

International Fellowships 2026

Further Particulars

The Urban Studies Foundation (USF) is delighted to announce a new round of its International Fellowship grant funding programme. The award is designed to enable early-to-mid career urban scholars from the Global South to pursue an extended sabbatical (three to nine months) at a university or other academically accredited organisation of their choosing worldwide (either Global South or North).

The deadline for applications to this funding scheme is **6th July 2026** (by 23:59 UTC+0).

All prospective applicants should ensure that they have read this document in detail before applying, and before contacting the USF to discuss, query or clarify any issues relating to this funding.

If the answer to your query cannot be found either below, or in the scheme's Frequently Asked Questions, please contact the USF via email: grants@urbanstudiesfoundation.org

Please note that some information below may be repeated across different sections for clarity.

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Contact: grants@urbanstudiesfoundation.org

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1 Scheme purpose and intent

Applications are invited to the USF's International Fellowships for urban scholars from the Global South. Each award will cover the cost of a visiting sabbatical period at a host university of the candidate's choice, for the purpose of writing-up the candidate's **existing** research findings in the form of publishable articles, book chapters, and/or books. The proposed work should be completed under the guidance of a chosen Mentor in the candidate's field of study. Funding is available for a period ranging between three and nine months, and eligible research may cover any urban studies theme pertinent to a better understanding of urban realities within and across the Global South.

The scheme is intended to serve the USF's over-arching strategic mission to advance global urban studies. Supporting over seventy Fellows from over twenty countries, the scheme has also contributed enormously to the USF's goals of supporting early-career researchers, strengthening scholarship of the Global South, fostering collaboration, and developing excellent urban research. Through promoting the global exchange and mobility of both individuals and ideas, the scheme also aims to intervene in the production of knowledge in a manner that both champions epistemic justice and elevates new understandings of diverse global realities. In the longer-term, the scheme works towards cultivating the research leadership and capacities of tomorrow.

Beyond supporting the Fellow in achieving their published outputs, the USF expects that prospective Mentors and host organisations should be capably invested in contributing to these wider outcomes and impact of the International Fellowship scheme. This includes demonstrating the value added by the Mentor and host both during and after the Fellowship period, which must include the provision of a stable and productive working environment for the Fellow during their visit. It should also include integrating the Fellow into relevant research communities and networks, ensuring that long-lasting connections can be built to support future collaboration. It is expected that Fellows should be fully released from any existing obligations and/or responsibilities in order to benefit from the time and space that the Fellowship will provide.

Proposed research outputs must be based on existing and completed primary data collection and analysis, and candidates should be ready to write-up their findings as academic publications. The planned outputs should present a clear connection and novel contribution to any topic within urban studies, including but not limited to: climate, development, ecology, finance, governance, housing, migration, mobility, planning, policy, political economy, public health, social equity, sustainability, transport, and technology. Applicants must be familiar with the wider urban studies discipline (including through relevant publications such as the [Urban Studies Journal](#)), and be confident that their scholarship can make a significant contribution to the field. This contribution should also expand theoretical and empirical understanding of the major social, economic, political, and other issues associated with the specific development trajectories of cities in the Global South.

The International Fellowship programme is therefore focused on the following key activities, outputs, and outcomes:

- The development of high-quality academic research publications (articles, chapters, books, etc) on a topic that makes a significant contribution to urban studies in terms of urbanisation

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within, across, and beyond the Global South. It is anticipated that the work undertaken might be of a largely theoretical nature and/or focused on the analysis and conceptual development of empirically based research **for which the data has already been collected**. The Fellowship is **not** designed to support additional primary data collection, and will **not** fund such activities.

- Fostering collaboration between an emerging researcher from the Global South (the Fellow), a suitable and experienced researcher (the Mentor), and a capable and supportive host organisation (e.g. a university, research institution, or other suitable organisation where the Mentor is based, that may be located anywhere worldwide, either Global North or South).
- Building and strengthening the international profile and career path of the Fellow, and ultimately contributing to developing their research leadership.
- Building and strengthening institutional-academic networks of urban studies at a truly global scale. This includes active linkages between, around, and beyond the Fellow, Mentor, home organisation and research networks, and host organisation and networks (as relevant).
- Providing a time and space where the above aims can be achieved. The Fellowship therefore requires that the Fellow should be able to take a break from their home institution environment and responsibilities, during which they can dedicate themselves to pursuing their Fellowship proposal objectives.

All successful applications to the International Fellowship scheme should attend to the various intents above, whilst taking into account the remainder of the eligibility, terms, and guidance within this document.

2 Eligibility

Please consult this section for the terms of eligibility to this scheme. The section covers important eligibility factors around the Fellowship, not limited to the candidate, proposal, host organisation and Mentor, budget, and additional award support for extra-ordinary costs (e.g. relating to childcare and/or disability).

Any doubts or clarifications on these terms should be directed to the USF **prior** to applying, provided prospective applicants have consulted this document and the relevant Frequently Asked Questions in full.

2.1 Candidate

- Candidates must be a national of a country present on the OECD's current [ODA recipient list](#). Preference may be given to candidates from least-developed or low-income countries, but middle-income developing countries are not excluded if the need for support is justified.
- Candidates must also reside within a country on the current [ODA recipient list](#), and have a formal affiliation with a university or other higher education and/or research institution based in these countries at the time of applying.
- The candidate's PhD must have been awarded in a relevant social science or humanities discipline within the last ten calendar years (by the exact application deadline date). Relevant disciplines might include: anthropology, architecture, data science, demography, development, economics, geography, planning, political science, public policy, sociology, spatial science/modelling, sustainability, urban-environmental engineering, urbanism (though this list is **not** exhaustive). Candidates who have not received their PhD are not eligible.
- Career breaks with supporting statement and evidence may be considered as reasons extend this ten-year period in some cases (e.g. documented maternity/paternity leave, unemployment, military service, illness, etc.). However, in this case prospective applicants must contact the USF **prior** to applying to discuss and confirm their situation (and the USF reserves the right not to consider applicants whose PhDs were awarded more than ten years ago).
- Candidates who have an existing formal affiliation with an organisation that will run throughout and/or beyond the duration of the proposed Fellowship must confirm they will be fully released from their associated duties and responsibilities for the duration of the Fellowship (e.g. via a formal approval for a sabbatical break in their affiliation and/or similar leave arrangement). It is not permitted to hold an International Fellowship simultaneously with an active role or grant based at another institution.
- Previous International Fellows are not eligible to apply for a second Fellowship, and only one application per candidate is permitted in each call.

2.2 Fellowship

- The Fellowship is intended to support writing up **existing** research for publication outputs (i.e. where the primary data collection and analysis has already been completed). It is not designed to fund new research projects, and such proposals will not be considered for funding.
- Candidates may propose Fellowships between three and nine months in duration. The proposed duration should reflect the proposed volume of work and outputs.
- The Fellowship must begin no sooner than four months after the deadline for applications, and no later than fourteen months after the deadline for applications, i.e. by mid-September 2027 at the latest (and applicants should be aware that the review process will last up to twelve weeks).
- The Fellow must be based at the proposed host organisation for the duration of the Fellowship to engage with and benefit from the relevant scholarly community and resources. Remote Fellowships will not be considered.
- Proposed research outputs should present a clear connection and novel contribution to the field of urban studies and be aimed towards publication for relevant academic audiences.
- The Fellowship is entirely self-managed, and the USF cannot actively assist with issues surrounding negotiations between candidates and prospective Mentors, host organisations, or home organisations (e.g. for formal release during the Fellowship). Candidates should be ready, willing and capable to manage their funding, apply for the necessary visas, and make other necessary arrangements for the Fellowship.

2.3 Host organisation and Mentor

- All prospective Mentors, host organisations, and candidates should consult the **Guidance for Host Organisations and Mentors** document to ensure they are able to provide the support expected, available on the USF website.
- The Fellowship must be taken up at a different organisation to the candidate's current affiliation.
- The Fellowship may be proposed at a host organisation in any country worldwide, and the applicant must explain the rationale for the chosen institution. Fellowships in Global South regions are also encouraged, to promote South-South mobility.
- Host organisations should typically be universities, but public research institutes that are dedicated to scientific research and operate on a non-profit basis are also eligible.
- There should be a suitable research environment in the host organisation to stimulate and support the Fellow's research.

- The Mentor should ideally be a scholar with a strong track record of research excellence in urban studies and relevant mentoring experience, and should be based permanently at the host organisation for the duration of the Fellowship.
- There should be a match or a clear compatibility of research interests between the Fellow and Mentor.
- It is anticipated that the Mentor will be willing to assist the progress of the Fellow to ensure that they are able to fully realise their writing ambitions during the sabbatical period, possibly followed by jointly authored publications.
- Candidates may only name one Mentor on each application, who should be fully prepared and willing to take sole responsibility for supporting the Fellowship. However, applicants may draw attention to additional individuals who might be willing to provide secondary support and mentorship during the Fellowship, either at the host organisation and/or beyond (e.g. individuals who are part of a community of researchers, and/or external partners of the host institution).
- Candidates should refrain from nominating their previous PhD supervisor(s) as a Mentor unless there is a novel dimension to the proposal which represents a strong potential for the development of new research networks and connections. If the PhD was recent, it is unlikely to be considered a competitive proposal in this respect.
- Fellows cannot be Mentored by existing Trustees of the Urban Studies Foundation, and Trustees should **not** be named as referees for applications (except in certain strict circumstances, see Section 4 below on the application process).

2.4 Budget

- The requested budget must be reasonable, justified, and include all primary costs directly related to the Fellowship (e.g. travel, accommodation, food, visa costs, insurance, and resource costs, etc).
- Budgets must be applied for in GBP currency, and grants are only payable in GBP currency. All conversions should be made using [Oanda](#) currency rates, and evidence for the rates of exchange at the time of applying should be attached to the budget evidence document.
- Applicants should ensure that they have carefully researched all likely expenses, and of any size (e.g. travel to and from visa appointments, additional travel documents required, insurance costs, etc.). There is no template budget provided, since all budgets will be unique according to specifics of each proposed Fellowship (location, duration, distance, country, etc).
- Living costs should be budgeted at a modest rate relative to the local cost of living. All travel must be economy class.

- Budgets must be well-documented, with all budget items over GBP 500 clearly documented with supporting evidence (e.g. flight prices, quotes for accommodation, local cost of living rates, etc.). Evidence supporting the budget costs, and exchange rates, should be collated and attached as a single pdf document (maximum 2mb file size), and should clearly demonstrate that the applicant has carefully researched a realistic and reasonable budget for the Fellowship.
- Suitable forms of evidence might include flight ticket prices, quotes, university accommodation prices, visa processing costs, local living cost rates from online sources, etc., as relevant.
- There is an additional amount of limited funds available to support extra-ordinary costs incurred during the Fellowship due to either: (a) caring responsibilities for dependent persons, or (b) disability. Please see Section 2.5 below for more details.
- A small budget can be included in the application to enhance the Mentor’s understanding of the Fellow’s research networks and context, to assist the Fellow to reach their intended goals and outputs, and to develop medium and long-term collaborative networks. This might support activities such as a visit of the Mentor to the Fellow’s home organisation(s), network(s), research site(s), and the participation in activities such as conferences, workshops, talks, and other engagements. This is optional rather than compulsory, and can be included in the budget of the Fellowship proposal if appropriate and justified in terms of strengthening leadership roles and future research and teaching collaborations between host and home institutions. The budget statement and any supplementary documents should be used to explain the value of this item.
- The USF strongly expects host organisations and Mentors to explore a full waiver or significant discount for any overhead charges (e.g. bench fees, affiliation fees, general overheads, etc). This is considered a reflection on the strength of the proposed partnership between USF, Fellow, host organisation, and Mentor (see ‘Guidance for Host Organisations and Mentors’). However, where a full waiver is not possible:
 - Host organisations based in countries on the [current OECD's current ODA recipient list](#) may charge overheads of up to GBP 150 per calendar month of the Fellowship.
 - Host organisations based in other countries (including those of the Global North) may charge overheads up to GBP 125 per calendar month provided that evidence is presented to demonstrate this represents a discount on the normal overheads charged for visiting scholars.
- Equipment costs (e.g. laptops) will not normally be considered eligible budget items unless the request is an exceptional case from a candidate based in a least-developed/low-income country. Applicants who wish to include equipment in their budget should clarify this with the USF **prior** to applying.

- Funding is not available for other research costs associated with primary data collection, for which this award is not intended.
- Mentor fees or payments are not eligible budget items for this scheme, and will not be considered under any circumstances.
- Open access publication fees should not be included in the budget. Fellows may however contact the USF at a later date to motivate any case for support (e.g. after the Fellowship has finished and outputs have been accepted for publication).

2.5 Additional support

Applicants wishing to apply for additional support funds towards additional care or disability costs **must** contact the USF **at least two weeks prior** to applying to discuss their requirements and ensure eligibility. Do **not** include these costs within the main application budget.

The USF is committed to supporting scholars who may incur extra-ordinary costs during their Fellowship due to either caring responsibilities for a dependent person(s) or disability. The USF has a very limited source of support funding to support successful candidates who can demonstrate justified, extra-ordinary, and affordable cases for support **prior** to applying to the scheme.

Extra-ordinary costs are defined as those which may be incurred due to taking up the Fellowship, and where no reasonable alternatives for support exist. The USF cannot support candidates where costs include ordinary expected expenditure due to caring responsibilities or disability (i.e. costs which would otherwise be incurred despite the Fellowship), and/or where reasonable alternatives exist to accommodate the candidate's needs.

For example:

1. Extra-ordinary care support costs might include (but are not limited to) additional hours of care provided to dependent person(s) whilst the Fellow is away on sabbatical. The USF cannot however support larger costs such as relocating multiple family members, and will only consider funding travel of a dependent person in affordable cases where no reasonable alternatives exist.
2. Extra-ordinary disability support costs might include (but are not limited to) small purchases of additional equipment, slightly increased accommodation costs, or slightly increased travel costs, etc.

Applying for additional support

To apply for additional support to cover extra-ordinary costs relating to caring responsibilities and/or disability, applicants should ensure they follow these instructions:

3. Contact the USF at least two weeks in advance of applying to discuss their requirements and ensure eligibility (please contact grants@urbanstudiesfoundation.org with the email subject “IF Additional Support”). Prospective applicants should have ensured they can explain the needs and justification for applying to additional funds, including provision of a carefully researched and tabulated summary of any associated costs (if requested).
4. The USF will reply to confirm whether the associated costs might be considered for support in the event that the candidate is shortlisted for the grant. **If candidates do not contact the USF prior to applying, and do not receive confirmation, the USF is unable to consider such requests.**
5. When applying, applicants should check the relevant box in the budget section of the application to indicate they have contacted the USF regarding such additional support. Applicants must **not** include such costs in their main application budget (for reasons of fairness, budgets are assessed independently of these needs).
6. In the event that the candidate is shortlisted for the grant, the USF will contact the candidate to submit a separate budget application for the additional costs. This budget will be considered separately to the main application.

There is no guarantee that shortlisted candidates who apply for additional support will be offered the requested funding, and each application for this funding will be assessed based on (a) the funds available and (b) the individual case for support. In some cases the USF may only be prepared to offer a portion of the requested funds, and reserves the right to make such a reduced offer. Any decision made on such funding is final, and the USF will not enter into any discussion surrounding decisions on such supplementary funding.

3 Award terms

Successful candidates must agree to all the following award terms:

- Fellows must clearly acknowledge USF funding in all publications emerging from their grant, as instructed via USF communications guidelines which are issued to all successful candidates along with their offer letter.
- All International Fellows and Mentors must submit a final report on the grant within one month of their Fellowship end date. A pro forma award report is provided to all successful candidates along with their offer letter.
- All International Fellows must write a short blog post on their Fellowship work (e.g. synopsis of research outputs and activities), of at least 750 words, for the USF website. This may be submitted at any time during the Fellowship, up until the final report is due.
- Funding is paid directly to the Fellow, with 50% payable upon commencement of the Fellowship and a further 50% half-way through the award. Initial up-front costs may be covered by the USF before the Fellowship begins, provided evidence is submitted (e.g. receipts and quotes), and this will be deducted from the balance of the first funding payment.
- Fellows must be able to receive the funds to a bank account in their name via international bank transfer (e.g. SWIFT), originating in the UK (GBP currency).
- The award will be offered strictly according to the original application, in terms of the proposed research, host organisation, Mentor, duration and budget. Amendments to these terms may only be made with the explicit written permission of the USF. This includes requests to delay or defer the Fellowship dates.
- Fellows must agree that they will act independently and according to all relevant local legal and ethical regulations, standards, and guidelines during the course of the Fellowship.
- The USF reserves the right to withdraw offers of funding at any point (including offers of additional care support), and may do so if the terms of the award are not upheld by the Fellow, host organisation, or Mentor.

4 Application process

Candidates must complete the online application form prior to 23:59 (UTC+0) on the date of the advertised deadline.

The application must include:

- **Applicant information** including:
 - The candidate's contact details, recent education, and recent academic positions.
 - Proof of applicant's **nationality**, and therefore eligibility for the award (pdf document upload). This can be provided as a scan/photograph of the applicant's passport or other relevant ID document.
 - Career stage statement (250 words maximum) that (a) summarises any international/visiting Fellowships the candidate may have benefited from in the past (if any), (b) what was achieved during any past international/visiting Fellowships (if any), and (c) explains how an award from the USF could help the candidate further advance their career. The statement should not be a generic CV summary, and instead focus clearly on the three points above (a-c).
 - The names and contact details of two academic referees. Both referees should be prepared to submit letters of recommendation to the USF upon request. Referees should be suitably senior supervisors, Mentors or colleagues of the applicant (e.g. PhD supervisor, line manager, etc.) who can comment on the applicant's suitability and qualification for the Fellowship. Referees **must not** be Trustees of the USF unless they were the candidate's sole PhD supervisor, **and** permission for this has been sought from the USF **prior** to submitting the application.
- **Proposed Fellowship information**, including dates, Mentorship and host organisation arrangements.
- A **budget** in GBP with main cost items, including documentary evidence for all cost items above GBP 500, uploaded in a pdf document (e.g. flight prices, quotes for accommodation, local cost of living rates, etc.). See Section 2.3 above for details.
- A **research proposal** (in English language) that includes (see Section 5 below for further guidance):
 - A research statement (1200 words maximum), and bibliographical references (750 words maximum).
 - Summary of planned research outputs (300 words maximum).
 - Background and suitability of proposed host organisation (300 words maximum).
 - Background and suitability of proposed Mentor (300 words maximum).

- **Applicant CV** listing academic achievements and publications (3 pages maximum, pdf document upload). Applicants must **not** list “Submitted” or “Forthcoming” publications on their CV unless they are placed in a separate section (e.g. under “Forthcoming publications”) **and** are accompanied by evidence of acceptance (maximum one page per publication).
- Short **Mentor CV**, which should include any previous Mentoring experience (3 pages maximum, pdf document upload).
- **Mentor support letter** stating their willingness to act as a Mentor to the Fellow, and detailing the suitability of the host organisation for the proposed Fellowship in reference to the **Guidance for Host Organisations and Mentors** (2 pages maximum, pdf document upload).

All supporting documents should be uploaded in .pdf format and not exceed 2mb in file size.

In addition, all applicants will be requested to complete an anonymous Equality & Diversity Monitoring Form after the application is submitted. This form, and any information provided with it, will be separated from individual applications and is not to be used in the assessment process. It is only used for collecting information on who applies to USF awards on aggregate, so that the USF may regularly assess and improve how it advertises and administers its grant funding.

Decisions will normally be made within twelve weeks of the closing deadline for this award, and all applicants will be contacted regarding their application outcome. The USF regrets that it cannot offer any feedback on applications, and all decisions are final.

Further general terms regarding applications to USF funding may be found in the [USF Code of Practice](#).

Candidates wishing to discuss their application informally, or with questions regarding the online application process, should contact the USF via email: grants@urbanstudiesfoundation.org

5 Proposal guidance

The candidate's **research statement** (1200 words maximum) should provide a summary outline of the candidate's research, including clear explanation of the originality and value it will contribute to the field of urban studies specifically, and its current stage of development.

This section should explicitly describe what data has already been collected and analysed (i.e. existing research), and how this will be transformed into the research outputs detailed in the outputs section below.

It must be very clear that the research is at a state where it can be successfully written up (i.e. data collection and analysis has been largely completed). Brief discussion of research methods, data collection, and wider methodological considerations are welcome, but the section must ensure it has adequately explained how the existing work will be transformed into high-quality outputs.

The **bibliography** (750 words maximum) provided should detail any references used in standard bibliographical format.

The **outputs statement** summarising the intended form of research outputs (300 words maximum) should focus on detailing the format of the planned outputs (e.g. articles and specific target journals, chapters, monographs, book, etc.) and their expected impact. It should be clear that the programme of work is achievable and reasonable within the duration of the Fellowship (timelines and other project details may be uploaded using the supplemental document, but are entirely optional, and excessive additional words on supplemental documents will be discarded by the reviewers).

The final sections should focus on how the chosen **host organisation** (300 words maximum) and proposed **Mentor** (300 words maximum) will benefit the Fellow's programme of work. This should focus on the suitability and alignment between the candidate's work and the Mentor/host organisation, including relevance of expertise, networks, resources, linkages, and other opportunities.

A strong scholarly connection and contribution to urban studies should be clear throughout the research, output, host organisation, and Mentor statements. This should include explaining the proposal's contribution to building collaborative research networks at a global scale

6 Assessment criteria

The USF International Fellowship applications are assessed according to the [USF Code of Practice](#), and the awarding panel takes great care to review all applications in detail.

Applications to this scheme are primarily assessed on three key criteria:

1. The quality of the research **proposal**, including:
 - Originality and suitability of the proposed research within the stated purpose of the International Fellowship scheme.
 - Clearly defined research outputs with scope for adding value to the field of urban studies.
 - Feasibility of the outputs (e.g. in relation to the existing research and within the time period of the Fellowship, which should be carefully chosen to suit the planned outputs).
2. The **profile** of the candidate, including:
 - Previous academic achievements. Applicants will need to provide evidence in their CV of achievements to date, e.g. publications, papers at international conferences, etc.
 - The benefits of the proposed Fellowship to the candidate's current career stage. The applicant should clearly explain how the Fellowship will strengthen their research profile and advance their career path in urban studies (via career stage statement).
3. The quality of the Fellowship **placement**, including:
 - The match between the Fellow, research proposal and Mentor. The Mentor should ideally be a scholar with a strong track record of research excellence in urban studies and relevant Mentoring experience, and should be based permanently at the host organisation for the duration of the Fellowship. There should be a clear compatibility of research interests between the Fellow and Mentor, and the Mentor's supporting letter should indicate their engagement with the proposed research.
 - The match between Fellow, research, and the environment of the host organisation. The host organisation should provide a suitable environment to support the Fellow in developing their proposed work both individually and collaboratively. The community of researchers and professional partners around the host organisation should be actively engaged in the generation and dissemination of new knowledge in fields that match the interests and concerns of the Fellow.
 - The detail of the budget, including the evidence provided for costed items, and its value for money in terms of the overall planned Fellowship. It should be clear that the budget is both reasonable and well-researched.