

Geosolutions Leeds Research Project Call

2025 Round

Geosolutions Leeds is an interdisciplinary centre based at the University of Leeds. It is funded under the Climate Plan to refocus research towards the energy transition and deliver on net-zero goals.

Geosolutions Leeds brings together world-leading expertise in geology, engineering, and social science to deliver an integrated approach to energy research related to the subsurface.

As a strategic investment to grow Geosolutions Leeds and drive forward the refocusing of research, Geosolutions Leeds plans to fund up to 4 PDRAs for proposed research projects that align with its mission. Each post will last up to 2 years* and proposals for these projects are now being invited.

The scheme is a further development of Geosolutions Leeds funding activity, which currently supports 4 PDRAs in the broad domain of geothermal energy. The new scheme is designed to kick-start activity in other – i.e., non-geothermal energy – areas of the energy transition, thereby broadening the scope of future work. This scheme addresses the documented Key Performance Indicators for Geosolutions Leeds under the University Climate Plan.

A necessary condition for funding is that the PI will use the results of the research to apply for further external funds – for example, industry JIP, UKRI, EU or national academy funds (e.g. Royal Society, RAEng, etc).

In the new scheme, the objectives are to:

- Seed pilot projects designed to secure new externally funded research – e.g., UKRI, EU, JIPs, etc.;
- Support new research groupings across disciplines;
- Support Early Career Researchers – projects that can demonstrate that they promote opportunities for staff who consider themselves to be early career researchers will be looked upon favourably;
- Focus new activity of Geosolutions Leeds in areas not previously extensively supported. This might include fundamental or applied research in areas such as critical minerals, nuclear waste disposal, or engineering, or the underpinning social science and policy-related research needed to ensure a just energy transition;
- Continue to deliver a blend of geoscience, engineering and social science, building on the success of the approach used in the campus geothermal project and Geosolutions Leeds kick-start projects in 2020;

- Foster collaborative, inter- & multi-disciplinary links within SEE and beyond (e.g., Engineering, LUBS, LIDA, Geography, and other unrealised potential collaborative links);

Ideally, these positions would be supported by related PhD projects funded by new applications to relevant external bodies (e.g., for critical minerals, this would be the TARGET DTP; for disposal/storage, this would be the NWS RSO Bursary scheme) or by related undergraduate, MSc and MRes projects.

In this way, the investment from Geosolutions Leeds can be leveraged to maximum effect – delivering more trained professionals for the Energy Transition, publishing more papers, and generating more pilot data for further proposals.

** funding cannot extend beyond the current Geosolutions Leeds funding end date of 31st July 2027.*

Who can apply to the call

Applicants must be employed at the University of Leeds (in any Faculty) and need not have a permanent academic position to be PI/Co-I.

Applicants of an appropriate grade are able to cost themselves into the PDRA positions, but if they are not doing so, they must have an existing contract until the end of the proposed project.

Use of the funding must not exceed the end date of 31st July 2027 nor exceed the available funding on offer, and any use of the funding must not conflict with the terms of any other funding or internal regulations.

Any queries on the eligibility of applicants and use of funding can be discussed with the centre team via geosolutions@leeds.ac.uk.

Collaborators on the project may be both internal and external staff. However, staff and non-staff costs will only be covered for staff employed by the University of Leeds and non-staff costs related to the University of Leeds. Travel costs for external staff may be applied as part of the project, provided they are incurred within the University of Leeds, for example, booked through Key Travel for the external staff.

What we want to fund

We welcome applications from groups of academics working together with a maximum of 2 PDRAs to maximise impact. For example, we currently fund 2 complementary projects investigating the geothermal potential in the Leeds City region (social science and geoscience/engineering).

Similar pairings of projects will be considered, with the expectation that these projects would be inter-/multi-disciplinary and leverage the Geosolutions funding through applications to related PhD schemes, including but not limited to DTPs, DLAs and DFAs.

We encourage applications that will seek to strengthen and expand the Geosolutions community either through developing new relationships with existing members or through

bringing new researchers, disciplines or research fields into the centre, where these align with the aims of the funding.

Proposals that show the support of early career researchers, include match funding from other sources, or that maximise the seed funding from Geosolutions Leeds in other novel ways will all be looked upon favourably.

Projects that interest us

We welcome proposals that complement activity across the breadth of Geosolutions Leeds, outlined on our webpage: <https://geosolutions.leeds.ac.uk/>.

Funding on offer

The following funding will be offered for each PDRA, with up to two PDRAs being funded for each project to maximise impact:

- Maximum of 2 years of grade 7 postdoctoral research fellowship time – recruitment is expected to follow the University of Leeds [recruitment guidelines](#) and cannot extend beyond 31 July 2027.

Funding will also be considered for the following:

- University of Leeds staff time for supervision and leadership by the supervisory team on the project, the maximum amount that will be funded should not exceed £30k per PDRA;
- Consumables and IT costs – laboratory consumables and small items of equipment (costing up to £5k each), and IT costs such as specialist equipment, storage, computing costs etc.;
- Travel – travel, subsistence and conference fees;
- Facilities – directly incurred facilities costs that are specifically related to, and required for the project;
- Other justified costs, such as fieldwork costs, will be considered by the committee.

Requirements for successful applicants

Successful applicants are expected to become members of Geosolutions Leeds and contribute to the activities of the centre, including attending meetings and events, developing outputs and communicating research developed as part of centre activities, and contributing to furthering the centre's objectives.

Successful applicants will be expected to provide progress reports on the project to the Geosolutions Management Committee on a 6-monthly basis. The project teams must supply a short media article at the end of the first and second year of funding, to be posted on the Geosolutions Centre webpage, as well as any ongoing communications outputs that are relevant arising from the research.

Application procedure and Assessment process

Applications should be submitted via the Sharepoint form:
<https://forms.office.com/e/yPvhhYEKVs>

Applications will be assessed by the Geosolutions Leeds Management Committee. The panel reserves the right to award a revised funding offer and will be assessed to ensure value for money for the Geosolutions Leeds investment.

Key dates

Deadline for proposal submission: 3 pm 23 January 2025

Award announcement: Early February 2025

Project start expected: March-June 2025 (latest start date for 2 years funding - 1st August 2025)

Fixed project end date: 31st July 2027 – funding cannot be spent beyond this date.

Further information

For further information or to discuss the application process and funding offered, please contact:

| geosolutions@leeds.ac.uk