

Strategic Priority Support Mechanism



UCD
Earth
Institute

Funding call 2025
Call details & how to apply



Strategic Priority Support Mechanism

The UCD Earth Institute is delighted to launch its annual call for Strategic Priority projects. The call aims to stimulate and develop interdisciplinary activity across the Institute, the University and beyond, in the area of environmental, climate, sustainability and related disciplines. Funding of up to €10,000 will be awarded to 2-4 multidisciplinary teams per annum. The funding will support non-research costs for targeted projects that are topical, achievable and impactful.

Full details of the initiative, including eligibility, evaluation and the application process can be found below. We are happy to discuss proposed projects in advance of submission, advise on suitability and help with development. If you have any questions please contact either Prof Eoin O'Neill (Director, UCD Earth Institute; eoim.oneill@ucd.ie) or Caitriona Devery (Research Manager, UCD Earth Institute; caitriona.devery@ucd.ie).

The deadline this year is 17.00 on Wednesday 11 June 2025.

Background

The UCD Earth Institute is UCD's research institute for environmental, climate and sustainability research. The mission of the UCD Earth Institute is to foster research and innovation to address the environmental challenges of our time, to develop and support the environmental, climate and sustainability research community in UCD and beyond, to forge new connections across disciplines and sectors and to help maximise the impact of our members' work.

Our members address challenges relating to the built environment; climate; developing plants for the future; ecosystems and evolution; people, work and society; sustainable communities; and water.

The objectives of the *UCD Earth Institute Strategy 2021-2025* are to:

1. Increase the quantity, quality and impact of environmental and sustainability research, and innovation by building interdisciplinary communities and facilitating and supporting our members.
2. Build our engagement and reputation locally, nationally and internationally by developing internal and external partnerships and enhancing profile and societal impact.

Strategic Priority Support Mechanism

The Institute's Strategic Priority Support Mechanism aims to identify and support short term member-led strategic priorities. It stimulates targeted activities which address topical challenges over a 12-18 month period and contribute towards the achievement of the Institute's objectives. 2-4 projects are selected for support each year, with awards of up to €10,000 made available for each strategic priority, as well as additional support from the institute team.

Applications should propose a project on a topic that could be considered strategically important, within one or more of the Institute's research themes.

- **Climate**
- **Water**
- **Biodiversity**
- **Plants for the future**
- **People, work, society**
- **Sustainable communities**
- **The built environment**

Topics of proposed projects should be sufficiently broad to be of general interest and importance, but sufficiently well-defined that a short period of targeted activity will enable UCD researchers to establish or enhance a profile in this emerging area or substantially progress an agenda.

There is considerable freedom on what the scheme fund. Eligible activities can relate to developing and building interdisciplinary research capacity as well as more external facing activities such as policy, societal and public engagement. However, it is important to note that direct research costs are not eligible.

Sample eligible costs include but are not limited to:

- activities to support development of an emerging research area;
- visits to or of potential collaborators in other institutions;
- invited speakers and internal or external workshops;
- attendance at research networking, information or consortium building events;
- preparation costs for position papers, scientific publications or policy briefs;
- costs to support collaboration with external/partner organisations
- societal engagement and public engagement activities;
- outreach or educational events or initiatives;
- social enterprise and social entrepreneurship;
- innovation, enterprise and commercialisation activities
- knowledge transfer activities, development of industry links;

We encourage budgeting for short-term appointments to assist in the project if appropriate. Please discuss your budget with us if you are unsure about eligible costs

Additional support from Earth Institute

In addition to this financial award, the selected strategic projects can also draw on:

- Administrative and operational support from the Institute's management team
- Communications support including website development and support with digital engagement
- Support in identifying and applying for future funding

All financial support will be drawn directly from the Institute's cost centre account and administered by its management team.

Recent projects

- [MarSea](#) - UCD Marine and Seabed Research Group (2024)
- [TREES](#) - Trees outside the Forest (2024)
- [IE-NARR](#) - Irish Energy Narratives in the Transition (2023)
- [SoilSphere – Connecting UCD soil researchers](#) (2023)
- [TREA](#)H: Transport Research Hub @ UCD (2022)
- [Data Farms and Urban Farms](#): Alternative Energy Flows Within Data Storage Infrastructure (2022)
- [JTRG](#): Just Transition Research Group (2022)
- [CLaSS](#): Cultural Landscapes and Social Spaces (2022)
- [UCD-MRG](#): UCD Mountain Research Group (2021)
- [SWHEL](#): Sustainable wellbeing: humans, environment, and liveability (2021)
- [SAPBio](#): Stakeholder Attitudes and Perceptions of Biostimulants and Biopesticides (2021)
- [Re-EcoNet](#): Reconstructing Ecological Network to predict systemic crisis (2020)
- [Community SDG Dashboard](#): Measuring Sustainable Actions at Community Level (2020)
- [CfIT](#): Centre for Irish Towns (2019)
- [DIVERSICROP](#) (2019)
- [HempHub](#) (2019)

A full list with project descriptions and leads can be found on the [Institute website](#).

How to apply

1. Proposals with a strong rationale leading to a clear set of objectives are invited, with tangible, measurable outcomes and a programme of activities to achieve them within the defined period.
2. The application form (available on the Earth Institute website or by email from Caitriona Devery, Institute Research Manager) must be completed and submitted to caitriona.devery@ucd.ie **by 17.00 on Wednesday 11 June 2025**.
3. The form asks for concise information on the team involved, background and rationale, objectives, deliverables, impact, plus a short work plan and budget.
4. Applications will be acknowledged within two working days and all applicants will receive notification of the outcome of their application by August 2025.

Application Eligibility

1. Each proposal must include a lead applicant and at least one other co-applicant from UCD; there is no upper limit on the number of co-applicants. Co-applicants from outside UCD can be included in proposals, but it would be expected that the majority of each team would be based in UCD.
2. The lead applicant and at least one co-applicant must be either UCD faculty, postdoctoral staff or UCD postgraduate students.
3. The lead Applicant and at least one co-applicant must hold an employment contract (staff) or be fully registered (students) at UCD for the full duration of the proposed activities.
4. Each proposal must include applicants from at least two different disciplines, preferably from different UCD Schools.
5. The competition is open to members and non-members of the Institute though each proposal must include at least one Institute member (as the lead applicant or co-applicant). Non-members involved in successful proposals will be expected to apply for membership.

Evaluation process & criteria

All eligible proposals will be reviewed by an assessment committee comprising:

1. Earth Institute Director (Chair)
2. Earth Institute Research Manager
3. A member of the UCD Earth Institute Executive Committee not directly involved in any proposals
4. An appropriate member of UCD's academic staff appointed by the UCD Earth Institute Executive Committee

The committee will evaluate the proposals on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Topicality and importance of the proposed strategic priority, e.g. including relevance to current environmental challenges and national and global initiatives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, EU Directives, strategies or funding priorities; and potential contribution to the achievement of the objectives of the UCD Earth Institute Strategy 2021-25 (as listed above) (50%)
2. Breadth and degree of interdisciplinarity and/or public, societal, or policy engagement (25%)
3. Operational feasibility, cost-effectiveness and justification of budget (25%)