UKRI-MRC Mid-Range Equipment Funding MRC Equip

Application deadline

12-January-2023, 16:00

Summary

The MRC EQUIP 2023/24 opportunity will fund mid-range equipment at a value of over £100k (inc. VAT), with an MRC contribution of between £100k and £800k, to enhance the capability of the UK research base in biomedical research within MRC's remit.

This document provides essential information to assist applicants in the preparation of applications.

Checklist

Applicants should read all the opportunity guidance and the separate MRC Equip 2023/24 pre-submission checklist carefully, and ensure their submissions are compliant with the requirements. Failure to comply with the guidance will result in the application being rejected without review.

Scope

- The majority of the user base for the equipment will be undertaking research in areas within UKRI-MRC remit and this is clearly evidenced in the Case for Support.

- If the expected user-base of the equipment significantly spans areas outside UKRI-MRC remit, it is expected that there will be proportional financial support from the Research Organisation or other sources.

- Applications may be for new capability or replacement equipment for existing capability. In the latter case, applicants are encouraged to outline any additional new capacity or capability provided by the replacement.

- The application must be for capital equipment and must not be a technology or software development project.

- Applications must consist of a single piece of capital equipment, although this can include equipment that requires assembly or involves several components (not necessarily physically linked) provided they constitute a single technology platform.

- It is expected that awards would be made in Q1 2023/24. Successful applicants must complete their spending by 31 March 2024; this deadline cannot be extended. If you are concerned that your spending cannot be completed in this timeframe, please contact CA@mrc.ukri.org to discuss before submitting an application.

- The application presents evidence that the equipment would have appropriate and ongoing professional/technical support in the host institution and includes plans for training and support of users.

- The application clearly presents how the equipment's capacity and capability will be used optimally to deliver maximum value for money. This can include evidence of demand (including evidence for a lack of other provision within the RO or locally) or procedures to make the equipment available to other users through equipment-sharing activities.

Finance

- Only costs under the 'Directly Incurred Equipment' heading are permitted. The application must not request costs for staff or other ineligible costs.

- The value of requested equipment must be **over £100k including VAT, if applicable**. Equipment should exceed this threshold and equipment prices should be based on standard HEI discounted prices not the list price.

- The maximum MRC contribution that can be requested is £800k (excepting MRC intramural institutes, where the maximum can be £800k+VAT), although the total item cost may be higher, with the remainder being met by institutional or partner contributions..

- The funding requested on the Je-S application form (under the 'Directly Incurred Equipment' heading) should be the costs being sought from UKRI-MRC, net of any discounts and contributions from elsewhere (value in Column F of the Justification of Resources template). **Costs should be requested at 100%fEC.**

- The values in the Justification of Resources must match the quotes provided.

- The application should include at least 3 recent equipment quotes (i.e., dated within the last 6 months at the time of the opportunity closing date). Alternatively, the cover letter must clearly outline why this is not the case. All quotes must be provided in GBP. When quotes are not provided in GBP, the conversion rate used at the time of submission must be clearly stated in the Justification of Resources.

- You must outline in the Justification of Resources how you will ensure that the equipment can be delivered by 31st March 2024, assuming a 1st July award date.

- Details of funding offered, in-kind support, and any other collaborative activities to be conducted in support of the research, should be provided in the Case for Support.

Documentation

- The application must be submitted as a single Je-S form. This applies even if it involves two or more collaborating organisations; joint applications are not permitted.

- A list of all required documents is provided in this document.

Technician Commitment and technical staff as applicants

- As the first funder to sign the Technician Commitment, UKRI recognises the value and contribution of technical expertise to the UK research workforce. To reflect this, MRC welcomes applications from eligible facility staff as either principal investigators or co-investigators.

General information

1. This opportunity will fund mid-range equipment at a value of over £100k (inc. VAT if payable), with an MRC contribution of between £100k and £800k, to enhance the capability of the UK research base in areas of science in UKRI-MRC's remit. For further detail please also refer to the opportunity text and other associated opportunity documents.

Financial information

2. Details of eligible and ineligible costs are provided below. All costs must be fully described and justified in the Justification of Resources (see Justification of Resources and the Cost summary table).

Eligible costs

3. The MRC Equip opportunity will ONLY allow costs to be requested under the 'Directly Incurred Equipment' heading.

4. Costs such as initial installation or service maintenance contracts can also be included if they are one-off costs and part of the manufacturer's offer. Service maintenance contracts up to 5 years in duration may be included but the contract cost must be paid by the 31 March 2024. Should the expected length of the contract exceed 5 years in duration, then the cost included in the application should be reduced on a pro-rata basis so as to fit within the conditions as stated.

5. The additional costs will need to be supported through RO or partner contributions.

6. Refurbishment or installation costs may be eligible under the scheme providing these are an absolute requirement for the proper functioning of the equipment (e.g., a ventilation system or cold room). These costs must be itemised in the application and fully justified. However, you should note that contributions from the RO to such costs can be an important part of the assessment of value for money.

Ineligible costs

7. This opportunity does not support costs to undertake research or the development of new technologies or software packages.

8. Other maintenance costs apart from the costs referred to in paragraphs 5 and 6 are not eligible.

9. Support for running costs for usage of the equipment such as consumables, and longer-term estate charges. They should be provided as host institution contribution(s) or sought on a project basis through research grant applications.

10. **Staff costs** – commitments to staff posts for the running and maintenance of the equipment beyond the lifetime of the grant, as well as for the training of users (where applicable), should be provided in the form of host institution contribution(s).

11. Depreciation costs.

12. Estate and indirect costs.

13. Requests for funding for equipment that is scheduled for market release after the opportunity closing date.

Financial contributions from the institution or external sources

14. Contributions from the host institution(s) and/or external sources are strongly welcomed but are not mandatory. Institutional commitments directed towards staff posts supporting the operation and maintenance of the equipment, as well as training of users, are encouraged, as UKRI-MRC is unable to support them through this opportunity. Contributions from external sources can be in-kind (such as commitments to staff posts for the running and maintenance of the equipment, or the training of users) and/or financial (such as partial financing of the equipment).

15. Any financial and/or in-kind contributions must be secured at the time of application. For each contribution a letter of support from the contributing party should be attached to the application, detailing the type of support to be provided. Where contributions are coming from existing awards from other funder(s), a statement from the funder agreeing to the use of funds in this way must be provided. Applications that are dependent on the outcome of requests to other funders to secure the required funding will be rejected.

Application procedure

16. Applications may involve a single institution or two or more acting in collaboration. However, applications involving two or more collaborating

organisations must be submitted as one, using a single Je-S form. Awards will be made to the submitting research organisation, which will subsequently own the equipment. Applications that involve investigators from different institutions that are not submitted on a single form will be rejected.

17. As an individual you can only lead on one submitted application. As principal investigator (PI) on one proposal you can still be member of a consortium on a different application as long as you do not take a leading role as PI. However, as such applications will be in direct competition this is not recommended unless the applications are in very different areas. An institution may submit more than one application, but multiple applications from an institution for similar equipment are strongly discouraged. Applicants are advised to consult within their institution to identify mid-range equipment that is of strategic interest across departments, as applications are expected to provide evidence of the wider context of the institutional environment.

18. Unsolicited resubmissions of proposals that have previously been considered by any other funder are not permitted, unless they have been rejected by the funder as out-of remit. If this is the case, please quote the previous grant reference in the 'Related Proposals' section and explain this in your cover letter. Resubmissions from the first round of MRC Equip are permitted, if they have substantial changes to improve the case, but they will count towards the cap on the number of proposals from each research organisation.

Required documents

In addition to the completed Je-S pro-forma, the application should include the following attachments:

Attachment	Max. A4 page length	Guidance
Application Cover Letter (mandatory)	None	If 3 quotes for the equipment requested could not be included, applicants should give clear reasons in the Application Cover Letter.
Case for support (mandatory)	8 pages	See guidance below

Justification of resources (mandatory)	4 pages, including tables	Applicants should also consider the information provided for completing this section on the JeS System Help pages. (see -Standard Proposals> Case for Support and Attachments) **Failure to address all aspects in full may result in the application being rejected.**
Data management plan (mandatory)	3 pages	Please use the MRC data management plan template Applicants should explain how data from the new instrument will be captured, managed, and made available. The data management plan should complement the Case for Support, addressing the challenges involved in data capture and maintenance and detailing how the necessary resource and skills to support data management will be made available. **The page limit is a maximum, and the data management plan can be shorter where data management requirements are simpler.**
Applicant CVs (mandatory)	2 pages each	Required for all named applicants and named research staff only. CVs for key technical staff can be included where appropriate although they are not mandatory, except where they are acting as PI or CoI. You may use the CV to outline any gaps in your career, for example career breaks, parental leave or due to the pandemic should you wish (see appendix). **All CVs should be collated and uploaded as a single PDF**.

| Applicant publications | 1 page each | Required for all named applicants and named research staff only. Publications for key technical staff can be included where appropriate although they are not mandatory, except where they are acting as PI or CoI.

All publications should be collated and uploaded as a single PDF. |
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| Letters of support for institutional support **and** project partners (mandatory) | None | A letter of support is **required from the institution and each external project partner** providing a contribution, this includes financial and/or in-kind. This must clearly state the contribution value and any conditions. Conditions cannot be contrary to UKRI grant Terms and Conditions.

All letters should be on headed paper, dated within six months of the date of submission of the application and have the signature of the named contact in the partnering organisation. **All letters of support should be collated into a single PDF before uploading**. |

Equipment quotations (see guidance)	None	Three quotations should be provided. If it is not possible to obtain three quotations, **applicants must explain why in the cover letter** and will need to upload blank documents to satisfy the Je-S validation requirement.

Additional letters of support (optional)		A **maximum of 5 additional relevant letters** from scientific and other collaborators may also be attached. For example, this would include expressions of interest from the wider user community. **All letters of support should be collated into a single PDF before uploading**.
Business case (blank document)	1 page	A business case is not required but applications over the OJEU threshold (£138,000 including VAT) will need to upload a blank document to satisfy the Je-S validation requirement.

Case for Support

Applicants MUST use the following Case for Support headings.

Part 1 – Equipment sustainability and institutional environment

Equipment summary

Please state the equipment type and the brand name and model of the preferred option.

Case for support for proposed equipment

Briefly describe the rationale for the equipment chosen and the MRC-relevant research benefits that will be gained from it.

Institutional environment and contribution to the wider research infrastructure

Including the following aspects:

- Summary of existing facilities in the institution(s), including details of related/ complementary equipment (existing or where confirmation of purchase is provided) and technical support.

- Summary of existing facilities beyond the institution, including identification of similar instruments overseas or in industry, outlining reasons why they cannot be utilised for the intended research.

- Summary of how the proposed equipment improve or complement these existing facilities in the short and long term.

- Summary of supporting physical environment, including housing and laboratory space.

- If computing equipment is requested alongside instrumentation, why there is a need for enhanced data analysis/management with the associated purchase of the data-generating platform.

- Summary of specific long-term technical support which will be available to support the requested equipment.

Capability to deliver

Please outline any track record the applicant team has of managing multi-user capital equipment capabilities. Provide evidence of the capacity to deliver excellent research Where applicants do not have prior experience, they should be able to clearly demonstrate their potential relevant to these points.

Management plans and Usage – **Please ensure to give sufficient detail to this section (anticipated minimum of two pages).**

With reference to the Usage table in the Justification of resources, please indicate how the equipment will be used and by whom, and how it will be made available to internal and external users (where appropriate). Please give details of the access and user support plans. Add details of how the equipment will contribute to training activities.

Please describe management plans for the requested equipment. Please include clear and specific plans for maintenance and long-term support of the equipment. Please also provide details of financial/cost recovery plans to support the longer-term financial sustainability of the investment.

Support for Research Technical Professionals

Research Technical Professionals are often key to effective management and delivery of research equipment investments. Outline arrangements for professional development of these technical staff generally, including appropriate plans to ensure support and career development for staff directly involved in managing and supporting the requested equipment.

Please refer to the [UK Research and Innovation statement of expectations for technology/skills specialists](#) .

Contributions from host institutions, external project partner(s) or funders

Provide details of funding offered, in-kind support, and any other collaborative activities to be conducted in support of the research, where applicable. Host institution contributions can include contribution towards the equipment, its local

environment, training, services costs, and staff time to run and maintain the equipment.

Part 2 – Proposed research and wider benefits

Detailed plan of research

This should include a description of the projects that will be supported by the equipment with sufficient experimental detail to allow the Panel to assess the quality of the science, including preliminary results where possible. Consideration should be given to any ethical and societal issues relating to research using the new instrumentation.

Relevance to MRC priorities

State any relevance to [MRC's delivery plan](#) and [UKRI-MRC strategic priorities](#).

Environmental sustainability

Please outline how your proposal will contribute to UKRI's ambitions to support the UK's transition to net zero. This can include aspects such as energy efficiency of the equipment, reduced consumable usage, provision of more environmentally-friendly housing or use of green energy. This may also include measures such as strategies to mitigate the emissions of high-impact equipment through management of the energy consumption or reducing the impact in other areas such as through remote access or use of consumables. Where the manufacture of the equipment has a high environmental impact you should consider sharing between departments and organisations and ensure that the machine is used at its full practical capacity. You can also use this section to outline how the equipment will tie into the broader environmental strategy of your research organisation, however you must ensure to specifically address this specific equipment. . **Please note that environmental sustainability will be one of the assessment criteria** and applicants must show that they have provided due consideration to a move towards lower impact solutions and that the choice of equipment and the proposed management plans will aim to minimize the environmental impact of the equipment.

Post award

- UKRI-MRC will decide the final funding value of each grant. This decision is final.

- Following the decision, successful applicants must seek value for money in their choice of equipment, through competitive tender where appropriate. Applicants whose external support takes the form of a supplier's discount are reminded that there may be a procurement risk in seeking discounts from a specific supplier prior to a full tendering process. Where applicable, they are

advised to discuss the management of any such risk with their institution procurement staff before submitting the bid.

- There can be no purchase of equipment prior to a grant being formally announced and the offer letter being received, even if this is at the applicant's own financial risk. This will result in withdrawal of the grant. Expenditure may be incurred prior to the start of the grant and be subsequently charged to the grant, provided that it does not precede the date of the offer letter.

- Managing VAT exceptions on equipment is the responsibility of the Research Organisation.

- Applicants and institutions are reminded that it is their responsibility to comply with all relevant national and EU legislation, and the institution's own financial policy and procedures regarding the procurement of equipment. Accepted procurement best practice in the higher education sector must be observed. For all equipment and services where the contract value is greater than £25,000, professionally qualified procurement staff must be consulted before the procurement process begins and applicants are advised to consult with their local purchasing office.

- Progress on procurement will be monitored and you will be required to provide MRC with a status update on procurement progress for each item specified, committed value, forecast and actual expenditure incurred. If evidence of suitable progress in procurement to meet the spending deadline is not provided the capital offer will be withdrawn and the funding allocated elsewhere.

- Successful awardees will be required to engage with our Evaluation team who will be conducting an evaluation of the impact of this funding opportunity, and to provide information as required, such as number of users and outputs and publications.

- A sample of successful applications may be audited.

Useful links

Je-S Login | Je-S Helpdesk

Contact information

Please provide as much information as possible in your email to ensure a rapid response.

For opportunity-specific queries please email: CA@mrc.ukri.org

For Je-S system queries please email: jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org

How we will assess your application

Applications will be assessed by a multidisciplinary panel of experts covering scientific, managerial, technical and user aspects of equipment provision and management. MRC staff will also comment on the relevance of the proposals to MRC strategy. External reviews will not be sought, except exceptionally where specific expertise is required.

The following assessment criteria (not listed in order of priority) will apply. Please ensure that you address all criteria.

Scientific quality and impact of the investment

This includes:

- The quality and impact of the research enabled by the equipment

- The benefit to or involvement of a wider user community

- A clear demonstration of the need relative to facilities that are already available, both at their organisation and externally

- The contribution of the equipment to the infrastructure of the Research Organisation and that of the UK, and the benefit to the wider community. ▪ The strategic relevance to MRC.

Arrangements for the management and support of the equipment

This includes:

- The capability of the team to deliver excellent research and manage the facilities. A track record in managing facilities is strongly encouraged. Where applicants do not have prior experience, they should be able to demonstrate their potential.

- Plans in place to manage to the equipment and to provide access to other users.

- Provision for staff development, training and sustainability for staff employed to operate and manage the equipment, including the professional development of technical and support staff will be part of the assessment by the panel and will inform the final score.

Value for money

This includes the credibility of the financial and management proposals. Contributions from the host institution or institutions and other external sources are welcome but not mandatory. This will also take into account whether the equipment will be used at

its optimal capacity and capability. The proportion of the proposed research that is under MRC remit will also be considered. Where a substantial proportion will be outside MRC remit, financial contributions from other sources are strongly encouraged.

Environmental sustainability

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that the choice of equipment and the proposed management plans will aim to minimize the environmental impact of the equipment.

Portfolio balance

Consideration will also be given to the balance of the portfolio of funding recommendations made by the Panel, including balance across disciplines, organisations, the existing landscape and strategic drivers. UKRI-MRC will seek recommendations from the panel on portfolio balance.

Appendix CVs.

CVs should be a maximum of two pages.

The CV should cover:

- ✦ employment history – description of your current post and the sources of funding for this post (including dates); list and description of previous posts (including dates); educational qualifications (including dates)
- ✦ whether you are clinically qualified or clinically active.

The CV should only include information relevant to the application. Unnecessary personal data (for example home address, date of birth, personal phone numbers and emails) should NOT be included.

In the CV applicants can make clear any substantive periods of absence from research or career or research disruption resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CV is your opportunity to explain any breaks in employment or publication record, for example as a result of a career break or parental leave.

You may also use it to highlight how the COVID-19 pandemic has specifically affected the individuals involved in the application. We will assume all researchers have experienced general disruption.

Further details on the nature of the absence or COVID-19 disruption, what mitigations have been possible and how it has affected track record, productivity and career progression may be provided if desired. For example:

- ✦ illness or shielding either for applicants or their families
- ✦ caring responsibilities
- ✦ restricted access to facilities and normal work environment
- ✦ clinical responsibilities
- ✦ impact on research and the production of preliminary data, development of collaborations or methodological or technique training and experience ✦ impact on publications or other outputs, including markers of esteem. Information provided will be used only to make appropriate adjustments when assessing an individual's track record, productivity and career progression.

MRC is committed to eliminating unjustified discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. Please see our **equality and diversity webpage**.