

Grant Call Information for the Singapore Management University (SMU) – University of Toronto (U of T) 2026 Call for Proposals

Section A: General Information

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The SMU-UofT seed research funding call, delivered in partnership with AgeTech LaunchPad Toronto, a University of Toronto Institutional Strategic Initiative (ISI), aims to strengthen ties between the two institutions by supporting research collaborations in areas of mutual strategic interest. AgeTech LaunchPad Toronto will serve as the academic home at U of T for all funded projects, connecting project teams to its university-wide AgeTech community, activities and partnerships.

In enabling both SMU and U of T faculty to identify complementary strengths, explore synergies, and develop outstanding joint research, this seed fund programme will help foster long-term academic collaboration by engaging researchers from all schools and research centres at both universities. The fund supports both new collaborations and the strengthening of existing partnerships.

2. Eligibility

- 2.1 The SMU-UofT seed research call is open to eligible researchers from both institutions. Each application must include one Principal Investigator (PI) from SMU and one Principal Investigator (PI) from U of T.

2.2 **U of T Applicants (PI and Co-Investigators)**

U of T: Faculty members who meet the [University's definition of a Principal Investigator \(PI\)](#) are eligible to apply. PIs must hold an appointment for the full duration of the grant's funding period plus one year. PIs must be able to hold funds at U of T.

2.3 **SMU Applicants (PI and Co-Investigators)**

Eligible applicants must be full-time faculty members, including those on term track. Full-time faculty members are those appointed to perform duties at the University for a minimum of nine (9) months per year.

2.4 **Additional Requirements**

Applicants may only submit one application per funding round.

All SMU Principal Investigators are expected to obtain the support of their Head of School, Department, Centre Director, as applicable.

3. Themes

- 3.1. Under the overarching theme of **Ageing in Place**, grant applicants submitting to this grant call should indicate which theme they are submitting to.

- 3.2. There are two (2) subthemes under this Call for Proposals:

(A) Economics of Ageing-in-Place

(B) Human-Robot Interactions for Elderly Assistance in Homes

3.3. More detailed descriptions of the themes are given below.

[A] Economics of Ageing-in-Place

Population ageing is reshaping economies, labour markets, retirement systems, healthcare needs and patterns of care. At the same time, enabling older adults to remain independent and live well within their homes and communities for longer is becoming an increasingly important aspiration in ageing societies such as Singapore and Canada.

This theme invites research that explores ageing in place as a multidimensional economic and societal challenge, examining the economic, financial, social and technological conditions needed to make ageing in place sustainable for individuals, families and society. It seeks to investigate how demographic change, financial preparedness, health, family and caregiving arrangements, housing, access to services and technology can support longer, more financially secure and independent lives.

Topics of interest include, but are by no means limited to:

- **Population ageing and its economic and fiscal implications:** Examine how longer lives and changing demographic structures affect economies over time, including their implications for labour-force participation, productivity, retirement, healthcare expenditure, social protection and public finances. Research could investigate how ageing in place may alter these effects, and how policy, labour-market and retirement systems might adapt to support longer and more financially secure lives.
- **Labour, retirement and financial resilience across longer lifespans:** Investigate how demographic change affects labour supply, productivity and retirement patterns, and the factors that determine retirement adequacy and financial resilience across longer lifespans. Research could examine how individuals, employers and policymakers can prepare for and support longer working lives and retirement.
- **Financial preparedness, health and household resilience:** Examine how financial preparedness, health, family support and caregiving arrangements interact to determine whether individuals can successfully age in place. Research could investigate how these factors accumulate and interact across the life course, producing differences in individuals' ability to remain independent as they age, and identify interventions that improve financial security, well-being and resilience in later life.
- **The economics and organisation of ageing in place:** Analyse the economic costs and benefits of supporting older adults at home relative to alternative models of care. Research could examine how households, families, care providers and society share the financial and social costs of ageing, and which policies and interventions can support healthy, financially secure and independent living.
- **Technology in extending independent living:** Investigate how vital-sign monitoring, sensing technologies, digital health tools and other home-based care technologies can enable earlier intervention, reduce dependence on institutional care and support older adults and caregivers. Research could examine the effectiveness, adoption and affordability of these technologies and how their economic and societal value should be assessed.
- **Comparative approaches to sustainable ageing in place:** Examine how the challenges and potential solutions associated with ageing in place differ across Singapore and Canada. Research could explore how differences in demographic structures, labour markets, retirement systems, healthcare and care arrangements, housing and social protection shape approaches to supporting older adults to live independently within their homes and communities.

[B] Human-Robot Interactions for Elderly Assistance in Homes

Advances in robotics and embodied artificial intelligence offer new possibilities for supporting older adults to live safely and independently at home. Robots may assist with everyday activities, mobility, monitoring, cognitive assistance and communication, while complementing the roles played by family members and professional caregivers.

However, deploying robots within homes creates challenges that go beyond technical performance. Domestic environments are dynamic and unstructured; users differ in physical, sensory and cognitive capabilities; and robots operate within intimate social environments where safety, trust, autonomy and privacy are critical. This theme invites research that investigates the technological, social and human dimensions of assistive robotics and human-robot interaction, and examines how older adults, caregivers and intelligent machines can interact and work together safely, effectively and appropriately within the home.

The topics of interest include but are not limited to:

- **Safe and reliable human-robot collaboration:** Investigate how assistive robots can perceive and respond to human behaviour and changing environments, while minimising the risks associated with incorrect or unexpected actions. Research could examine how risks in robot execution around older adults are identified, quantified and mitigated, and how robots determine when to act autonomously, seek clarification or defer to humans.
- **Inclusive interaction and adaptation:** Examine how older adults communicate and interact with technologies in different ways, including how physical and cognitive disabilities may affect the fidelity and suitability of different modes of interaction. Research could investigate appropriate combinations of speech, gesture, gaze and other interaction modalities; how robots learn individual preferences and routines; and how assistance can adapt as users' physical or cognitive needs change.
- **Task planning and personalised assistance:** Investigate how robots can reliably perform task planning and execution under instructional or goal ambiguity, while taking benefit of the long-lived, persistent nature of their interactions with elderly residents. Research could also examine how robots can adapt their assistance to changing user needs or preferences while preserving independence and autonomy.
- **Data collection and testbeds:** Propose innovative new ways of collecting ecologically valid datasets on performance of robots and modes of human-robot interaction in homes inhabited by older adults, to help with the design of relevant future embodied AI algorithms and models. Research can examine a combination of real-world instrumentation as well as simulation-based environments, as well as novel techniques to bridge the associated Sim2Real gap.
- **The human and social dimensions of living with robots:** Examine what properties, including robotic form and behaviour, enable older persons to appropriately trust an assistive robot, and the factors that determine trust, acceptance and appropriate reliance on such technologies. Research could investigate the social norms that should govern the behaviour of robots within private homes, how autonomy, dignity, privacy and consent can be protected, and how robots should respond when the preferences of older adults, family members and caregivers differ.
- **Privacy, consent and accountability in assistive robotic systems:** Explore how privacy, consent and accountability can be designed into assistive robotic systems, particularly within private and intimate home environments. Research could examine how responsibility and decision-making should be managed when robots interact with multiple stakeholders and when intelligent, but not perfect, machines make or contribute to decisions.
- **Human-machine systems and the future organisation of care:** Analyse how assistive robotics may redistribute tasks and decisions across older adults, family members,

professional caregivers and machines. Research could investigate how these human-machine systems should be designed, how caregiving practices, skills and the work of caregivers may consequently change, and how tasks and decisions should be appropriately distributed among humans and machines.

- **Effectiveness and societal value of human-robot systems for ageing in place:** Examine how the effectiveness and societal value of human-robot systems for ageing in place can be evaluated, including their impact on older adults, caregivers and the wider organisation of care.

4. Requirements/Obligations to Apply for Follow-on External Research Funding

- 4.1. Funding from this grant call is intended to seed and catalyse high-quality research, interdisciplinary studies, and/or impactful work led by researchers across both universities. Accordingly, while the intellectual and scientific merit of the proposed work is the primary determinant, applicants are urged to view the proposed work as initial efforts that are clearly aligned with a longer-term, broader impactful research agenda. Proposals should thus ideally articulate a clear pathway towards strengthening the evidence base or piloting approaches that can be scaled into competitive applications for external research funding.

Section B: Grant Application

5. Proposal

The project description should address the selection criteria and include the following components:

5.1. Abstract of the proposal

A concise summary describing the project.

5.2. Details of research proposal

5.3. Proposal fit in establishing key complimentary research capabilities and strategy for securing follow-on research funding

5.4. Proposed Budget

A detailed breakdown of projected costs (e.g. travel, accommodation, research expenses).

Eligible Activities and Costs

Eligible costs include travel and subsistence, consumables and the cost of research assistants which are directly related to the project. Existing staff time including the Co-PIs time cannot be costed to the project. The award of any fund from either Institution will be subject, in each case, to the internal processes and procedures of such Institution. All travel activities must comply with the guidelines of the respective universities. U of T PIs are required to follow [U of T policy guidelines](#).

Expense Type	SMU	U of T
Travel costs for PIs and co-PIs, including flights, hotels and subsistence	Eligible, maximum one trip, capped at SGD6,000 for each trip	Eligible
Research costs, including consumables and research assistants	Eligible	Eligible, capped at 30% of the total requested budget
Costs associated with organizing workshops	Eligible	Eligible
Replacement research/teaching costs, e.g. buyout time, teaching assistants	Ineligible	Ineligible

Applicants' time	Ineligible	Ineligible
Indirect costs/estates costs	Ineligible	Ineligible
Equipment	Eligible	Ineligible
Scholarships	Ineligible	Ineligible
Conference attendance with presentations of project-related outcomes	Eligible, total travel costs for PIs and co-PIs and overseas conference travel, capped at 30% of the total requested budget	Ineligible
Tuition fees	Ineligible	Ineligible
PhD stipends	Ineligible	Ineligible
Honoraria	Ineligible	Ineligible
Hospitality and entertainment	Ineligible	Ineligible

Detailed list of ineligible expenses included in Annex A (page 7).

6. Application Submission

- 6.1. Each proposal must have one PI from SMU and one PI from U of T.
- 6.2. Applicants should submit **one joint application** to the [OVPI Application Portal](#) by deadline of **Friday 4 December 2026 (11:59am EDT, 11:59pm SGT)**.

The application must be uploaded as **two files only**:

- One single PDF document comprising Items 1 to 4 listed below.
- One Budget Excel file containing Item 5.

1. SMU-UofT Research Seed Fund Application Form
2. CV of U of T Lead Principal Investigator (PI), and any Co-PI (max 2 pages each)
3. CV of SMU Lead Principal Investigator (PI), and any Co-PI (max 2 pages each)
4. SMU PI only: Quotations for OOE items > SGD3,000 and all equipment requests
5. Budget Excel

No more than two files should be uploaded for each application.

- 6.3. Applicants are encouraged to submit their application **a few working days before** the grant call closing date and remain contactable after submission in case of administrative clarifications or additional information relating to the application are required.

6. Budget and Justification

- 6.1. Applications submitted to this grant call will be awarded as two separate grants: one awarded to the SMU PI by SMU, and one awarded to the U of T PI by U of T.
- 6.2. PIs should only utilise the funding awarded by their relevant institution, and utilisation of funding should not cross institutions.
- 6.3. The funding quantum is capped at SGD25,000 per project for SMU PI and CAD25,000 per project for U of T PI with a duration not exceeding 1 year.
- 6.4. This grant call cannot be used for the non-fundable items listed in Annex A.

Section C: Grant Evaluation

7. Evaluation Criteria and Process

- 7.1. All grant applications received will be evaluated based on the merit of the proposals, subject to a two-stage evaluation process.
- 7.2. Applications will undergo an independent review process at each institution in accordance with their respective review procedures. Following the completion of the independent reviews, representatives from SMU and U of T will convene a joint selection meeting to discuss the review outcomes and determine the projects recommended for funding.
- 7.3. The evaluation criteria are:
- 7.3.1. **Originality and Significance** – The Panel will consider the originality, ambition, and significance of the proposed research idea or question, including its potential to address an important and timely need, advance knowledge, and make a meaningful contribution to the field. (10 points)
- 7.3.2. **Implementation** – The Panel will assess the strength and rigour of the research design or implementation plan, the clarity of objectives and expected outputs, the suitability and feasibility of the proposed activities and timeline, and the likelihood of achieving the intended outcomes. (10 points)
- 7.3.3. **Potential impact and capacity for future collaboration/funding** – The Panel will consider how the project, if funded, may: 1) strengthen long-term academic collaboration between U of T and SMU 2) contribute high quality, peer-reviewed co-authored research papers for publication in top journals in the relevant field of research and/or high-quality policy-related papers; and/or 3) result in external joint funding proposals, identifying potential funders or schemes; and/or (10 points)

Section D: Grant Award and Project Commencement

8. Key Dates

- 8.1. **Grant Call Opens:** 9 October 2026
- 8.2. **Application deadline:** 4 December (11:59am EDT in Toronto / 11:59pm SGT in Singapore)
- 8.3. **Outcomes expected to be announced:** March 2027
- 8.4. **Project Commencement:** 1 April 2027
- 8.5. Projects awarded under the 2026 Joint SMU-UofT Grant Call will start on 1 April 2027, with a project duration capped at 12 months.

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Annex A
NON-FUNDABLE ITEMS

S/N	Item	Description and additional conditions
1.	Salaries of PI / Co-PIs/ Visiting Professors & Researchers/ Collaborators/ general administrative support staff	Not allowable. For SMU, this includes research ninths of PI and Co-PIs
2.	Teaching buy outs	Not allowable for the hiring of substitutes to perform the Investigators' teaching duties.
3.	Stipend top-up for existing post-graduate scholarship holders	Not allowable.
4.	Undergraduate stipend and tuition support	Not allowable.
5.	Costs related to general administration and management	Not allowable. This includes common office equipment, such as furniture and fittings, office software, photocopiers, scanners and office supplies.
6.	Costs of office or laboratory space	Not allowable. This includes renovation/outfitting costs, rent, depreciation of buildings and equipment, and related expenditures such as water, electricity, general waste disposal and building/facilities maintenance charges.
7.	Personal productivity tools & communication expenses	Not allowable, unless the use of mobile phones and other form of smart devices were indicated in the methodology for the research project.
8.	Entertainment	Not allowable.
9.	Refreshment	Not allowable, unless this is related to a hosted conference or workshop for the research project.
10.	Fines and penalties	Not allowable.
11.	Audit fees (internal and external audit) and Legal fees	Not allowable.
12.	Patent application	This includes patent application filing, maintenance and other related cost.
13.	Professional Membership Fees	Not allowable.
14.	Staff retreat and team-building activities	Not allowable.