event. The specific requirements for seed funding will be determined based on the outcomes of the In-Person Workshop. Researchers attending the workshop will receive detailed information.

Selection Criteria

Submissions at each stage will be assessed according to the following main key criteria:

- Ability to leverage **External Funding**
- **Relevance** to the theme areas and Horizon Europe Pillar II
- **Innovation** and originality of the approach.
- Potential for **cross-disciplinary collaboration**.
- Feasibility and potential **impact** both academically and socially.

Assessment Process for Attendance at Online Workshop

After reviewing initial proposals, each institution will select successful ideas to progress to the online workshop.

Assessment Process for Attendance at In-person Sandpit

Selection will be made by a joint committee formed by members of both universities. This committee holds final authority over the selection of participants, considering university and faculty strategic priorities as well as the availability of funds. Researchers accepted to the in-person workshop must have attended the online workshop.

Assessment Process for Seed Funding Award

The assessment process for the seed funding will be determined based on the results of the In-Person Workshop. Researchers attending the workshop will receive detailed information.

Funding

Online Workshop: no funding for participating researchers.

In-Person Sandpit in Edinburgh: U of T will cover one return airline ticket in economy class and accommodation for up to three nights in Edinburgh.

Seed Grant: 2-3 projects will be given up to \$20,000 (CAD) of funding from Toronto and up to £11,500 (GBP) from Edinburgh to develop their proposal. Midterm reports must demonstrate that collaborative activity is ongoing, and that progress has been made against the goals stated in the original proposal.

All award recipients must complete a final narrative report (between 1 and 2 pages) as a condition of receiving the seed funding. This report should describe the outcomes, the nature of the collaboration, the project's impact, and the status of any external funding applications.

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