

## SECURITY & DEFENCE PLUS SEED GRANTS: 2025 GUIDELINES

### About Security & Defence PLS

PLuS Alliance is a longstanding partnership combining the strengths of three leading research universities on three continents – Arizona State University (ASU), King's College London (KCL) and the University of New South Wales (UNSW) – to solve global challenges. Security & Defence PLS (S&D+) is the flagship program of PLS Alliance. S&D+ advances research, education, and statecraft in the spirit of AUKUS, an agreement announced in 2021 between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States to strengthen diplomatic, security, and defence cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

### Objectives

Seed funding is available in 2025 to support the development or expansion of research collaborations within the S&D+ initiative that are co-led between researchers from at least two of the three PLS Alliance universities (ASU, KCL, and UNSW).

### Expected Outcomes

Funded seed grants are expected to lead to all the below outcomes:

- In person meeting(s) between co-leads to advance the collaboration;
- Development of a two-four page white paper (explained below) proposing a solution to a security and defence need with the plan to submit to defence agencies and/or government officials;
- Submission of a pitch to [The Conversation](#) or equivalent in each partner country that highlights the project, with reference to S&D+ seed funding;
- A timelined plan outlining steps towards a collaborative proposal for an external sponsor;
- Availability of project co-leads for communications opportunities as needed (e.g. short video interview or feature content).

### White Paper Outcome

For the purposes of this seed grant round, white papers are defined as an overview document outlining how the research collaboration offers a solution to a security and defence need. The white paper is written with the goal of submitting to defence agencies and/or government officials to showcase expertise and influence decision-making. The requirements of white papers can vary depending on the specific agency it is submitted to, but typically follows a structured format including an introduction, background information, problem statement, analysis, proposed solutions or recommendations, and a conclusion.



## Themes

The seed grants aim to fund collaborations aligned to security and defence. Funded areas are not limited to AUKUS stated priorities. Areas of interest for funding include, but are not limited to:

- Space
- Artificial Intelligence
- Cyber-Security
- Nuclear Propulsion and Safeguards
- Materials Science
- Hypersonics
- Undersea Robotics Autonomous Systems (AURAS)
- Decision Support Systems
- Critical Supply Chains
- Deterrence
- Ethics in International Systems
- International Alliances and Security Cooperation
- Disinformation and Narrative Strategy
- Irregular Warfare
- Climate Security
- Human Security
- Mission Engineering
- Disruptive and Emerging Technologies
- Air Domain Awareness
- Underwater Awareness
- GPS-denied Environments
- Competitive State Craft
- Women, Peace and Security

## Eligibility

- Must be co-led between a minimum of two PLoS institutions, which are ASU, KCL, and UNSW; applications co-led between all three PLoS institutions are preferred.
- Co-leads must be salaried staff members at their PLoS institution (adjuncts are not eligible to be a co-lead).
- Co-leads must be citizens or permanent residents of their PLoS institution's country (due to restrictions in the Defence Trade Controls Amendment Bill 2023 and many defence funding opportunities).
- Investigators can be a co-lead on only ONE proposal.

## Selection Criteria

1. Specific security and defence need that your white paper plans to address (20%)
2. Proposed solution and approach to the identified need (20%)
3. Potential benefit and impact of your proposed solution on the defence sector within the partner countries (20%)
4. Strength and complementarity of the project team (20%)
5. Alignment to scheme objectives and expected outcomes (20%)

## Funding Available

≤\$US15,000 total for trilateral projects.

≤\$US10,000 total for bilateral projects.

Eligible items for S&D+ funding:

- Return economy airfares;
- Reimbursement of living and hosting costs of visiting team members from each institution;
- Costs of workshops/meetings related to developing the white paper and other expected outcomes;
- Other project costs if funds remain after the above in-person meeting expenses.

## Grant Duration

The grant duration is six months from the grant commencement date (see timeline below).

## Timeline

Dates and times are in the Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST) zone.

Date	Milestone
Tuesday 22 April 2025	Round opens
Monday 2 June 2025	Application deadline – 5 PM (AEST)
June 2025	Application review period
End June 2025	Outcomes anticipated
Early July 2025	Grants commence
December 2025	Grants end and recipients report against expected outcomes. Final reports are anticipated to be due Friday 19 December, 2025.

## Application Review

Applications will be assessed by a cross-institutional panel with security & defence expertise.

## Reporting

Successful recipients will be required to submit a **Final Report** on or before the project end date detailing progress, outcomes and final financial expenditures against the original budget.

All funding must be fully expended within the awarded period. Any unspent funds will be returned.

S&D+ personnel will be available to provide advice on securing external funding for the next steps of your collaboration if required.

## Submission

Project teams are required to work together to prepare and submit a single application. The application form and attachments must be submitted as a single PDF and named using the co-lead's surnames i.e. Surname1\_Surname2\_Surname3\_S&D+ Seed Grant 2025.pdf.

Submit applications to [international.RSO@unsw.edu.au](mailto:international.RSO@unsw.edu.au)

## Queries and Further Information

Please email:

- General inquiries/info on S&D+: [securitydefence@plusalliance.org](mailto:securitydefence@plusalliance.org)
- UNSW: Alison Butt ([international.RSO@unsw.edu.au](mailto:international.RSO@unsw.edu.au))
- ASU: Thorin Wright ([thorin.wright@asu.edu](mailto:thorin.wright@asu.edu)) and Roslynn Runia ([roslynn.runia@asu.edu](mailto:roslynn.runia@asu.edu))
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