

Research funding - Call for Expressions of Interest

The Oxford Martin School is requesting proposals from eligible applicants for solutions-focused research programmes that could have a major impact on this and future generations. Further details of our selection criteria are given below but we are looking for adventurous “high-risk high-reward” ideas that would not be fundable through standard research council or related routes.

We have decided not to specify a theme but will be considering any project that addresses the School’s mission. As always, we are interested in applications from parts of the University that the School has not previously supported, and welcome proposals that make novel interdisciplinary links across the University. Initially, we are requesting a short Expression of Interest (Eoi) that clearly states the programme’s aim, novelty and how, if successful, it will have real-world impact. The Eoi should also state why the Oxford Martin School should support the idea rather than traditional funders, and how the project would continue after the end of School funding. Our Management Committee will then shortlist a limited number of Eois to go to full proposals.

Please send your Eoi by 5 pm on 10th February 2026 to kanwal.baluch@oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk. E-mail jean-charles.buffet@oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk if you have any research queries related to your expression of interest.

More than a funder

The Oxford Martin School seeks to promote world-leading and pioneering research that addresses global challenges. The School aims to help find solutions to the most pressing challenges of our time, in particular issues that cannot be understood by work in any one academic field alone. Underpinning all our research is the need to demonstrate a feasible pathway to impact and implementation at scale, from innovations in science, medicine and technology, through to expert advice and policy recommendations.

An Oxford Martin School research programme is not solely a funding arrangement but entails a partnership: we provide strong support for our researchers both in the unique challenges of interdisciplinary research and in disseminating the outcomes to effect real world change. We offer flexible, pragmatic funding and support in areas such as fundraising and communications; in return, we expect our researchers to engage actively in our community.

How will we decide?

We will judge your expression of interest against the School’s research funding criteria:

- **Scale:** does the project address a contemporary challenge of global significance?
- **Excellence:** does the project involve research of the highest international standard?
- **Impact:** will this research make a major positive difference in the world beyond academia, and how will this be achieved?
- **Additionality:** what is novel about the proposed research, and why should this research be funded by the Oxford Martin School, rather than by another funder?

Your Expression of Interest should therefore demonstrate, in a summary form, that you:

- Are addressing a key research question related to the creation of solutions for a major challenge of the 21st Century.

- Have a clear pathway to impact so that the results of the project, if successful, will be taken up by policymakers or practitioners.
- Are proposing an idea that would not be easily fundable through conventional research channels.
- Have the academic expertise and leadership in the relevant areas and are eligible to apply.

Eligibility

We view the combination and selection of an Oxford Martin School Programme's Directors as vital to the success of the programmes. All prospective applicants (PI/co-I) must be on a permanent contract or have a contract of employment with the University of Oxford that extends beyond the length of the proposed research. Each application needs to include at least two applicants from more than one Department and successful proposals are very likely to pull together novel combinations of researchers from different fields. The Oxford Martin School aims to contribute to the University's diverse and rich research environment, so we are particularly interested in receiving expressions of interest from consortia that span different divisions and demonstrate diversity in the composition of the applicants team.

The School expects to provide funding for our Directors, we do this because we want the proposed programme to benefit from your full involvement and for the School to benefit from your membership. We would expect all applicants (PI/co-I) to be costed between 5 – 20%, but we are flexible as to whether you are able to contribute more or less.

The length and budget of a programme is flexible, between 2 to 5 years, and between £250k and £1 million. The Oxford Martin School does not support research external to the University of Oxford.

The process

For the first stage of our selection process, we are seeking short Expressions of Interest from eligible applicants (**maximum of two pages**). We are not prescriptive about the structure of the Expression of Interest, but it typically might comprise:

- A non-technical summary;
- The context and statement of the problem;
- A description of the proposed research, anticipated outputs and pathway to impact.

At this stage, we are interested in the subject to be researched, approach to be taken, the suitability of the applicants and potential for impact. If our Management Committee decide to request a full proposal, we will then need more details of the research, the timetable and the team. We do *not* require costed proposals at this stage, but please provide a rough estimate of budget and length of the proposed programme. For further information on selection criteria, costings and eligibility, please see our frequently asked questions. Our Management Committee will pay attention to the diversity of the teams at all stages of our selection process.

The Expressions of Interest will be considered by our Management Committee. All information will be treated in strict confidence. Requests for full proposals will be issued mid-March 2026; the deadline for full proposals will be mid-May 2026, and it is hoped that final decisions will be made end of June 2026. It is envisaged that the research teams would be able to start work in Michaelmas 2026.