

2018 UK-China-BRI Countries Partnership Fund Call Guidelines (for UK applicants)

Call opens: 7 November 2018

Call closes: 30 December 2018

I. Introduction

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is China's largest outward development and investment strategy; which focuses on connectivity and cooperation between various countries along the old *and new* silk (land and sea) routes.

We propose an initiative to proactively support multi-lateral **higher education links** between the UK, China, and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Countries¹, including ASEAN countries². Seed-funding will be provided to institutions from the UK to partner with China and BRI countries that would boost higher education exchanges and create opportunities for individuals (students, academics, researchers), while delivering real benefit to the education sector of the countries involved.

We propose to focus on higher education projects that will ***enhance graduate employability, foster entrepreneurialism and creativity, and support the internationalisation of higher education***. This focus would be, for example, through joint curriculum development, creating an enabling environment for transnational education collaborations (eg regulatory and policy environment, quality assurance, student experience, academic development, teaching quality and learning etc), student exchange projects, leadership training and professional development (eg for academics and senior administrators), which would leverage on private sector resources and expertise along BRI countries etc.

II. Strategic Objectives

The key objectives are to boost

- a) student mobility
- b) academic exchanges
- c) leadership skills development
- d) teaching excellence
- e) research collaborations

III. Funding Amount

The British Council has earmarked GBP430,000 to kick start this project in 2018/2019, including GBP230,000 ring-fenced for UK-China-ASEAN countries and GBP200,000 for UK-China-BRI countries (non-ASEAN). For each project, funding of £60,000-£80,000 will be awarded covering the whole project duration. Projects in receipt of funding will be expected to start in April 2019 and can run for a maximum of five years (until March 2024). The funding is for the duration of the project **and not** per annum.

¹ For BRI countries, please check below link for the full list and profiles:

https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/info/iList.jsp?cat_id=10076

² ASEAN countries included 10 States — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

IV. Assessment Criteria

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

- *Increase collaboration among institutions in the UK, China and BRI countries by nurturing strategic and sustainable partnerships. (Examples: training hubs, joint curriculum design, joint centres for the development and research of priority subject areas, etc.)*
- *Increase opportunities for students, academics and early career researchers from the UK, China and BRI countries to engage with each other and gain international skills and experience. (Examples: collaborative student projects, academic exchange projects to boost teaching and learning experience, early career researchers' workshops and discussions leading to specific research ideas and funding)*

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, China and BRI countries with evidence-based results, such as economic returns, increased numbers of international students, enhanced employability, greater international influence, etc.*
- *Creation of benefits that apply to the wider higher education sector, such as by sharing international best practice.*

Priority considerations will therefore be given to projects that demonstrate:

- *significant growth potential for the UK, China and BRI countries, such as skills development and job creations*
- *access to other sources of funding, including in-kind contributions that support the delivery of project outputs, such as fixed assets and staff, industry support;*
- *innovative services and/or products;*
- *sustainability beyond the project period*

V. 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:

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.

Partnership:

All project proposals **must include** minimum of at least 1 UK institution, 1 Chinese institution and 1 institution from either ASEAN or any other BRI Countries. In addition, project proposal must have signed off from the most senior leader of each of the partner institutions. (eg: Vice Chancellor, College Principals, President)

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.

VI. 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, China Ministry of Education, and individuals who are sector representatives and community leaders in the UK and China.

Proposals will be assessed as follows:

- Alignment with strategic objectives (30 per cent)
 - *Proposals must show a clear understanding of and fully address the strategic objectives.*
 - *Proposals must 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, China, and BRI countries, and how this will be achieved.*

- Potential to deliver target outcomes and impacts (40 per cent)
 - *Proposals 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, China and BRI countries.*
 - *Proposals must propose a realistic action plan to achieve the target outcomes, with defined impacts that can be monitored and evaluated.*
 - *Proposals must demonstrate measurable, tangible and sustainable impacts that bring value and benefits to the UK, China and BRI countries as well as the 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, China and BRI countries, innovative services and/or products, access to other sources of funding, and partnerships with Chinese & BRI 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 results are announced, the British Council 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.

VII. Who can apply from the UK?

The UK-China-BRI Countries Partnership Fund is open to all UK organisations and institutions involved in international education, including:

- education authorities, research organisations, and awarding bodies
- universities, colleges, and schools
- private organisations offering higher education services and/or products;
- private organisations not offering higher education services and/or products must partner with an UK education institution (university, higher education college, etc.)

VIII. 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 GMT on 30 December 2018.

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

IX. Timetable:

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| Call for proposals: | 7 November 2018 |
| Deadline for proposals: | 30 December 2018 |
| Announcement of results: | 1 February 2019 |
| Allocation of funding: | March 2019 |
| Projects start: | April 2019 |

X. Implementation

All funded projects must be implemented in accordance with the approved proposals, 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.

XI. 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 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-BRI countries Partnership Fund.

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