

Call for Proposals

IIT Madras & Kenya Network of Entrepreneurial Institutions Leaders (KNEIL) JFBMP-Partnership Collaboration Awards Round 1 Guidelines for Applicants

Purpose

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) and Kenya Network of Entrepreneurial Institutions Leaders (KNEIL) have identified each other as strategic partners to foster deep collaborations in research and education. The IIT Madras & KNEIL JFBMP-Partnership Collaboration Awards (PCA) - round 1 have been established to facilitate and support joint initiatives that will strengthen the two universities' strategic priorities as well as develop multi-disciplinary cutting-edge research to create academic and societal impact.

In this round of the PCA, applicants are invited to submit funding proposals for **innovative and sustainable programs** that foster **collaborative research** between **IIT Madras** and **KNEIL**. Proposals may also include **learning and teaching initiatives**, provided they are part of a broader research collaboration.

Focus Areas:

This India–Kenya partnership aims to promote joint efforts in **Startups, Innovation, and Academic R&D**, with a particular emphasis on the following themes:

- Innovation & Entrepreneurship
- Deep-tech Startups
- Translational solutions for the Global South, including:
 - Sustainability
 - Climate Action
 - AgriTech
 - WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene)
 - Data Engineering (AI, AR, Quantum, Web3)
 - Robotics
 - Sensors

Proposals should plan for long-term engagement that includes leveraging external funding and support. Proposals must include a team of participants from both institutions and are encouraged to include PhD or Masters by research students, Postdocs, early- and mid-Career Researchers (EMCR). Projects which are multidisciplinary in nature are encouraged.

In this round, up to three proposals will be funded (each with two Investigators; one from IIT Madras and one from KNEIL). Each successful proposal may receive up to the equivalent of USD 34,000 in total.

1. Eligibility

- 1.1 Proposals are invited from academic staff from all disciplines at IIT Madras and KNEIL and their affiliated Research Centres and Institutes.
- 1.2 Applicants from affiliated Research Centres and Institutes must be University Title Holders.
- 1.3 Investigators must be employed full-time.
- 1.4 PhD and masters by research students, post-docs, and research assistants/associates are not eligible to apply as Investigators but they are welcome to join the applications.
- 1.5 Current recipients of PCA funding whose project is still ongoing and will not have finished by the application close date may apply for concurrent grants but are required to submit a progress report of their current project when submitting their application. The progress report should be an attachment to the application – single page, narrative update on project progress to date and unexpended award balance.
- 1.6 Previous recipients of PCA funding whose projects have finished or will have finished by the application close date may only apply for consecutive grants if they have submitted their final report.

2. Duration

Funding from IIT Madras is available for up to 1 year from the date of the award.

Funding from KNEIL is available for up to 1 year from the date of the award.

3. Important Dates

Applications open	20th December 2025
Applications close	20th January 2026
Successful applicants notified	31st January 2026
Earliest start date for projects	5th February 2026
Latest date for projects to end	31 January 2027
Final reports due	31 January 2027

4. Eligible Grant Activities

4.1 Activities that will be considered for funding include:

- Airfares: Only travel on economy class will be considered
- Other travel expenses (e.g. train, rental car)
- Costs for hosting seminars/conferences or workshops
- Accommodation and subsistence
- Consumables

- Publications and printing costs

4.2 All travel activities must comply with the guidelines of the respective universities.

- **IIT Madras** – All IIT Madras travel must comply with its relevant travel policy.
 Must apply through workflow, obtain letter of support upon invitation from partner institute, apply for VISA, and post travel to submit bills
- **KNEIL** – All KNEIL faculty travel must comply with its relevant travel policy

4.3 Activities that will not be considered for funding:

- General teaching;
- An individual staff member's research projects, unless as catalytic funding for the establishment of an international research collaboration with the prospect of external funding;
- Event registration fees;
- Venue hire if event held on campus
- Website development;
- Salaries or salary supplementation, and honoraria (Research/ project assistants may be possible with the approval of JFBMP advisor-Global Engagement IIT Madras/ Finance Manager and Head of School);
- Scholarships for students;
- Course fees for international students;
- Bench fees;
- Mobile phone cards;
- Entertainment costs; and
- Computers, including laptops (excluding access to high-performance computers or other specialised applications that are justified by the project) and basic computing facilities such as printers, word processing and other standard software.

5. Submission Requirements

All proposals must be submitted online and include the following elements:

- JFBMP proposal -PCA Application Form (online)
- Details of team involved and the role and contribution of each member
- Expected outcomes
- Selection criteria (see point 6)
- Project timeline
- Project budget
- CV of the IIT Madras Investigator (maximum two pages in length) which should include:
 - Qualifications, current position, and employment history
 - 10 career-best publications
 - Awards and relevant presentations
 - Current grant income

- Collaborative track record (limited to 200 words)
- CV of the **Partner** Investigator (maximum two pages in length) which should include:
 - Qualifications, current position, and employment history
 - 10 career-best publications
 - Awards and relevant presentations
 - Current grant income
 - Collaborative track record (limited to 200 words)

6. Scoring and Selection Criteria

6.1 Priority is given to applications that align with the strategic focus areas of both universities. Applications in other fields showing a good prospect of sustainability are also welcome.

6.2 Criteria do not have weightings; proposals are assessed holistically. Each proposal will be assessed according to the selection criteria described below.

Score	Category	Justification
10	Excellent	Proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. Any shortcomings are minor
7 to 9	Very Good	Proposal addresses the criterion very well, but a small number of shortcomings are present
4 to 6	Good	Proposal addresses the criterion well, but a number of shortcomings are present
1 to 3	Weak	Criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses

Selection Criteria	Description
Quality & Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Clearly describe the objectives and methodology to be employed with the project. The alignment with strategic priorities and the objectives of the funding scheme will be considered in combination with the soundness of the concept and credibility of the proposed methodology. ● Explain how the participants in the team will bring together the necessary expertise to carry out the project. The 2-page CVs of the Chief Investigators will be taken into consideration. ● 300 word maximum
Execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Elaborate on the work plan and milestones outlined in the timeframe (there are separate sections in the application form for an outline of activities in the Timeline and Budget). Proposed timeframes and budget estimates should be realistic and appropriate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The long-term plan for engagement to attract funding will be taken into consideration. This section should also address the appropriateness of the allocation of tasks, ensuring that all participants [including PhD or masters by research students, postdocs, Early and Mid-Career Researchers (EMCR)^(*1), and any researchers on Sabbatical Leave] have a valid role and there are adequate resources in the project to enable them to fulfil that role. 300 word maximum
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline what the participants will gain from the project and how it will contribute to the innovation & entrepreneurship ecosystem of the respective universities. Explain how the project will establish or strengthen a durable cooperation between the universities and participants. Explain how the project will impact beyond the academic sphere (i.e. benefit society, address global challenges, <u>Sustainable Development Goals</u>, etc). Explain how the project activities and results will be communicated to different target audiences. 300 word maximum
Future Development of the collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain how your proposal will lead to future development of collaboration, in terms of academic collaboration, applying for external grants etc (300 word maximum)

*1Early-Career Researchers are defined as those within 10 years of award of PhD and Mid-Career Researchers are defined as those between 10-15 years of award of PhD.

7. Expected Outcomes

It is expected that the selected proposal will result in the following outcomes:

Category	Outcome
Research quality and influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In this special call, we look for research/technology translation to a start-up that impacts any of the innovation areas listed above. Strengthening start-up activity between both partners, leading to formation of multi-national start ups and towards identification of

	validated market opportunities between both partner countries are expected
Publications	<p>A researched and validated business model canvas is expected when the proposal is focusing on research and/or technology translation.</p> <p>When technology development is also involved, journal and/or other scientific publications, particularly referencing any of the UN SDGs are expected.</p>
External funding	<p>At least one (1) Category 1-3^{(*)2} national/international competitive grant submission.</p> <p>Special category fund raising is also encouraged in this call</p> <p>Details of the external funding bodies to which you plan to submit applications must be identified within the application form.</p> <p>Proof of submission is required in the final report.</p>
Training & education	Supervision and mentoring of visiting PhD students/postdoctoral researchers/ECRs
Joint Workshop	A joint workshop at either institution. This may be in-person, virtual or hybrid.
Conference	A conference presentation. This may be online.

Industry engagement is encouraged, but not expected. If proposals include industry engagement, then details should be provided in the timeline/activities section of the online application.

²

Category 1: Competitive grants such as SERB core support, DST extra mural funding, African govt funds.

Category 2: Other Public Sector Research Funding. Other Indian/African Government schemes (including state govt and govt funded bodies)

Category 3: Industry and other Funding for Research. Research grants or contract research with Indian/ Australian or international industry or non-Government agencies. Funding through donations/ CSR (corporate social responsibility) or any other sources

Special category: In this proposal, where start-up activities are expected, funding from foundations, angels and other venture investment groups are encouraged.

8. Assessment Process

Award selection will be made by a joint committee formed by members of both universities, which reserves final authority over the selection of projects taking into account university and faculty strategic priorities, and the availability of funds.

9. Application Submission

1 All applications must be jointly submitted by an Investigator from IIT Madras at the following link:
<https://ge.iitm.ac.in/forms/kneil-jfbmp>

2 Only complete submissions will be considered.

3 Late applications will not be considered.

10. Notification of Application Outcomes

Successful applicants will receive a letter of award outlining the process to accept the award including payment. Feedback on individual applications will not be provided.

11. Change of Investigator

Awardees should contact the Program Coordinator at each institution. Such changes will need to be approved and documented.

12. Extensions

Only under exceptional circumstances will extensions be approved. Requests for extensions must be submitted to the Program Coordinators in writing at least 2 months before project end date and include a revised budget and timeline of activities for consideration.

13. Forfeiture of Grants

Grants must be spent by 31 Jan 2027

For IITM researchers, the fund can be claimed as per allotted budget, from the ICSR project account created for this mobility program. The funds can be claimed post travel by submitting relevant bills.

For Partner, successful researchers can claim funds as per its institute policy.

14. Financial and Reporting Obligations

1. The funding should only be used for the approved project and in accordance with the proposal and the budget plan. It must not be used for any other purposes and prior approval from both universities is needed for any variation in the budget items. Requests for variations from original proposals must be submitted to both universities for approval.
2. Awardees must adhere to the purchasing guidelines of the respective universities to which reimbursement is to be sought. Reimbursement of each expenditure item will be capped at the approved amount.

3. Awardees must submit a final report to the respective campus coordinators at IIT Madras and KNEIL.
4. Failure to submit a completed report will result in all members of the project team being ineligible to submit future funding applications.
5. The activation of research funding accounts/submission of claims are not tied to ethics/other approvals being obtained. It is the responsibility of Investigators to ensure that no work requiring approval is commenced until such approvals are in place.

15. Marketing and Communications

Awardees may be contacted by the office of GE publicity/social media team for the purposes of promoting their successful funding application and informing others of their research.

16. Publications

Any publications (e.g. abstracts, articles) or dissemination (e.g. public presentations) arising from activities supported by the PCA should acknowledge assistance received from the PCA and copies or notification should be submitted to the Office of Global & Research Engagement at IIT Madras and the Office of Global Engagement at KNEIL. The standard acknowledgment is “IIT-Madras- KNEIL JFBMP Partnership Collaboration Awards”.

Further Information

For further information please contact the campus coordinators:

IIT Madras	Kenya Network of Entrepreneurial Institutions Leaders (KNEIL)
Prof. Prabhu Rajagopal Director-in-charge, IITM Zanzibar. prajagopal@iitm.ac.in	Mr. Stephen Omwenga s.omwenga@kenia.go.ke
Prof. Satyanarayanan Seshadri – Head, School of Innovation & Entrepreneurship, IIT Madras satya@iitm.ac.in	Dr. Tonny K. Omwansa -CEO, Kenya National Innovation Agency tomwansa@kenia.go.ke
Ms. K. S. Nandhini Manager (School of Innovation & Entrepreneurship) manager.ie@imail.iitm.ac.in	
Ms. Ranjitha KV -JFBMP/JMP Coordinator global.relations@ge.iitm.ac.in Office of Global Engagement	



IIT Madras