The Newton Fund

Introduction

The Newton Fund aims to develop research and innovation partnerships that will promote economic development and social welfare in collaborating countries.

Originally launched in 2014 as a five-year programme, the fund has since been extended and expanded to run until at least 2021. By this time the UK Government will have invested £735 million. In addition to this sum, matched funding is provided by partner countries, of which there are currently 16 (a full list is below). These collaborating countries are all on the OECD DAC list (the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD) of ODA (Official Development Assistance) eligible recipients. All funded activities must demonstrate that they are compliant with ODA guidelines.

The Newton Fund is managed by BEIS, the UK Government’s newly-formed Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and administered by 15 UK delivery partners including the Research Councils and a number of National Academies.

Aims of the Newton Fund

The UK has a legislative requirement to spend 0.7% of Gross National Income on Official Development Assistance and awards made through the Newton Fund contribute towards this. Awards from the fund are made in three broad areas:

1) **People**: building capacity in science and innovation in partner countries, through student and researcher fellowships, mobility schemes and joint centres

2) **Research**: research collaborations on development topics

3) **Translation**: innovation partnerships and challenge funds to develop innovative solutions on development topics

Individual calls are developed in a collaborative way between the relevant UK delivery partner and a funder from one of the partner countries, with call topics being chosen in order to best meet local development priorities. It is intended that Newton Fund activities will support development activities in a sustainable way, leveraging other funding where appropriate and generating lasting benefit for communities in partner countries.

All activities funded through the Newton Fund must be able to demonstrate the following:

- Eligibility for official development assistance (ODA)
- They utilise an open and transparent process
- That the project addresses a strong need and has a clear benefit in-country
- That the activity would not take place without the Newton Fund
- Scientific excellence and value for money
- Matched funding and/or matched effort from the partnering country

It should be noted that, in a majority of cases, arrangements for matched funding will have already been established between partner funding organisations, so typically this will not need to be sought by prospective applicants.
Developing Partnerships

Funding opportunities available through the Newton fund have open and competitive calls that require a Principle Investigator in both the UK and the partner country in question. Typically, funding calls will make use of a system requiring a single application and peer review process involving both countries.

Building collaborative partnerships is an integral aspect of the Newton Fund. It’s recognised, though, that the development of joint applications can be a time-consuming process, even for partnerships that have already been established. Communicating in an effective way across time zones can present challenges and, especially given the diversity of partners involved in the delivery of the Newton Fund, there can be significant variation in the guidelines and expectations of different funders.

Some calls will require that funding awards are divided equally between the two (or more) applicants. This can sometimes be particularly challenging in cases where there are discrepancies in salary expectations between applicants in partner countries. Where this requirement exists, applicants will need to devise their project accordingly and be mindful that such considerations can sometimes require a greater amount of preparation time.

A variety of resources are available to help researchers find prospective partner applicants. The UKCDS (UK Centre for Development Studies) has provided a summary of advice on finding partners, which also includes links to tools such as Piirus, an online platform enabling researchers to find collaborators across boundaries. Increasingly, though, individual Newton Fund calls are also offering partnering services or networking events.

A full list of current Newton Fund partner countries is as follows, with links to further information:

- Brazil
- Colombia
- Indonesia
- Malaysia
- Thailand
- South Africa and wider Africa
- Chile
- Egypt
- Kazakhstan
- Mexico
- Turkey
- China
- India
- Kenya (more information available soon)
- Philippines
- Vietnam

Funding Opportunities and Useful Resources

All current funding calls are listed on the Newton Fund website, where opportunities can be sorted by partner country or UK delivery partner, as well as other criteria.

The UK Higher Education International Unit produces a regular Newton Funding Bulletin, which details new call announcements as well as forthcoming deadlines.

Regular updates are also posted on the Newton Fund’s Twitter feed, and a summary of information (including FAQs) is contained in the Government’s Newton Fund policy paper.

If you are interested in applying to a call that is linked to the Newton Fund, please contact your relevant Research Development Manager, who will be able to support the development of your application.
The Newton Fund and the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF)

Though similar in size and scope, the Newton Fund and the GCRF are two separate, distinct funding schemes. Below are a number of key similarities and differences between the GCRF and the Newton Fund.

Similarities between the GCRF and Newton Fund
The Newton Fund and the GCRF are both funded by HM Treasury, and administered by BEIS (the UK Government’s Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy). Both are large-scale, multi-year schemes (each running until at least 2020). They each form part of the UK’s commitment to providing Official Development Assistance, which means that it is particularly important for applicants to consider the potential for research to generate impact. Both schemes are also intended to strengthen the UK’s capacity to deliver world-class research.

Differences between the GCRF and the Newton Fund
Both funding schemes are intended to promote the sustainable development of DAC ODA eligible recipients. However, whereas GCRF schemes will not normally have specific country requirements, Newton Fund opportunities usually specify a particular country, or countries, that should be able to derive some benefit from a given project. Newton Fund schemes will generally include a commitment to matched funding from partner countries, and awards to UK applicants are administered by a sole UK delivery partner. This is in contrast to the GCRF, whose schemes are predominantly delivered by a range of funders who will encourage a more multi- and inter-disciplinary approach to research activities.