

# SCAF Pump-priming Awards Round 4

## Guidance notes



Version 1.0 – published June 17, 2025

### Overview of the Scottish Alliance for Food

The Scottish Alliance for Food (SCAF) is a collaborative, cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral research Alliance funded by the Scottish Funding Council. SCAF aims to connect stakeholders across disciplines and sectors to deliver collaborative, future-focused research that will help transform how food links to health, equity, and sustainability.

We invite research that explores the multifaceted world of food, spanning an inclusive range of disciplines, and topics from innovations to logistical challenges, the study of behaviours, cultures, economies, and the science of food, health and sustainability. Our commitment is to breadth, innovation and curiosity, rather than adhering to prescriptive research portfolio, building on the belief that groundbreaking insights can emerge from unexpected places.

Our values are

- **Evidence-based** – Our work is underpinned by the latest available evidence and driven by robust data.
- **Inclusive** – Our work is shaped by a diverse range of voices and perspectives.
- **Collaborative** – Working together is at the core of our alliance.

### SCAF planned outcomes:

- Enhancing research collaboration and knowledge sharing and engaging industry and third-sector stakeholders in R&D
- Strengthening pathways to impact for research projects and increasing visibility and funding for Scottish research in the fields linked to food/nutrition
- Improving job security and cross-sector mobility for researchers
- Normalising health, equity and sustainability across the broader food sector
- Bridging gaps between production and nutritional quality, and shifting consumer habits and understanding
- Improving communication and engagement, and developing a shared understanding of research's power
- Developing transdisciplinary approaches and skills transfer
- Creating a consensus and shared understanding among stakeholders

**SCAF planned impacts:** SCAF envisions a transformed food system that prioritises health and environmental sustainability for all, regardless of socioeconomic status, through evidence-based policies and a thriving, innovative sector. This vision shifts responsibility from individual consumers to structural changes, empowering stakeholders across the system while reducing stigma around food choices and fostering a sustainable, health-focused economy.

### Call priorities

This pump-priming call aims to support teams in academic and/or non-academic settings looking to carry out collaborative research and innovation relevant to food/nutrition in the context of health, equity and/or sustainability.

Priorities for this call include research that

- is inter- or transdisciplinary and is approaching FOOD as a research challenge from the perspective of different disciplines

- involves working across institutions, or sectors
- has a direct alignment with plans to secure further support for the next step of the project

## Who can apply?

All applicants must be SCAF members and have joined the SCAF Slack community. You may register as a member via our website: <https://scaf-arc.co.uk/takepart/>

Researchers or individuals involved in research and innovation in any institution or organisation able to receive funds and working in any field are eligible to apply. Students can apply if they secure the relevant authorisations from their supervisors/managers and indicate how the award will be managed if they are identified as the lead investigator.

Teams of applicants should bring at least two people from different disciplines or sectors, with at least one named applicant from a Scottish university/higher education institution (HEI). The Scottish HEI applicant does not have to lead the bid but must play an active and essential role in the project.

SCAF will prioritise applications that are led by Early Career Researchers. Evaluation criteria and the selection process are outlined in the [Review & Assessment](#) section below.

Applicants can only submit one application where they are the Principal Investigator (PI) but are permitted to be part of up to three bids in total in any given round (as PI or co-I). PIs from awarded Round 3 projects cannot lead an application in Round 4.

Any conflicts of interest must be declared at the application stage and in all outputs from the project. If not declared but found to be pertinent to the particulars of the application, the alliance holds the right to void an application at any time during the assessment process.

Any application making use of animals in experiments must justify how these are critical to the proposed project and how the principles of the 3Rs principle (replacement, reduction, and refinement) have been applied.

## Project costs and duration

Project duration can range from 1 month to a maximum of 9 months.

Project costs can range from £1000 to £10000 (we expect most awards to come in the £4000 to £5000 range, with specific justification for awards seeking greater funding) and should be costed at 100% FEC (direct costs only). Whilst travel can be costed in, it needs to be justified (e.g. field work) and aligned with the [SCAF Travel Policy](#).

Funding must not be used for the purposes of:

- Indirect or estates related costs at the institution you are based in
- Costs relating to intellectual property protection, including but not limited to registering, maintaining, or supporting patents.

## Deadline & Timeline

This call is open from **17 June 2025**, and applications should be submitted by **29 August 2025 (17:00 GMT)**.

ECR-led project proposals can be pre-submitted before the written feedback between **04 and 15 August** – see details in the [How to apply](#) section.

Selected projects will be announced by early October 2025. All activities related to this call should start no later than 01 November 2025 and be completed no later than 9 months after the start of the project (31 July 2025).

All funded projects are expected to present findings in a SCAF-hosted webinar or event no later than 6 months following the completion of activities.

## How to apply

Please download the application form using the link below and submit your application by sending a MS Word copy of the completed form to [scaf@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:scaf@glasgow.ac.uk).

Your email should be titled as follows: “*SCAF | pump-priming awards round 4 application – YOUR NAME*” and you should cc. all co-applicants in that email. No cover letters are required.

Please ensure the completed form below is submitted along with:

1. Letter of support from the lead applicant's host institution representative, e.g. head of school, or RnD manager/director (using template available on the website)
2. If applicable, letter of support for ECR application from line manager, confirming that time and space will be available for the project to be conducted (using template available on the website)
3. The submission checklist (included in the application form)

For written feedback on ECR-led proposals, submit your application between 04 and 15 August 2025 by sending an email to [scaf@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:scaf@glasgow.ac.uk) with the subject line “*SCAF | Pump-priming awards round 4 presubmission – YOUR NAME*”.

**Download the application form on the SCAF website:**

<https://scaf-arc.co.uk/opportunities/fundingopportunities/>

## Review & Assessment Process

Once applications have been received, the SCAF office staff will undertake an initial review to ensure that all eligibility requirements are met and that no information is missing. Applications will be blinded at this point, and the research environment and applicant-specific information will be split from the research/innovation case for support.

Applications (research part and applicant/environment part) will be reviewed and scored by three SCAF members with no current direct existing working relationship with the applicant (e.g. same institution, ongoing project or supervision). All scores will be combined, with a median score allocated to each application.

Applications scored as fundable will be entered in a lottery, with as many applications being sequentially selected until the fund is exhausted. Applications led by an ECR will be prioritised so that, assuming sufficient applications led by ECR are received, 30% or more of awarded applications are ECR-led.

The lottery will be in two stages. First, applications will be drawn from a pool containing only ECR-led applications to fulfil the 30% quota if enough ECR-led applications are available. Any remaining fundable but non-drawn ECR-led applications will be added to the main pool for further drawing until the funds are exhausted.

The success rate for previous rounds was 60% (round 1), 80% (round 2), and 71% (round 3). For more information on previously funded projects, please read [this blog post](#).

## Application scoring criteria

Project proposals should be connected to the overall aims of the alliance and will be assessed by the following criteria.

1. Collaboration – is the team bringing at least 2 different institutions, sectors and/or disciplines together? Is this a new collaboration? Is at least one team member from a Scottish higher education institution?
2. How well does the project align with SCAF values, aims and mission?
3. Potential of the pump-priming project to support future larger grant applications
4. Research questions – are the questions novel and foundational to developing new knowledge/know-how?

5. Research methodology – are the methods proposed suitable?
6. Feasibility (cost/timeline)
7. Career stage – Applications led by ECRs will receive prioritisation, but the fund is open to all career stages.
8. Research environment suitability – are there suitable infrastructure and support systems for the project?
9. Contribution to SCAF – has the applicant engaged with SCAF activities, or plans to give back to the SCAF community?
10. Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

## Payment Arrangements

Cost details should be submitted in the application. Payment of the award is in arrears as detailed below.

*The Award Holder shall invoice The University of Glasgow quarterly in arrears based on actual expenditure and The University Glasgow shall pay the Award Holder within thirty (30) days of a valid invoice, subject always to receipt of funds from the Funder and subject to the satisfactory completion by the Award Holder of any due diligence checks as may be reasonably required.*

*The final invoice should be sent to The University of Glasgow within one month of the end of the Project. The cost statement should include the breakdown of the indexed full economic cost (FEC) figures as well as the actual sums claimed.*

## Frequently asked questions

1. **Collaboration agreements between research partners** - SCAF is not involved in establishing collaboration agreements. Where required, collaboration agreements are the responsibility of the project partners.

Information about how to apply, forms and guidance is contained in this document and the application form linked on the SCAF webpage.

If you have a question or enquiry not covered in these documents, please contact [scaf@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:scaf@glasgow.ac.uk). Frequently asked questions relevant to the wider pool of applicants will be posted on the website if applicable.

**Download the application form on the SCAF website:**

<https://scaf-arc.co.uk/opportunities/fundingopportunities/>