

Introduction

The British Council UK-China Partnership Innovation Challenge Fund is an initiative by the British Council China to enhance education links between the UK and China. It will provide seed-funding for UK institutions to partner with China in developing innovative ideas that contribute to the public good and create opportunities for individuals, while delivering real benefit to the UK education sector.

Funding is provided and administered by the British Council China and funding decisions will be made by a Project Board consisting of representatives from the British Council and the UK education sector, and individuals who are community leaders in the UK and China.

Strategic Objectives

The British Council UK-China Partnership Innovation Challenge Fund allows eligible UK organisations to bid for funds to develop innovative ideas that support collaboration between the UK and China in international education with significant growth potential.

It is aimed at projects that support the following strategic objectives:

- Seeding future growth and innovation for the public good
International education projects that will spur growth and innovation for the benefit of people in the UK and China.
- Expanding individual opportunity
International education projects that will enhance graduate employability, foster entrepreneurialism, and support the internationalisation of education by leveraging on private sector resources and expertise to create opportunities for individuals in the UK and China, including UK alumni.

Priority Areas

The British Council UK-China Partnership Innovation Challenge Fund will give priority to project bids that support development in language and cultural studies, art and design, health and social care, sports, and media. (*please refer to appendix for rationale*)

Funding Amount

For each project, funding of between £50,000 and £80,000 will be awarded covering the whole project duration. Only a limited number of projects will be funded as the fund aims to support innovative, high-quality projects that meet all the criteria.

Projects in receipt of funding will be expected to start in January 2016 and can run for a maximum of three years (until December 2019).

Assessment Criteria

Projects must lead to at least one of the following outcomes:

- *Increase collaboration between institutions in the UK and China by nurturing strategic and sustainable partnerships.*
 - *Examples: industry–institution collaboration, training hubs, joint curriculum design, joint centres for the development of priority subject areas, etc.*
- *Increase opportunities for Chinese and UK students, alumni and young professionals to engage with each other and gain international skills and experience.*
 - *Examples: graduate employment centres, professional networks and series workshops, etc.*

Projects must be able to demonstrate all of the following impacts:

- *Creation of measurable and tangible impacts in the short term (within 1 year), in the medium term (1 - 3 years), and in the long term (3 years and beyond);*
- *Creation of real value to the UK with evidence-based results, such as economic returns, increased numbers of international students, enhanced employability of UK students, greater international influence for the UK, etc.;*
- *Creation of benefits that apply to the wider UK education sector, such as by sharing international best practice.*

Only limited funding is available and priority will therefore be given to projects that demonstrate:

- *significant growth potential for the UK , such as cultivating skills, generating jobs and economic growth;*
- *innovative services and/or products that position the UK as a leader in international education;*
- *access to other sources of funding, including in-kind contributions that support the delivery of project outputs, such as fixed assets and staff;*
- *partnerships with one or more Chinese organisations that will add value to the outcomes of the project.*

Operational Requirements

Proposals must meet the following operational requirements:

Value for money:

Projects must achieve the best possible outcomes with the funding and resources available, while ensuring funding and resources are used effectively, economically and without waste.

Deliverability:

Project proposals must incorporate a credible delivery plan with realistic milestones for progressing the different elements of the project to completion on time and within budget. This will require a team with relevant skills and experience.

Affordability and sustainability:

Project proposals must be affordable in relation to the overall funding available and be financially sustainable with benefits that can endure beyond the funding period.

Monitoring and evaluation plan:

Projects must have a clear monitoring and evaluation plan. The plan should explain what the key performance indicators are and how monitoring will be carried out. Tangible milestones should be set, with an explanation as to how they will be measured. A risk management plan should also be included.

Who can apply?

The British Council UK-China Partnership Innovation Challenge Fund is open to all UK organisations involved in international education, including:

- education authorities;
 - universities/colleges/schools;
 - research organisations,
 - awarding bodies;
 - private organisations offering education services and/or products (private organisations not offering education services and/or products must partner with an education institution).
- Private organisations who apply must be recognised by relevant UK or Chinese authorities.

How to apply?

Please complete the attached application form and email it along with all supporting documentation to partnershipfund@britishcouncil.org.cn by 23:59 pm GMT on 16 October 2015.

Any enquiries about the British Council UK-China Partnership Innovation Challenge Fund or the bidding process can also be sent to the above email address.

Assessment Process

Project proposals will be assessed based on the information provided in the application form. Shortlisted applicants may be contacted for further information about their proposals. A final decision will be made by the Project Board, which will consist of representatives from the British Council, and individuals who are sector representatives and community leaders in the UK and China.

Proposals will be assessed as follows:

- *Alignment with strategic objectives and priority areas (30 per cent)*
 - Project bids must show a clear understanding of and fully address the strategic objectives.
 - Proposals need to demonstrate the ability to generate outcomes that are of benefit to the wider public.
 - Proposals must explain clearly what kind of opportunities they will create for individuals in the UK and China, and how this will be achieved.
- *Potential to deliver target outcomes and impacts (40 per cent)*
 - Project bids must clearly explain what the project will achieve and how this will contribute to creating opportunities for individuals and/or increasing collaboration between the UK and China.
 - Project bids must propose a realistic action plan to achieve the target outcomes, with defined impacts that can be monitored and evaluated.
 - Project bids must demonstrate measurable, tangible and sustainable impacts that bring value to the UK and benefits to the UK education sector. Projects that principally benefit one institution will not be considered.
 - Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate significant growth potential for the UK, innovative services and/or products, access to other sources of funding, and partnerships with Chinese organisations.
- *Capacity to deliver on time and within budget (30 per cent)*
 - Projects must be led by a team with the skills and experience necessary to successfully deliver the proposed work.
 - Proposals must have a clear budget plan that can be realistically executed.
 - Proposals must fully address the operational requirements.

After the final results are announced, the British Council China will sign agreements with the successful applicants. Funding will be administered after the agreements are signed and all funded applicants must submit a declaration confirming they have received the funds.

Timetable:

- *Call for proposals:* *July 2015*
- *Deadline for proposals:* *16 October 2015*
- *Announcement of results:* *November 2015*
- *Allocation of funding:* *December 2015*
- *Projects start:* *January 2016*

Implementation

All funded projects must be implemented in accordance with the approved proposal, any additional conditions stipulated by the Project Board, and the agreement signed with the British Council. Any changes to the proposed activities must be approved by the Project Board before going ahead. More detailed terms and conditions will be stipulated in each project agreement.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Funded projects will be expected to provide quarterly progress updates and annual achievement reports based on the milestones agreed at the time of approval. A project manager from the British Council China will monitor all projects. The British Council will also commission independent evaluations of selected projects that are of strategic importance to the British Council UK-China Partnership Innovation Challenge Fund.

A detailed record of activities, including important communications, documents and spending, should be kept in case an external audit is carried out.

Appendix

Rationale for Priority Areas

Priority Area	Rationale
Language and cultural studies	<p>China's growth and development offers great economic opportunity for the UK. Developing the UK's Chinese language capability and understanding of Chinese culture will help to build familiarity between the UK and China, and is essential to maximising this opportunity.</p> <p>Last year UK Prime Minister David Cameron set a target of doubling the number of Chinese learners in the UK by 2020. China also has a strong interest in promoting Chinese language and culture, with plans to open 1,000 Confucius Institutes overseas by the end of the decade. At the same time, the English language is in great demand in China, with 300 million learners of English in the country.</p>
Art and design	<p>The development of China's cultural and creative industries was set out as one of the priorities in the country's current five-year plan, with a goal to transform this into one of China's 'pillar industries'. Both national and local governments have provided strong support for this sector.</p> <p>The UK is a world leader in the creative industries, and this sector now accounts for 5 per cent of the UK economy, according to a 2015 report from the Department for Culture, Media & Sport. China is a major export market in this field.</p> <p>Art and design is also a popular subject for Chinese students coming to the UK, and the number of Chinese students starting university courses in this field has more than tripled over the last five years. Cooperative projects in the art and design field will also help to position the UK as a world leader in the creative industries.</p>
Health and social care	<p>China's healthcare sector is currently going through a period of reform, with broad-ranging plans to increase the overall scale of the Chinese healthcare system, standardise training, optimise resource allocation and increase the level of private and overseas investment. Many of these reforms will take China in directions where the UK already has strong experience, such as a shift from hospital-centric to GP-centric care. This creates opportunities for UK institutions to play a valuable role.</p> <p>At the same time, the UK and China face many of the same challenges in the healthcare field, such as caring for a rapidly growing elderly population and taking advantage of new advances in fields such as digital health. Working together to address these challenges can provide benefits for both countries.</p>

Sports	<p>Sports education is playing an increasingly important role in China's education system with policies promoting sports education announced in 2012 and increasing resources being invested in training PE teachers. In 2015 the Ministry of Education mandated that football be taught in primary schools to bolster the nation's competitiveness in the sport under a national football reform plan.</p> <p>The UK is well placed for partnership here due to its world-class football league and strong systems for sports education. As well as creating direct benefits for individuals, cooperation in this field will showcase the UK's expertise in sports, and particularly in sports education and training.</p>
Media	<p>Stronger ties between the UK and China in the media field can have a positive impact in both a cultural and an economic sense. The UK has a strong international reputation in this sector and its films and TV series are an important export, but they also play a strong role in creating mutual understanding and expanding Chinese viewers' perceptions of the UK. Meanwhile, the Chinese government is supportive of its own media sector, which it sees as an important component of the country's soft power strategy.</p> <p>Another key area for cooperation is the new media field, which is experiencing rapid development in both the UK and China. An understanding of developments and successful practices in China could contribute to the ongoing development of this field in the UK, and vice versa.</p>