

## SUSTAINABILITY FUND

### PROCEDURE GREEN SPARK GRANT & CAMPUS SUSTAINABILITY GRANT 2024-2025

This document outlines the aim, scope and application procedure for the two grants under the current overarching Sustainability Fund.

The Sustainability Fund aims to promote green initiatives and living labs on campus through [transdisciplinary](#) collaboration. The fund itself is an initiative of the Sustainability Office and was established to contribute to the university's ambition to become a more integrated institution where research, education and operations collaborate effectively towards common goals. Such as, transitioning towards becoming a socially and environmentally sustainable institution.

Sustainability Fund	
The <b>Green Spark Grant</b> aims to help realize practical sustainability initiatives on the university campus. Associated with the Green Office, this grant hopes to promote smaller scale sustainability ideas and initiatives from members of the UU community. Amounts of up to €5,000 can be awarded.	The <b>Campus Sustainability Grant</b> aims to encourage the establishment and growth of <a href="#">living labs</a> on the university campus. These labs are intended for sustainability research and experiments that contribute to solving sustainability challenges of the university ( <a href="#">UU Strategic Plan 2025</a> ). All labs must be user-oriented and take place in a real-life environment thus enriching campus and providing a space for learning through co-creation. Amounts of up to €50,000 can be awarded.

As a knowledge institution, the university has the opportunity to provide space for (on-site) learning, experimentation and co-creation towards a sustainable university. The university grounds and operations offer a unique place to facilitate this. To accelerate sustainability ambitions, the university wants to strengthen connections between business operations, research, education and community partners.

*Please note:* both grants have different application and assessment criteria, please read through the document carefully. We hope to ensure a fair and transparent application process and remain available to answer any questions you may have. Good luck!

## Green Spark Grant

The Green Spark Grant was created to support small-scale sustainability initiatives and activities within the university that directly contribute to environmental and social sustainability at Utrecht University. New ideas and innovative projects by staff or students who want to tackle global sustainability challenges on a local level are encouraged. All students and employees of Utrecht University can apply provided the plans contribute directly to the university's sustainability goals.

The grant is intended to enable the implementation of activities and the realization of the initiatives. Consider material funding, room hire, food/drink, salary costs, etc. The maximum amount to be disbursed for this grant is €5,000 per application.

### Criteria

- Applicants are students and/or employees of Utrecht University.
- The grant is primarily intended to finance the costs incurred by students and/or staff in carrying out the project.
- The project contributes directly to environmental and/or social sustainability of Utrecht University, in line with the university's sustainability goals. Examples of goals are becoming equitable CO2 neutral and zero waste by 2030, restoring and enhancing local biodiversity and making sustainability accessible to all.
- The project will be carried out and implemented within the time frame of one year and will be reviewed at mid-term and afterwards through a progress report and impact summary.

### *Example (within scope)*

Students lack a non-animal milk product in the university's coffee machines. The Green Office supports students by finding the right stakeholders within the university and helps students get this more sustainable and animal-friendly option implemented in the vending machines. In doing so, the Sustainability Spark Grant undercuts the costs incurred, e.g. for researching different options and conducting a taste test.

### Application Procedure Green Spark Grant

A sustainability initiative or activity can be submitted by any student or employee of Utrecht University to the Green Office UU. The Green Office will check with the initiators what the possibilities are and

what stakeholders inside or outside the university can contribute to the realization of the initiative or activity. To assess an application, at least the following five questions must be answered:

- What is your initiative or activity?
- What is the goal of your initiative or activity?
- What will it bring to the sustainability of the university?
- What is your plan of action to achieve your goal?
- What do you need to realize your plan of action?

### Submission and Contact

Applications in both Dutch and English will be accepted. There is no deadline and applications for the Green Spark Grant will remain open and be accepted as long as funds remain available. Please submit your application in Word format via email to [sustainabilityfund@uu.nl](mailto:sustainabilityfund@uu.nl), any questions you have can also be sent to the above-mentioned email.

### Campus Sustainability Grant

The Campus Sustainability Grant aims to fund the development of campus living labs that work towards enhancing sustainable development at the university grounds. Members from all disciplines are invited to apply, given that the funds are used to initiate a campus living lab or scale up an existing one. The living lab project should result in an output report and/or a presentation. There are two categories: **small (€3,000-€10,000) and large projects (€10,000-€50,000)**. While the criteria for all applications regardless of the amount is the same, projects of a larger scope will also be asked to pitch their application to the Living Lab Board.

The grant is primarily intended for resources needed to develop a living lab. This primarily includes but is not limited to staff costs, materials for the living lab and acquiring expertise or information from external stakeholders. The maximum amount to be disbursed for this grant is €50,000 per application.

After the grant is awarded, the UULabs team remains available to assist in the development of the living lab if required.

### Criteria

- Contains research and experiments, in the form of a living lab that enhances sustainability on campus.

- The living lab contributes to the environmental and social sustainable development of Utrecht University, in line with the [university's sustainability goals](#), such as; CO2-neutral and zero waste by 2030 and restoring and enhancing local biodiversity.
- The living lab must be on campus, realized in two years or less, is replicable in case of proven innovation and/or usefulness, scalable and has measurable impact.
- One follows the living lab methodology in setting up the living lab. This means the project:
  - is transdisciplinary in nature and the participation of university stakeholders (operations, research and education) is required;
  - provides space for experimentation and learning in a real-life setting;
  - is user-oriented and involves co-creating with different stakeholders.
- It is considered a plus if the project:
  - has a clear applied research question and tests new technologies for sustainability innovation;
  - connects with the local community;
  - has an educational component, giving students the opportunity to co-learn/research in the living lab.

**Fictitious example (within scope):**

The university has a sorting facility for waste, it is being transformed into a materials center. The living lab project linked to this transition focuses on how materials can be separated effectively, making them suitable for reuse. In this project, a sorting tool that can quickly, and effectively separate construction waste is tested and experimented upon. In this living lab, students, researchers and operational staff from different disciplines (ICT/AI, Circular Economy, Energy & Materials) are working together on this issue.

**Fictitious example (out of scope):**

A group of students and staff want to set up a tree fund - an initiative that aims to plant a tree for every graduating class in the Utrecht region. Considering that this does not involve research, experimentation nor is transdisciplinary, thus not including any components of a living lab – it falls outside the scope of this fund.

**Application Procedure Campus Sustainability Grant***Step 1: Living Lab idea*

It starts with a living lab idea. This idea can originate from different corners in the university. We encourage transdisciplinary and creative ideas. If desired, the UULabs team remains available to brainstorm together and provide guidance on the application.

*Step 2: Explore opportunities*

Here we move from idea to initiation. The possibilities of realizing the living lab with or without UULabs are explored. If there is not enough financial support available from operations or faculties, one can apply for the Campus Sustainability Grant.

*Step 3: Fund application*

Applications are reviewed and awarded quarterly. If the funds are exhausted for that year, the application process is closed. Applications are made by completing an application form (Appendix A). For small applications (up to €10,000), this is sufficient. Larger applications (€10,000-€50,000) will also be assessed through a pitch they make to the Living Lab Board.

*Step 4: Application assessment*

The Living Lab Board assesses the applications and will give positive or negative advice. In some cases, the board will be inclined to grant the application, with conditions to apply their feedback first.

*Step 5: Award or rejection of scholarship*

Applications may be accepted either in their entirety or on a conditional basis, provided that comments are reviewed, and the required adjustments are made. If awarded the grant, UULabs will play a facilitating role throughout the process and help find and involve the right people from business operations, education and research. In the event of a rejection, the applicant is free to apply again with a refined proposal. Changes in the proposal are to be highlighted for ease of review.

----- *if awarded the grant* -----

*Step 6. Progress Report*

During the living lab project (maximum two years), producing a progress report every 6 months is a requirement for the grant recipient. Appendix 3 provides the format for such a progress report. The report is shared with the board members. They can then provide feedback to the scholarship recipient. In case of misuse, board members may make a recommendation to the head of the Sustainability Office and/or the V&C director to stop the grant award and return unspent funds.

*Step 7. End of term scholarship*

## I. Implementation

If the experiments in the living lab have proven successful and feasible to implement on a larger scale, UULabs will work with the living lab participants and the Sustainability Office towards university-broad implementation.

## II. Impact summary

In all cases, including implementation or extension, an impact summary should be written by the living lab owners.

### **Submission and Contact**

Applications in both Dutch and English will be accepted. For the Campus Sustainability Grant please refer to the submission timeline. The deadline for the first round of applications closes on August 30. These must be submitted in Word format with a maximum word count of 1500 words.

Kindly submit your application via email to [sustainabilityfund@uu.nl](mailto:sustainabilityfund@uu.nl).

Every other Monday from 14:00 to 16:00 at the Green Office, the UULabs team will be hosting open office hours. Feel free to walk in if you would like some help brainstorming ideas or if you need advice on the application process. No appointment is needed. If you cannot make it to those dates, please get in touch with us.

For any other questions about the Sustainability Fund please email: [sustainabilityfund@uu.nl](mailto:sustainabilityfund@uu.nl).

### **Appendix**

- Application form(s)
- Progress report