

Call Document: Ireland and Central America Joint Research Initiative



Irish Aid

An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade reserves the right to amend this call document

Table of Contents

1. Background and Overview
2. Purpose
3. Research Themes and Policy Alignment
4. Duration and Value of Awards
5. Who can apply?
6. Partner Universities in Central America
7. Proposal submission
8. Evaluation of Proposals
9. Eligible Costs
10. Reporting

Annex 1: Proposal Template

1. Background

Ireland's [Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) is intended to intensify Irish relations with Central America, with a view to delivering enhanced political and economic engagement with six countries in the region: Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Belize, and Nicaragua.

A key part of the strategy envisioned the establishment of small, added-value bilateral development cooperation initiatives. As such, in August 2024, the Irish Government approved a Development Cooperation Programme for the region, worth approximately €2.25 million per annum, supporting climate change adaptation, gender equality, and human rights initiatives in the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Separately, a Central America Fellows Programme has also been established, which, to date, has seen 10 students from the region awarded scholarships to study master's programmes in Ireland.

With these initiatives now underway, the Irish Embassy to Mexico, through its Office for Central America, seeks to support the capacity of Irish and Central American think tanks and academic institutions to forge partnerships and engage in joint research initiatives, with a view to creating new or deepening existing academic links.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this initiative is threefold:

- To create new or enhance existing links between Irish and Central American academic institutions and think tanks;
- To identify new ways of working and cooperation between Irish and Central American universities;
- To support joint research on development challenges in Central America, with a view to informing policy development.

3. Research themes and Policy Alignment

[Global Ireland](#), *Ireland's Global Footprint to 2025* and *Ireland's Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean to 2025* both highlight the need for increased response to humanitarian and development challenges in Central America. Aligned with this, the LAC Strategy commits Ireland to identifying opportunities to support local communities and civil society in addressing a number of issues, including human rights, migration, food security and nutrition.

[A Better World](#): *Ireland's Policy for International Development* sets out central policy priorities: gender equality, climate action, strengthening governance and the reduction of humanitarian need. Ireland's climate finance forms part of Ireland's contribution to the implementation of the Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030, as we seek to deepen our partnerships towards an effective and concerted response to the global climate crisis.

To develop a better understanding of regional research priorities, Embassy Mexico's Office for Central America met with the Central American Higher University Council (*Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano* - CSUCA). Following that meeting and engagement with a number of Irish and Central American universities, the following themes were selected for this initiative, each of which aligns with Ireland's development strategy for the region:

- **Climate change and environmental management;**
- **Food security and nutrition;**
- **Social inclusion and intercultural studies.**

4. Duration and Value of Awards

Project awards are subject to a maximum grant of €50,000 per annum for two years.

Successful grantees will receive payments in instalments, with 25% payable in Q4, 2025, 50% payable in 2026, and the remaining 25% payable in Q1, 2027.

Projects should include both Desk and Field-Based research and **must** include active research collaboration with Central American Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

Successful grantees will be subject to financial due-diligence checks, which will be advised as part of the conclusion of a Grant-Aid Agreement.

5. Who can apply?

Partnership and collaboration are at the heart of this initiative, which aims, in as far as possible, to foster collaborative and equitable partnerships between researchers/HEIs in Ireland and those in Central American countries, and to fully recognise the capacity and knowledge that each can contribute.

- Only applications from an [eligible higher education institution \(HEI\) or research-performing organisation \(RPO\) in Ireland](#) will be accepted;
- While lead applicants must hold a doctoral degree, the involvement of postgraduate scholars is encouraged;
- Applicants must, on the call deadline, hold a contract of sufficient duration with their eligible HEI or RPO to carry out the proposed research from the project start date until the project end date;
- Applicants must have identified a research partner in Central America, and developed a clear and joint research plan;

6. Partner Universities in Central America

Partner universities may include HEIs in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize.

Embassy Mexico's Office for Central America has already made contact with the following universities in Costa Rica and Guatemala, each of which expressed their eagerness to participate:

Guatemala:

- Universidad de San Carlos;
- Universidad Rafael Landívar.

Costa Rica:

- Universidad de Costa Rica;
- Universidad Nacional.

On request, the Office for Central America can provide contact details for these universities.

7. Proposal submission

Proposals must be submitted to mexicoembassy@dfa.ie **on or before 30 June 2025**.

Please refer to the research proposal form at Annex 1.

An application will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered for funding if:

- it has not been submitted by the stated deadline;
- it has not been endorsed by the applicant's Higher Education Institution by the stated deadline;
- **it does not show a clear plan for collaboration with and the involvement of a Central American research partner;**
- it is incomplete or exceeds the word limit;
- it is not within the remit of the scheme;
- it includes additional materials other than those requested;
- it includes materials in a format other than those requested;
- it is in a language other than English, Irish, or Spanish;
- the applicant does not meet the relevant eligibility criteria for the scheme;
- any section of it has been plagiarised;
- any information supplied is false, misleading or unverifiable with appropriate documentation;
- canvassing on behalf of applicants occurs.

8. Evaluation of Proposals

Only completed applications received on or before the closing date specified in the call for proposals will be evaluated for funding. Each application will be examined initially to ensure that it is complete and that it contains adequate information to properly evaluate the research proposal.

A panel of experts established by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will evaluate eligible proposals. This process will be complete **by 31 July 2025**, with successful candidates notified within one week of this date. All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure objectivity, fairness, quality and confidentiality.

Eligible proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Category	Marks
Research-related problem the project seeks to address:	20%
The added value that collaboration between Irish Universities and CEI institutes will contribute	5%
Responds to priority challenges in Central America	20%
Research design and methodology A specific analysis of the expected outcomes of the collaboration	15%
Proposed modalities for cooperation between IE and CA HEI	15%
Source and Archives	5%
Results-based budget	20%

9. Eligible Costs

Eligible costs are defined as **direct** or **indirect costs** incurred in carrying out the research project. They must fulfil the following criteria:

- They must be **actual**;
- They must be **reasonable** and **wholly necessary** for the project;
- They must be incurred **during the lifetime** of the project;
- They must be **recorded** in the accounts for the project, which must be maintained during the lifetime of the project and reported on as required by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade;
- They must be **incurred solely to advance the research project**.

The eligible **cost categories** are:

- Staff Costs (see note below);
- Consumables (laboratory supplies, books and specialist publications);

- Travel and Subsistence with a view to supporting fieldwork, face to face meetings and/or conferences to facilitate knowledge sharing;
- Sub-contracts/external assistance;
- Publications;
- Agreed overheads;

Each partner requesting funds must submit a results based budget.

Staff Costs

While the programme **will** support costs associated with existing permanent staff and researchers within both Irish and Central American HEIs/RPOs, the primary goal of this initiative is to encourage and facilitate joint research and knowledge sharing.

Grantees may apply to Embassy Mexico to transfer between cost headings during the grant term. All budget reallocations will be subject to approval.

No costs other than eligible costs will be allowed. **Non-eligible costs** include the following:

- any interest, or return on capital employed;
- provisions for possible future losses or charges;
- interest owed;
- provisions for doubtful debts;
- resources made available to a Grantee free of charge;
- unnecessary or ill-considered expenses;
- marketing, sales and distribution costs for products and services.

10. Reporting

General

The partner should have a documented financial policy which reflects clear procedures for expenditure and accounting. The partner should also have appropriate policies and/or procedures in place regarding cash flow and the maintenance of a reserve, procurement, audit, payroll, travel and subsistence payments. Policies and procedures should be available to support practice at the relevant operational level.

The partner should have in place a framework that defines its approach to fraud/financial mismanagement, including in respect of any sub-grantees. There should be clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities, including authority to approve expenditure, with respect to financial management.

Where a partner will be sub-granting, managers should be confident that the financial management controls operated by the partner are appropriately structured

Reporting, including Financial Reporting

Reports shall be provided to DFA on the basis outlined by any agreed contract with specific reference to results and indicators outlined therein.

However, as a basic requirement, an annual narrative and financial report should be submitted not later than 3 months after the end of the Project.

Additional progress reports may be requested in writing by DFA, and the partner shall furnish to DFA all such information and documentary evidence as DFA may from time to time reasonably require in relation to the Project. A financial statement must accompany all reports.

Annex 1 – Proposal Template

1. **Research-related problem** (300 words).
2. **Added Value arising from collaboration between IE and CA HEI/RPOs** (300 words).
3. **How will the research inform/assist the response to priority national/regional challenges?** (500 words).
4. **Research Design, Methodology, and expected outcomes** (600 words).
5. **Proposed modalities for cooperation between IE and CA HEIs/RPOs** (400 words).
6. **Sources and archives** (100 words).
7. **Results based budget** (Excel Format).