



Research
England

Funding Application Guidance

12 June 2023

Research Capacity Building: Expanding Excellence in England (E3) Fund

Full Bid Stage

Round Two: AY 2024-29

Guidance for applicants



Full Bids should be emailed to Research England by
noon on 15 September 2023.



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To	PVCR and Heads of Research (or equivalent)
Of interest to those responsible for	Senior management, Research, Finance, Heads of Department in higher education providers
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Executive Summary

Purpose

1. This document details the policies, objectives, and methods for the allocation of up to £180m to expand excellent research through a second round of the Expanding Excellence in England (E3) fund. This fund is intended to support the strategic growth of excellent research units and departments in Higher Education Providers (HEPs) across England. The document provides further information and guidance for those bids shortlisted at the earlier Expression of Interest (EOI) round.

Context

2. Following the Independent Assessment Panel's recommendations at the Expression of Interest Stage, institutions have been informed where they have been shortlisted to proceed to Full Bid stage. This shortlist is expected to result in a success rate of approximately 50% for institutions invited to submit to the Full Bid stage.
3. Please refer to the [EOI guidance document](#) for more background and context to the E3 fund.

Key Points

4. The E3 fund aims to support the strategic growth of excellent research units and departments across England. In order to expand excellence, E3 focusses only on units and departments within HEPs where:
 - a) units are operating at a limited scale of activity,
 - b) demonstrable research excellence already exists within the unit, and
 - c) HEPs do not have the internal resources to support strategic investments.
5. At the Eoi stage we expected units to summarise:
 - a) what made their proposal distinctive,
 - b) the potential for the activities to have local/regional impact,
 - c) how they would deliver on their capacity building, and
 - d) how they would achieve a sustainable footing.
6. At this Full Bid stage we expect units to expand on the points above and further demonstrate:
 - a) a credible and detailed plan for growing research capacity,
 - b) the strategic and long-term commitment from the institution,
 - c) their proactive activities relating to the recruitment, development, diversity and retention of staff at all levels and their plans to deliver positive and inclusive research environments,

- d) the extent to which the proposal delivers benefits within the local and/or regional context and advances national research priorities.
7. This is a competitive scheme with up to £180m available through the fund to be allocated to successful units over five years from Academic Year (AY) 2024/25 to AY2028/29) with a resource/capital ratio of up to 2:1 across the fund as a whole. Awards will be for the five-year period, allowing successful bidders time to scale up activity and build quality. We are not setting a minimum or maximum threshold for awards. We will only fund bids that demonstrate potential to significantly increase the scale and excellence of research activity within the given unit.
 8. We expect all bids to propose realistic budgets for the scale of activities planned, taking account of both realistic expectations of inflation and the five-year nature of the awards.
 9. Applicants should note that we expect HEPs to assume greater responsibility for the sustainability of the units towards the end of the E3 funding period. The funding profile sought from Research England should reflect this.
 10. Funding will be primarily resource in nature, although bids that make the case for capital funding as part of the proposal will be considered. The 2:1 resource/capital ratio is a maximum across the fund as a whole, not for individual projects, and should serve only as guidance to proposals. Applications can request significantly more capital funding but will be required to clearly demonstrate why this element is necessary for sustainable research capacity building.
 11. We anticipate that successful institutions will be notified of funding in December 2023, 8 months prior to the start of the AY 2024-25.
 12. Universities will continue to receive their quality-related research (QR) resource allocations and their formula research capital (RCIF) allocations. There will be no relationship between the outcomes of this competition and those funding allocations. Nor will there be a direct relationship between this competition and a future national research assessment exercise. It is the intention of E3, however, to support sustainable improvements in the quality and volume of excellent research at those units awarded funding.
 13. This document sets out the guidance for the Full Bid stage. Bids should be confident that they will be able to comply with the full guidance and criteria for funding, as well as time-limited spending requirements, and compliance with relevant legislation. All bids should have strategic backing at the institution level, and we will only accept bids made through the office of the PVC for Research (or equivalent institutional authority).

Action Required

14. Full Bid Applications should be sent, by email only, to expandingexcellence@re.ukri.org by noon on 15 September 2023.

Timeline

Table 1: E3 Round two timeline	
Activity	Date
Launch of E3 round 2	5 December 2022
Expression of Interest deadline	24 February 2023
- Expression of Interest Panel	May 2023
Full Bid Deadline	15 September 2023
- Full Bid Panel	November 2023
Round 2 awards announced	December 2023
Funding commences	August 2024

Section 1: Aims and Objectives of the Fund

15. The aims of the E3 fund are to:

- a) Support the contribution of English universities to our society by pushing the frontiers of human knowledge and delivering transformative economic, environmental, and societal impact.
- b) Fund the strategic and sustainable expansion of research capacity across England's regions. E3 will focus on where distinctive research excellence with the potential for expansion already exists and where those existing disciplinary or interdisciplinary foci can benefit their local or regional setting at an increased scale.
- c) Contribute towards the delivery of government priorities while maintaining the principles of funding excellence wherever it is found and delivering a research environment that reflects the rich diversity of the UK and cultivates future talent.

16. In order to achieve these aims, the E3 fund will:

- a) Build capacity and quality in units where research excellence exists but at a smaller scale with potential for growth.
- b) Diversify the regional spread of research disciplines to support the sustained enhancement of research capacity across England.

- c) Enhance the skills base, build and diversify talent and bring disciplines together to develop new skillsets and "future leaders" in areas of research excellence where there is untapped potential.
- d) Reinforce the contribution of HEPs to their region through strategic local partnerships, focusing on sharing resources and infrastructure and generating local impact, backed by robust institutional leadership.
- e) Encourage institutions to explore novel and/or disruptive approaches to fundamental, applied, or interdisciplinary research and research practices through a risk sharing approach.

Funding Available

17. Up to £180 million is available for this round of E3 over five years (from academic year 2024/25 to 2028/29) with a resource/capital ratio of up to 2:1 across the fund as a whole. We are not setting a minimum or maximum threshold for awards, but the funding sought should set a realistic budget given the scale of investment required to reach a critical mass that is sustainable in the longer term. We will only fund bids that demonstrate potential to have a significant impact on the scale and excellence of research activity. In the previous round of E3, set over 3 years of funding, [E3 investments ranged from £0.9 to £8 million](#)¹.
18. At EOI stage this fund was open to all disciplines and Research England does not expect there to be a one size fits all approach to expanding capacity and capability. We expect Full Bids to be proportionate, accounting for inflationary pressures, and therefore realistic in terms of their calculated costs. Research England particularly welcomed collaborative joint bids from HEPs that offer distinctive opportunities greater than the sum of their parts.
19. Awards will be for the five-year period, allowing successful applicants time to scale up activity and build quality. While funding is expected to be primarily resource in nature, bids that make the case for significant capital funding as part of the proposal will be considered and this can be greater than the fund's overall ratio (2:1). There is no requirement to request capital funding, resource-only bids are eligible.
20. Our aim is to time award announcements so that successful units can commence recruitment processes eight months ahead of the beginning of the funding period (2024/25 academic year). All supported projects can start to draw down funding from August 2024 and receive final funding by July 2029.

¹ <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/what-we-have-funded/research-england/expanding-excellence-in-england-e3/>

Section 3: Assessment and Eligibility

Full Bid Assessment

21. At Full Bid stage, each project should expand on the information provided in the successful EOI. Any significant variation in the nature or level of funds requested (exceeding 10% of the value requested in an EOI) must be agreed by Research England's E3 secretariat before the bid submission. This will include instances where the panel has indicated, at EOI stage, that the funding request should be adjusted.
22. Alongside assessment by the expert panel, Full Bids will be reviewed initially within Research England. Other partners such as the UKRI Research Councils, Office for Students, other government agency/departments, or external consultants, may also provide expert advice on specific disciplinary, technical or financial areas if required. The intention of this initial assessment is to determine the following:
 - a) whether the lead institution has met the eligibility criteria described in the guidance,
 - b) whether the bid contains all the information requested in the guidance, and
 - c) whether the documentation raises any queries that need to be addressed before the panel can undertake formal assessment.
23. The assessment panel will recommend funding a number of the shortlisted proposals and, if necessary, reducing the funding allocations to individual units, or making pro rata reductions across all successful units. Research England will explore with the relevant institutions the viability of projects where the funding applied for cannot be provided in full.
24. The panel will consider the relative strengths of each bid against the relevant assessment criteria (see Section 5) and ensure the requirements of the fund have been met by the projects they recommend for funding. The assessment panel will pay due regard to the capacity and experience available for bid writing within the HEPs that submit applications to support a level playing field across the sector.
25. Further details, including the panel terms of reference and its membership can be found in Section 7 below.

Eligibility

26. Under the Higher Education and Research Act, (HERA, 2017), eligibility for Research England funding falls within the scope of the Office for Students (OfS) regulatory framework. This framework (as described in S39(3) of HERA) states that only HE providers in the approved fee cap category are eligible for Research England funding.
27. Only those applications that were shortlisted at the EOI stage are eligible to submit a Full Bid for assessment.

28. Further to these conditions, at the Full Bid Stage, in order to be eligible for assessment submissions must include:

- a) A signed letter or email from the Vice Chancellor (or equivalent) confirming they have read the submission(s) and agree to honour all commitments proposed by the HEP.
 - i. *(if submitting a joint bid)* the Vice Chancellor (or equivalent) from each institution will need to provide this same assurance separately.
- b) An accompanying letter(s) of support from the Pro-Vice Chancellor(s) of Research (or equivalent), that:
 - i. summarises the institutional commitments made to meet the sustainability of the unit during and beyond the E3 funding period, as fully described within the submission
 - ii. outlines clearly why the institution has not been able to invest in an area they also consider a strategic priority²
 - iii. demonstrates a clear understanding of the proposed expansion of the unit and the implications of the required commitment to sustainability beyond the funded period
 - iv. articulates the unit's place within the HEPs overall research strategy
 - v. *(If submitting multiple Full Bids)* clearly lists the bids in order of priority and presents a sustainability plan that reflects on the consequences of both proposals being successful.

29. Failure to provide all the above details will result in the submission not being assessed by the panel. If both the VC and PVCR (or equivalent) positions are held by the same person, an institution should provide this clarification and combine the VC and PVCR (or equivalent) letters into one supporting letter that covers all requirements listed at paragraph 28b.

30. **For joint applications**, where more than one HEP will be in receipt of E3 funds, letters of support are also expected from the Pro-Vice Chancellors of Research (or equivalent) from any additional partner, covering the same requirements as paragraph 28b. The Lead HEP letter of support should additionally confirm the governance arrangements in place to manage the proposed joint unit.

² Narratives that reflect upon conditions that effect the entire HE sector (e.g. inflation, the loss of funding sources such as Horizon or GCRF) are not sufficient here.

31. The panel expect to recommend a maximum of one bid per lead institution. Only in exceptional circumstances are two bids from the same lead institution likely to be successful.
32. This is not a project-based research funding grant that is awarded or flows directly to researchers but is instead institutional-level funding for a particular research unit. Bids must demonstrate their strategic support from the institutional leadership (Vice-Chancellor or equivalent authority) and must be submitted through the office of the PVC for Research (or equivalent authority).

Section 4: General Guidance for Applicants

33. Bids need to address the objectives of E3 as set out in paragraph 16. The primary use of the awards must be expanding research excellence and enhancing skills, particularly where this focusses on building the research talent pipeline and supporting a diverse workforce. Alongside this, projects may also address work on delivering impact from research. HEPs should consider any feedback provided by the panel at EOI stage to aid them in addressing the objectives of E3 at Full Bid stage.
34. Bids will relate to small units that can demonstrate an excellent foundation of research, with potential to build further excellence in a sustainable manner. While REF2021 submissions and outcomes may provide some useful context with regards to size and excellence, REF2021 data should not be presented as a sole indicator. Bids should present further relevant current and convincing evidence of their small size and research excellence.
35. Owing to the diverse nature of the sector and the broad disciplinary scope of this fund, a singular definition of 'small' is impractical. However, the panel will be robust in assessing this criterion in the context of the institution and the discipline area. It will be incumbent upon the submitting (lead) institution to describe why the unit(s) may be regarded as 'small' within the context of the sector and discipline. Bids that do not provide sufficient evidence to support their relative size are unlikely to be successful.
36. Successful projects will need to present a credible plan for expanding excellence in a sustainable way. E3 funding is for five years, so submissions must clearly articulate plans for expanding existing or securing further funding streams beyond the five-year funding period, to ensure that the expansion is sustainable in the long term.
37. Applicants should note that we expect HEPs to assume greater responsibility for the financial sustainability of the units towards the end of the E3 funding period. The funding profile should reflect all commitments (financial or otherwise) underwritten by the host institution(s), including those after E3 funding has ceased, and should be clearly articulated. The panel should be convinced of the feasibility of such commitments.

38. We would ordinarily expect additional staff to be appointed early in the funding process (year one-two) in order to sufficiently build capacity over the remaining funding period.
39. Bids will need to demonstrate the scale and distinctiveness of the opportunity and clearly articulate how they provide a unique contribution to the research base and align with the objectives of the fund (paragraph 16).
40. Proposals will need to set out how the E3 funding will generate genuine additional research activity beyond that which is already funded through QR or other existing sources. Where a bid focusses on a new direction in research activity, it will need to explain why this is appropriate, such as addressing a new national or international challenge or opportunity. Any claims as to the distinctiveness of the unit's research, outputs and/or impact must be fully evidenced; the panel may seek further expert advice to inform their assessment.
41. Multi- or interdisciplinary bids are welcome where they can demonstrate the scale and distinctiveness of this opportunity.
42. If a collaborative HEP bid is being submitted, the lead institution must explain why this is necessary in an English context, and how the collaboration would lead to research activity of greater value than that which is already underway in the individual institutions.
43. Successful projects will be exceptional, and not just represent a continuation or extension of research activity that could have been supported from QR and other existing sources of funding. A bid may be exceptional in terms of attempting higher-risk or innovative approaches that might not have been justifiable from institutional formula funds, because it supports activity that fits with new emerging national/international priorities, or because it contributes to the discipline in a unique manner. A bid might also be exceptional in terms of proposing an expansion of research excellence, quality and impact generation that could only be achieved through partnerships with organisations outside of higher education or through collaborations with other universities.
44. Bids will need to have strategic commitment from the HEP, including the commitment of internal financial resource, commensurate with the scale of the institution, and with due regard to the retention of staff beyond the E3 funding period. They will need to demonstrate how the expansion fits with the HEP's overall research strategy, but also justify why expansion cannot be supported by the HEP and therefore why the E3 funding would deliver an additional benefit. The panel will particularly scrutinize bids from those institutions already in receipt of significant levels of QR funding from Research England.
45. HEPs are particularly encouraged to consider relevant feedback from the Panel at EOI stage in evidencing their strategic commitment to the unit and how the unit fits within the HEPs overall research strategy.

46. Bids will need to set out how they align with local and regional strategic priorities and how they fit with any relevant national policies. This might include (but is not restricted to) describing how the unit plans to expand opportunities to work with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), public organisations and communities, and/or business clusters.
47. Proposals should clearly describe plans for expanding capacity. This should include plans for supporting the development of new research talent, such as postgraduate research students and ECRs, or research technical professionals and those moving into research from other professions/industrial backgrounds. Proposals should also consider the provision of professional services to support their plans for expansion and ensuring sustainability.
48. The proposal should provide a clear plan to increase the representation and diversity at all staff levels and types and demonstrate understanding of how to build positive and inclusive research cultures that accounts for the physical and mental wellbeing of their employees. This should include a genuine reflection on their institutional strategy and practices in equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in researcher careers, and a commitment to address the wider challenges and opportunities specific to the research discipline(s), area, unit, or department.
49. Proposals should also consider how they will address key skills gaps, and how they will upskill existing and future employees, and/or local and regional communities.
50. Collaborative bids that bring together collective capability are welcome. A lead institution will need to clearly articulate any plans to collaborate with other UK HEIs or to develop partnerships with organisations outside of higher education (business, public, third or cultural sectors) and the value that these partnerships will bring to the research activity. Any co-funding arrangements and the nature of these relationships should be described. While not essential, these are encouraged. At the Full Bid stage, the lead institution will be required to clearly outline the governance structure relating to the collaboration.
51. We wish to support expansions that are unlikely to be supported through formula funding. Bids need to set out and justify the level of funding requested and explain what added value E3 funding will bring. We do not propose setting a threshold for funding. Where the funding request appears high in relation to the proposed activity, the panel may choose to recommend a lower award.
52. We will pay very close attention to plans for the sustainability of the expansions. There is no continuation of funding available for successful projects; therefore, bids need to show how the additional capacity will be sustained beyond the funding period.
53. In line with responsible monitoring and evaluation of the fund, successful units will be required to submit a baseline of data and periodic monitoring reports throughout the five years. Research England may also track the continuation of research at increased volume

and quality over the longer term via continued dialogue with the successful units. In considering future rounds of E3 funding, we will review lessons learnt and outcomes from this competition.

How Funds Can Be Used

54. Our definitions for resource and capital follow the standard definitions used in accounting. We expect the use of the funding to be primarily resource in nature (e.g. staffing/studentships/fellowships, software, subscriptions, equipment under £10k, travel, workshops/conferences) although some capital spend will be considered (e.g. infrastructure, equipment over £10k and overheads).
55. The 2:1 resource/capital ratio is a maximum across the fund as a whole, not for individual projects, and therefore acts as guidance to specific proposals. Applicants requesting capital funding will be required to clearly demonstrate why this element is necessary for research capacity building purposes.
56. Applicants should note that we expect HEPs to assume greater responsibility for the sustainability of the units towards the end of the E3 funding period. The funding profile sought from Research England should reflect this. For example, in the final year (AY 2028/29) funding from E3 could taper as institutional support and research income increases.
57. Where PhD studentships form part of the bid, allocated costs must meet the minimum stipend for UKRI studentships³. Research England, however, encourages higher PhD stipends and Early Career Researcher remuneration to meet the cost of living and to encourage greater socio-economic diversity of applicants. To demonstrate good working practices and positive research cultures, Research England further encourages applicants to demonstrate their commitment to contracts that extend beyond the funding period, particularly for, but not limited to, Early Career Researchers.

³ [Get a studentship to fund your doctorate – UKRI](https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/developing-people-and-skills/find-studentships-and-doctoral-training/get-a-studentship-to-fund-your-doctorate/) - <https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/developing-people-and-skills/find-studentships-and-doctoral-training/get-a-studentship-to-fund-your-doctorate/>

Assessment Criteria

58. At the Full Bid stage proposals will be assessed according to the criteria set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Full Bid Criteria	
A	Planning
<p>A credible and detailed plan for expanding research excellence in a sustainable way, including robust project management, governance, milestone and KPI proposals.</p> <p><i>See paragraphs 86 – 89 of the further guidance below</i></p>	
B	Strategic Commitments
<p>Evidence of the strategic and long-term commitment from the host institution(s) and their senior leadership to the expansion, referencing the unit’s fit with the institution’s overall research strategy, commitments to local or regional partnerships (including collaborative bids with other local HEPs), and internal financial resources commensurate with the provider and regional setting.</p> <p><i>See paragraphs 90 – 92 of the further guidance below</i></p>	
C	Recruiting, Developing and Diversifying Talent
<p>Evidence on practice and principles for recruitment, career development and diversification of staff, including but not limited to early career researchers and technical and professional services. Applicants should reference the current EDI context of their unit, institution, and discipline(s) as well as outlining plans to create or improve upon an inclusive research culture that promotes a diversity of experience.</p> <p><i>See paragraphs 93 – 95 of the further guidance below</i></p>	
D	Alignment with Local, Regional and National Priorities
<p>A clear plan detailing the extent to which the proposal will deliver economic, social and/or cultural benefits within the host institutions’ local/regional context, including (but not limited to) through collaborations and public engagement. A clear plan detailing how the proposal will advance national research and innovation agendas through expansion in capacity.</p> <p><i>See paragraphs 96 – 98 of the further guidance below</i></p>	

59. The Full Bid proposal is also expected to build upon the evidence submitted during the Expression of Interest stage and Panel Members will also pay due regard to the EOI assessment criteria as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: EOI assessment criteria	
A	Size and Excellence
Demonstrate that the submitted unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can build upon existing research excellence. • is currently operating at a small scale in contrast to national comparisons. Exceptional cases may be made using international comparisons where this is pertinent to the nature of the unit. 	
B	Distinctiveness and Opportunity
Demonstrate that the capacity building programme will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make a distinctive contribution to the UK research base and broaden the regional spread of research excellence. • support the region where the unit is located, in leveraging nationally/internationally competitive research and innovation strengths to drive greater local economic, environmental and/or social benefits. 	
C	Planning
The submission will establish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which the proposed activity matches the objectives of the E3 programme • it can be achieved within the funding period and budget outlined. 	
D	Sustainability
The submission will establish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the extent to which both the unit and host institution(s) have accounted for the long-term sustainability of the expanding unit. 	

Section 5: How to Apply to the Full Bid Stage

60. Higher Education Providers who have been invited to apply should read the guidance and complete all documents provided to them and then forward these in a single email (per bid) to expandingexcellence@re.ukri.org **by noon on 15 September 2023**.
61. Where requested, individual documents should take the form of a single PDF file covering the submission and any evidence to support the case.
62. If your institution is shortlisted for more than one bid, the same supporting letter (from the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research, or equivalent) should be submitted and attached to each bid and this must include a clear order of priority.
63. In the case of a joint bid, the lead institution will be in receipt of the money directly from Research England and is expected to administer payments to partners. In this scenario, all partners must be eligible for Research England funding. Where organisational partners

will not receive E3 monies, nor share financial risk, this is not considered a formal joint bid in terms of the requirements of the bid.

64. Please provide all documents relating to your bid in a single email. The email should include the following:

- a) **Item 1: A single 15-page PDF submission.** *The cover sheet for this item is provided as Annex A.* This 15-page 'free text' submission will cover how the proposal meets the aims and objectives of the E3 fund and will be assessed in reference to the Assessment Criteria. Item 1 should be no more than 15 pages in length, using Arial font no smaller than 10pt, with line spacing set to 16pt and margin maximum at 2cm. Text should be suitably subtitled, and figures can also be included (but still count towards the 15-page overall limit). Any listed, published academic references should be cited as 'Author, (Date), *Title*, and Publication'.
- b) **Item 2: Details of spending strategies, EDI and the unit's commitment to Net Zero targets as a single PDF document.** *The template is provided as Annex B.* This document provides space to detail recruitment and staff development strategies and, for those bids with capital funding elements, details as to how this money will be spent. We also seek to understand how the expanded unit will address the UK's Net Zero target. Please do not add to, or write outside of, the template as provided unless otherwise requested to do so.
- c) **Item 3: Financial and personnel information as an Excel spreadsheet.** *The template is provided as Annex C.* Please do not add to, or write outside of, the template as provided unless otherwise requested to do so.
- d) **Item 4: Letters of Support as a single pdf document.** A single document which should include supporting letters from your PVC of Research (or equivalent) and any HEP collaborative partner in the case of a bid from several institutions, as well as letters from any external partners indicated within the submission.
- e) **Item 5: A completed document checklist, confirming that all necessary elements of the bid have been included.** *The template is provided as Annex D.* Bids with incomplete documentation will be automatically referred back to institutions.

65. All documents should be saved in the following format: "**Item [X] E3 full bid – [Lead HEI] – [Unit Name]**".

66. The email file size of the whole bid (including all evidence, annexes and financial information) should be no greater than 10MB. Guidance on the structure to this part of the submission is provided below.

67. The templates for Annexes A, B, C, and D, as described above, should have been provided to institutions when invited to submit a stage two bid. If you have not received these, please get in touch at expandingexcellence@re.ukri.org.
68. Research England will also host an event in July 2023 for shortlisted applicants to meet the funded units from Round 1 to share best practice both in regard to drafting your Full Bid application, managing an E3 award during the funding period, and longer-term sustainability.

Item 1 – Guidance on the Structure and Content of the Main Submission

69. You should ensure that the bid commences with the cover sheet as provided at Annex A, this does not count towards the 15-page limit.
70. Where the request for information mirrors that requested at the EOI, a fuller and more detailed response, with evidence to substantiate claims made, is expected at this stage. HEPs are encouraged to pay attention to any relevant feedback provided from RE on their EOI submission to inform their full bid.
71. Please note that Items 1, 2 and 3 will contribute to a holistic assessment of the bid. All submitted items will be viewed with equal importance by the panel.
72. While we do not provide a formal template for Item 1, we suggest that it include the headings indicated in headers for paragraphs 73 - 97.

Summary

73. Summarise the nature of the research and an overview of the plan for expanding capacity, in line with the overall objectives of E3 funding.

Unit Size and Current Activity

74. The submitting institution will need to summarise the full and accurate current staffing profile that has been provided per Item 3 (including research, technical and professional support staff, and those from any collaborating institutions) to provide clarity on who works for the unit and what their role is. The submitting institution will also need to provide comparative benchmarks with units/institutes undertaking research within the same/similar discipline(s) (nationally and/or internationally as appropriate) in order to demonstrate why they are small in comparison. The panel will not undertake any wider analysis but may seek confirmation of any evidence provided. It is up to the submitting institution to provide sufficient evidence of the size of the unit, relative to relevant benchmarks, that is accurate and convincing.
75. Describe the unit's research activity as it currently stands, indicating its strengths, impact, research grant income and other sources of funding from 2014.

76. **For joint bids**, the above guidance should be applied to all HEPs involved in the proposal, not just the lead institution.

Research Excellence

77. The panel will examine evidence of the unit's current research excellence. The evidence for excellence must be relevant to the discipline area(s). Where quantitative data are provided as evidence this must be clearly contextualized (for example, in reference to comparative units). Evidence should not be limited to outcomes from REF2021, but if this is available it may be provided as context or as one part of a set of evidence of excellence. Evidence for excellence should pertain to the recognition, outputs and impact of the unit as a whole and/or of individual researchers within.
78. Research England and UKRI strongly encourage institutions in the responsible use of research metrics, and we support the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). By way of example in evidencing research excellence, applicants should refrain from the use of Journal Impact Factors.
79. The panel will also want to understand the broader environment within which research excellence is fostered, including (but not limited to) research integrity, open research and the use of responsible metrics.
80. **For joint bids**, the above guidance should be applied to all HEPs involved in the proposal, not just the lead institution.

Distinctiveness and Opportunity

81. The panel will need to understand how the research fits within the national policy landscape for research in this area, for example, in addressing strategic challenges on a national or international scale.
82. Where units undertaking similar research exist (for example those referenced as operating at a larger scale), the bid must demonstrate how the unit's research is distinctive and complements, rather than duplicates, existing research activity. Any claims with regard to distinctiveness must be properly evidenced.
83. Institutions will need to describe the nature of any existing collaborations or partnerships (where these are not named as official partners in the bid) and how these relationships contribute to the research excellence and/or distinctiveness of the unit. Where these relationships are material to the proposed capacity building (including its sustainability), letters of support evidencing this relationship are required.
84. The submission will need to explain why the institution is best placed to undertake the proposed research and at the scale proposed, in line with the overall aims and objectives of E3 funding, including the extent to which the unit has been supporting the development of researchers for the future.

85. The section should conclude with an explanation as to why a funding intervention via E3 is necessary, for example including statements on the following:

- a) how will this expansion contribute to the wider discipline(s),
- b) what will the discipline/region/country be losing if this expansion does not go ahead,
- c) why an expansion of the size presented in the submission is needed

For joint bids, the submission should demonstrate why a collaborative effort between HEPs is required and why, combined, they are best placed to undertake the proposed research at a national level, and at the scale proposed.

The Plan for Delivering and Sustaining Expansion

86. Submissions should discuss how E3 funding will be used to catalyze the upscaling of research activity as indicated in the previous sections, in line with the overall objectives of E3 funding. This could include (but is not limited to):

- a) timing of and profile for academic recruitment,
- b) building work/equipment required (where pertinent),
- c) how the recruitment of non-academic staff, including technical and professional services staff will contribute to the sustainable expansion,
- d) workshops and conferences to be held or attended,
- e) creating new, or expanding upon existing, partnerships, and the nature and importance of these relationships,
- f) information about any associated staff materially linked to, but not directly working for, the unit that are highlighted elsewhere, e.g. as institutional commitments.

87. The bid should provide evidence of a robust and well-thought-through project plan, including any pertinent information on how building plans will be delivered (where further detail is pertinent beyond that requested in Item 2). The following must be included:

- a) A robust plan to monitor and evaluate the success of the unit's expansion including:
 - i. **Achievable milestones** which are strategic in nature.
 - ii. **Key performance indicators** and timings covering the key aspects of the expansion (including recruitment/EDI goals, equipment and estates planning as laid out in Item 2). Particular attention should be paid to the need to spend all the E3 funds by July 2029.
 - iii. A plan that demonstrates how the unit/institution will keep the E3 payment profile (per 'Item 3') on track. This should reference a **high-level risk register** to underline potential risks to the expansion plans and mitigating actions therein.

- b) Detailed project management and internal governance arrangements.
 - c) **For joint bids**, detailed joint governance arrangements with HEPs named as partners for the bid.
 - d) **Where appropriate**, how relationships with non-collaborating HEPs or external organisations will be managed.
88. You will need to provide broad and detailed evidence as to how any expansion in research capacity will be sustained in the long term. Expanding research capacity is not a short-term endeavor, and the success of an institution's E3 funding cannot be measured by the next research assessment exercise alone, nor is E3 intended as funding solely to boost institutional QR allocations in the medium term. A detailed review of the sustainability of the expansion beyond the E3 funding period is therefore required. Financial sustainability can be demonstrated through the prediction of income streams from, for example: teaching, research grants, commercial activities, charities, philanthropic and institutional commitments.
89. Sustainability is not reflected in financial resourcing alone; sustainability plans must also relate to the development of a future research agenda, developing talent pipelines and current researcher careers, and attending to the research culture and environment of an institution/unit. This could refer to the Developing Research Talent section.

Institutional Strategic Commitments

90. Describe the commitments (e.g. financial or in-kind) that the HEP has committed to during the five years of the E3 project. There is not a match-funding requirement within E3 however, it is expected that commitments from the institution(s) will be commensurate with their size.
91. The panel will need to see evidence that any expansion in staff and PhD numbers can be physically accommodated by the institution.
92. Describe how the institution is proposing to share risk with E3 investment beyond the funding period. These commitments will likely link up with areas of sustainability planning as we expect institutions to commit to retaining a majority of staff recruited via E3 funding. A commitment to creating permanent contracts will need to be clear (with reasons for not offering permanent contracts explained clearly) and include an explanation of how the institution will ensure the proposed longer term financial commitment(s) are met.

Recruiting and Developing Talent

93. The submission should describe the overall approach to recruiting and developing talent, including all research, technical and professional staff associate with this unit. To reflect the importance of developing future talent, and particularly Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, as it relates both to the excellence and sustainability of research, we require

submission to reflect on and address specific questions with regard to the unit's/institution's strategy and goals in this area (Item 2).

94. This section in the Item 1 submission can build upon the answers provided in Item 2 or provide further context or aspirations not noted in that item. In particular, we would advise units to consider:

- a) flexible provision for staff and doctoral students (e.g. part & full time, job sharing etc.)
- b) the training offered to all staff
- c) the funding provision for conferences, seminars, workshops and other activities,
- d) collaborative studentships (i.e. placement opportunities)
- e) key elements of the recruitment strategy and how this complements existing EDI strategies
- f) how temporary employment of fixed-term staff recruited through E3 will lead to increasing research capacity in the long term.

Alignment with Local and/or Regional Priorities

95. This should include a succinct statement that summarizes how the unit is defining 'place' for the purposes of their submission. While we are not proposing a definition of 'place', this could include for example, the use of International Territorial Levels (ITLs) 1, 2, and 3 definitions.⁴ While there is no requirement that the impacts of the unit's research are place-based, there is an expectation that submissions can demonstrate how the growth in capacity will be utilised to benefit the local or regional area.

96. The submission should explain the manner in which the expansion will deliver economic, social, or cultural benefits from research and innovation within the HEPs local or regional environment. For example, submissions could consider (but are not limited to):

- a) the need to expand the research discipline into additional regions of England,
- b) how the expanded unit can strengthen existing or develop new relationships with local organisations (LEPs, local authorities, government agencies, local businesses, and health, cultural, charitable, educational and research organisations etc.),
- c) the provision of outreach, educational and employment opportunities for all ages.

Alignment with National Priorities

97. The submission should demonstrate how this expansion of research capacity is of critical importance to the national research effort. Examples may include (but are not limited to):

⁴ [International geographies - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk). Please note 'England' is not a region in this context.

- a) developing original programmes of research at the national or international level,
- b) the wider public benefit in relation to research, and any social, cultural, or economic impacts,
- c) developing a pipeline of talent for an innovative economy,
- d) enhancing strategic partnerships with other research institutions and organisations including from the private, public, third or cultural sectors.

Item 2 – Guidance for completing Annex B

98. The questions provided by way of Annex B should be answered in the template provided and submitted as a single pdf document. The information provided here should not be duplicated from Item 1.

Item 3 – Guidance for completing Annex C

99. Financial information should be provided separately using the template provided as Annex C. This asks for information in three areas, covering the periods immediately before, during and after the E3 funding period:

- a) expenditure and sources of finance in each year relating to the resource and capital elements of the bid. Expenditure must be sufficient to use all of the E3 funding within the period in which it is awarded
- b) the unit's operating income and expenditure
- c) a profile of Research England payments

100. The quantitative information requested by way of Annex C should be provided and submitted as an excel/.csv document. Further guidance is provided on the first tab of the spreadsheet.

101. Please note that Research England **does not have a full economic cost (FEC)** policy as with Research Council proposals. Instead, institutions should consider the financial sustainability of all the activities for which they are requesting funding.

102. Please note that E3 Funding can be used to support Open Access costs (see paragraph 112 for more details).

103. **Where you deem it appropriate**, please use the subtitle 'Financial Information' in your Item 1 submission text to highlight anything pertinent from your Annex C template where you believe clarification is required (but note that any extra information beyond Annex C counts towards the 15-page limit).

Item 4 - Supporting Letter(s) and Agreement of Institution

104. As noted in paragraphs 28 & 29 to be eligible at the Full Bid Stage, the lead HEP must provide a Vice Chancellor's (or equivalent) statement **and** a substantive letter of support

from the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research (or equivalent) of the lead and any partner HEP in receipt of E3 funding.

105. In addition to the above further letters of support are required from any organisation(s) named as a partner or who otherwise have a material bearing on the evidence submitted in any aspect of the proposal.
106. The statement of confirmation from the head of the lead HEP (the Vice-Chancellor or equivalent) should demonstrate that they have read and agreed to the bid being submitted, and that any pertinent institutional commitments both during and beyond the period of E3 funding (e.g. financial, structural) will be met. In the case of a joint bid, this assurance will need to be provided by each head of institution. A signed statement or confirmation email should be incorporated into this bid, for a joint bid this could be one letter signed by all Heads, or separate.
107. We do not expect the supporting letters to contain any extra or restated information that should be included in the main bid as outlined above.
 - a) PVCRC Letters of Support from institutions should be a maximum of two sides of A4, with the exception of those institutions submitting more than one bid (as lead HEP or otherwise), where the maximum limit is three sides of A4, unless otherwise agreed with the E3 secretariat.
 - b) Letters of Support from other organisations should be no more than one side of A4.
108. All Letters of Support should be combined and submitted as a single pdf with the rest of the application. If the Vice Chancellors statement is provided as an email, this should be attached separately to the submission.

Item 5 – Checklist

109. Please review the checklist (Annex D) when you come to submitting your Full Bid to ensure that you are submitting all relevant documentation. Forward this completed checklist along with the other documents.

Section 6: Requirements Following Award

Payment of Funds

110. We will pay grants from AY 2024/25 to 2028/29 on a quarterly basis, during which all expenditure should take place. Payment of grant funding will be made in accordance with the principles laid out in HM Treasury's 'Managing public money' guidance and aligned to the profile of project expenditure that we agree with each institution. Where project expenditure is likely to be novel, contentious, or made in advance of value being received,

the E3 team should be consulted beforehand. Institutions may be asked to provide evidence to support expenditure profiles prior to grant payments being made.

111. We expect institutions to advise us promptly if the expenditure profile changes significantly for any reason. Research England cannot guarantee that funding will be available to cover any changes to the spending profile beyond the academic year for which it has been allocated.

Complying with Open Access Requirements

112. Research England expects projects to consider the principles of open research in their research environment. In-scope outputs which acknowledge E3 funding must comply with the [UKRI Open Access policy](#). In-scope outputs that are supported entirely by E3 funding are not eligible to access the UKRI Open Access block grants and may use E3 funding to support associated costs, in line with the eligible costs that may be charged to the [UKRI Open Access Block Grant](#). In-scope outputs that are required to acknowledge other sources of UKRI funding may be supported by an institution's UKRI Open Access block grant, where appropriate.

113. Further information about UKRI's open access funding can be found here: <https://www.ukri.org/manage-your-award/publishing-your-research-findings/making-your-research-publications-open-access/>

Compliance with Legislation

114. Higher education providers must ensure that their use of funding is compliant with all relevant legislation. This includes legislation applicable in the United Kingdom that regulates the granting by a public sector body of any advantage which threatens to or actually distorts competition in the United Kingdom and/or any other country or countries, including the Subsidy Control Act 2022. It also includes compliance with relevant national security legislation and guidance, including the National Security and Investment (NSI) Act 2022. Providers must inform Research England of any breach as soon as this becomes known to them. Providers acknowledge that if they breach any applicable legislation, UKRI may be required to recover some or all grant funding, together with interest

Trusted Research and Innovation

115. You must undertake appropriate due diligence on collaborative partner(s) before any collaboration between parties begins, including where changes occur after the grant start date to individuals or organisations involved in the funded activity, or where any material change occurs in the nature of the collaboration or external factors which might alter the level of risk to the research and its potential usages. Where due diligence checks identify

a potential risk, you must ensure that appropriate mitigations are in place to manage that risk before any grant activity and/or collaboration affected by the risk begins/is continued. Due diligence must be undertaken in line with UKRI's Principles on Trusted Research and Innovation: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-standards-and-data/good-research-resource-hub/trusted-research-and-innovation/>.

Monitoring and Evaluation

116. As stated above (paragraph 87) the panel requires submissions to include milestones and key performance indicators both for the institution's own internal monitoring, but also to allow Research England's monitoring of progress and spend during the E3 period. This monitoring should link to a plan to evaluate the success in expanding research capacity, maintaining excellence, and the seeds of sustainability in the long term, as outlined in the bid, at the end of the funding period in 2029. In preparing submissions it should be noted that programme-level evaluation will continue beyond the lifetime of the 2023-29 round and that we will work with the successful institutions beyond the funding period, therefore plans must include an element of monitoring beyond 2029.
117. Research England will monitor the progress of funded E3 projects. Institutions will be expected to provide information on the progress of their expansion in the unit or department awarded funding. At Full Bid stage, proposals will identify a key set of indicators against which performance will be measured. These will need to measure improvements in both research capacity and quality in line with the overall objectives of the E3 fund and the specific objectives of each individual project. Research England will work with the programme board to develop further guidance on monitoring and evaluation, which will be shared with successful units ahead of the start of funding.
118. By applying at either the Expression of Interest or Full Bid stage, institutions agree that any information relating to their bid (both successful and unsuccessful bids) may be used in future evaluation exercises.
119. Successful institutions may be audited by Research England, or an organisation commissioned by Research England, at any stage, to ensure funds are being used in accordance with the terms and conditions of grant. Each host institution will also be required to submit a final evaluative report at the end of the funding period.

Freedom of Information

120. Research England is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, which gives a public right of access to information held by a public authority. This may result in applications, communications between us and the institution, information arising from this work, or the outputs from the work undertaken being subject to disclosure if a valid request is made to us. We will comply with such requests in accordance with the legislation and our own policies.

121. Institutions can, if they wish, provide potentially sensitive information (such as information relating to commercial interests) in a separate annex attached to the application form. This will highlight to us that there are concerns about disclosure. With annexes, the proposal must not exceed the maximum length as stated in the application template.

122. Where we consider it to be appropriate and practicable, we will seek the views of applicants before disclosing this information in response to a Freedom of Information request. The applicant acknowledges that information provided in the annex is of indicative value only, and that Research England may nevertheless be obliged to disclose this information. Our assumption will be that all information in the main application documents can be disclosed on request.

123. Further information about the Freedom of Information Act is available at www.ico.org.uk.

List of Abbreviations

AY – Academic Year

E3 – Expanding Excellence in England

EOI – Expression of Interest

FY – Financial Year

HEP – Higher Education Provider

HERA – Higher Education and Research Act

OfS – Office for Students

PDF – Printable Document Format

PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

PVC – Pro-Vice Chancellor

R&D – Research and Development

REF – Research Excellence Framework

UKRI – United Kingdom Research and Innovation

UOA – Unit of Assessment

Section 7: E3 Assessment Panel Membership and Terms of Reference

Membership

Chair:

- Professor Mary Stuart, formerly Vice Chancellor, University of Lincoln

Panel:

- Professor Bashir M. Al-Hashimi, ARM Professor of Computing Engineering and Vice Principal (Research and Innovation), King's College London
- Professor Siladitya Bhattacharya, Professor and Head of School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition, University of Aberdeen and Sir Dugald Baird Chair in Women's Health
- Professor Sara de Freitas, Director of the Digital Futures Institute, University of Suffolk
- Professor Lin Foxhall, Rathbone Chair of Ancient History and Classical Archaeology and Dean, School of Histories, Languages and Cultures, University of Liverpool
- Professor Tony McEnery, Professor of Linguistics and English Language, Lancaster University
- Professor Karen Olsson-Francis, Professor of Geomicrobiology, School of Environment, Earth and Ecosystem Sciences, Open University
- Professor Leon Terry, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, Cranfield University
- Professor Carol Wagstaff, Professor of Crop Quality for Health and Research Dean for Agriculture, Food and Health, University of Reading
- Professor Roger Whitaker, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Enterprise, Cardiff University
- Professor Philip Whyman, Professor of Economics and Co-Director of the Lancashire Centre for Business, Management and Enterprise Research, University of Central Lancashire

Terms of reference

1. The expert panel will make recommendations to the Research England Executive Chair on:
 - a) Bids to be supported in the first round of the competition.
 - b) Bids to be supported in any future rounds of the competition.
 - c) Any terms and conditions to be attached to specific projects.
2. The expert panel will provide advice to the Research England Executive Chair on:
 - a) The overall conduct of the competition for the Expanding Excellence in England (E3) Fund.

- b) The approach to be taken to monitoring and evaluation to provide evidence that the funding has delivered the objectives of E3 and to support any case for future rounds of the competition.
- c) Changes to be made to the fund's guidance and criteria, drawing on the experience of this round of funding, to deliver fully the Government's and Research England's policy priorities and the objectives of the fund should future rounds of the competition be taken forward.
- d) The appropriateness of processes for due diligence and confirming awards (such as requesting additional information or setting project-specific terms and conditions).
- e) Any other comments on the successes or challenges of the fund and the influence on overall directions in research policy in the long term.