



Funding opportunity

International centre to centre research collaborations


Opportunity status:	Closed
Funders:	Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£15,000,000
Maximum award:	£1,500,000
Publication date:	9 March 2023
Opening date:	9 March 2023 10:00am UK time
Closing date:	18 May 2023 4:00pm UK time

Is this page useful?

Apply for funding to form world-leading partnerships and work with the best international collaborators for your research.

You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for EPSRC funding and meet one of our qualifying criteria to apply for this funding opportunity. Further details about the eligibility requirements are provided in the 'Who can apply' section.

The full economic cost (FEC) of your project can be up to £1,500,000 with a duration of three to five years. EPSRC will fund 80% FEC.

 The invited full proposal stage of this opportunity is likely to run on [The Funding Service](#) (TFS) our new funding platform, rather than via Je-S. The Funding Service has a digital form-based format. This means that the exact application requirements and assessment criteria may alter from what is currently published. Further information will be published in the full proposal opportunity.

Who can apply

Research grants are open to:

- UK higher education institutions
- research council institutes
- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)-approved independent research organisations
- eligible public sector research establishments
- eligible research and technology organisations
- NHS bodies with research capacity

[Check if your institution is eligible for funding.](#)

You can apply if you are a resident in the UK and meet at least one of the following conditions:

- are employed at the submitting research organisation at a level equivalent to lecturer or above
- hold a fixed-term contract that extends beyond the duration of the proposed project, and the host research organisation is prepared to give you all the support normal for a permanent employee
- hold an EPSRC, Royal Society or Royal Academy of Engineering fellowship aimed at later career stages
- hold fellowships under other schemes (please contact EPSRC to check eligibility, which is considered on a case-by-case basis)

The lead institution must be based in the UK and must be eligible to hold EPSRC grants.

International co-investigators are not eligible for this funding opportunity.

Holders of postdoctoral level fellowships are not eligible to apply for an EPSRC grant.

Eligibility criteria

In addition to the general eligibility requirements, applicant consortia must satisfy one of the following requirements (A or B) to be eligible to apply through this funding opportunity. Applicant consortia only need to satisfy one of the criteria. You can satisfy both, but this is not a requirement.

Criterion A

The applicant consortium must hold at least one current EPSRC strategic research grants. This grant must have an end date after March 2023 to qualify.

In order to satisfy the eligibility criterion, the principal investigator of the centre to centre proposal must be the principal investigator or co-investigator on the existing strategic investment.

We expect at least 50% of the investigators within the centre to centre consortium to be investigators on the existing grant or grants. However, there is no requirement to include all investigators involved in the existing strategic grant in the application for this funding opportunity.

We particularly welcome applicants from diverse research consortia and the inclusion of early career researchers.

The list of strategic research investments considered to satisfy this criterion is as follows:

- AI and Data Science for Science, Engineering, Health and Government
- ARCHER2 high performance computing centre
- Accident ToLerANT fuels In reCycling (ATLANTIC)
- Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)-EPSRC synthetic biology research centres
- Centre for power electronics
- Centre for Secure Information Technologies
- Cyber security of the internet of things hub (PETRAS)
- Ensuring the Security of Digital Technologies at the Periphery
- EPSRC-DSTL university defence research collaborations
- EPSRC institutes
- ExCALIBUR programme
- Future Manufacturing Research Hubs
- Healthcare technologies interdisciplinary research collaborations (IRCs)
- Henry Royce Institute
- High-end computing consortia
- ICT Future Communications Systems Platforms
- Innovation and Knowledge Centres
- Mathematics in Healthcare Centres
- National Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research Programme
- National Research Facilities
- NCSC-EPSRC cyber security research institutes
- Next stage digital economy hubs or centres
- Physics of Life
- Programme grants
- Prosperity partnerships
- Quantum technology hubs
- Rosalind Franklin Institute
- SUPERGEN hubs
- The Alan Turing Institute
- Tier 2 high performance computing centre
- TRANSCEND: Transformative Science and Engineering for Nuclear Decommissioning
- UK Catalysis Hub
- UK Centre for Research on Energy Demand
- UK Energy Research Centre
- UKRI Trustworthy Autonomous Systems (TAS) Hub
- National Research Centre on Privacy, Harm Reduction and Adversarial Influence Online

In cases where an investment on this list consists of more than one large-scale grants (more than £2 million) with different principal investigators and distinct objectives, the group of investigators on each separate grant may submit a proposal to this funding opportunity if desired.

Smaller component grants (less than £2 million) of a larger centre or similar investment do not qualify under this criterion, but may be included in the qualifying portfolio under criterion B.

Criterion B

Applicant consortia must collectively hold a research portfolio of at least £3 million of current EPSRC research grants. Each of these grants must have an end date after 9 March 2023. If an offer letter for a grant has been issued by 9 March 2023, it can be included in this portfolio even if the project has not yet started.

Grants can only be included in the centre to centre consortium's portfolio if the principal investigator of the grant is involved in the consortium. Not every proposed investigator is required to hold a current EPSRC grant, but we expect the majority of the applicant team to be investigators on one or more of the existing grants cited. EPSRC particularly welcome applications from diverse research consortia and the inclusion of early career researchers.

There are no requirements on the minimum or maximum number of grants that can be listed in order to establish eligibility in this criterion. The qualifying amount for the cost of the grant is EPSRC's contribution, rather than the full economic cost.

Exceptions: we are aware that grant values are typically significantly smaller for some of the fundamental areas of EPSRC's remit. For example, mathematical sciences. As such, we are willing to consider exceptions to criterion B, where consortia have a significant EPSRC grant portfolio in their area and you can provide evidence of prior collaboration (for example, joint publications). Consortia working in these areas must confirm eligibility with EPSRC prior to outline submission by emailing the EPSRC International Team (international@epsrc.ukri.org).

Conditions around eligibility

Any individual grant may only be cited against one proposal through this funding opportunity. Linked grants (parent and child grants) which make up a single research project count as one grant.

The following grants will not qualify to satisfy either A or B:

- UKRI Challenge Fund award
- capital equipment grants, including institute capital funding
- Centres for Doctoral Training
- Doctoral Training Partnerships
- training and skills hubs
- fellowships (with the exception of AI world leading researcher fellows)
- Impact Acceleration Accounts
- institutional sponsorship awards and other institutional block grants

- networks and Network Plus grants
- overseas travel grants
- platform grants
- workshops

Applicant teams may be based in a single discipline or multidisciplinary, as long as they satisfy one of the criteria. We are open to proposals in any area of research predominantly in EPSRC's remit. We welcome the inclusion of early career researchers in applicant consortia and diverse research consortia, as long as one of the eligibility criteria A or B are satisfied by the team overall.

There are no requirements on the maximum or minimum number of investigators we would expect to see involved in these proposals. UK investigators can be from a single institution or multiple institutions. Please ensure sufficient time to create Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system accounts for investigators who do not currently have one.

There is also no limit on the number of international institutions or countries that projects can work with. Investigator teams should be the most appropriate set of researchers to achieve the proposed project.

Please note that UK applicants may only be named as investigator (either principal or co-investigator) on one proposal to this funding opportunity.

Current International Centre to Centre grant holders are only eligible to apply through this funding opportunity where the research challenges to be addressed are significantly different to their current grant. As such it is expected that they will satisfy the eligibility criteria based on a different grant or set of grants and be working with different international partners.

A track record of the core applicant team working together is required and will be assessed at both outline and full proposal stages. See assessment criteria section.

Outline submissions to this funding opportunity will not count towards the [EPSRC repeatedly unsuccessful applicants policy](#). Full proposal submissions to this funding opportunity will count towards the policy.

If you are currently restricted under the repeatedly unsuccessful applicants policy, you may submit unlimited outlines. However, you will only be able to submit one full proposal as principal investigator or co-investigator during the 12-month restricted period.

What we're looking for

Scope

This is the third round of the EPSRC International Centre to Centre scheme. Our aim is to enable world-leading partnerships by providing an opportunity for leading

UK research groups to work in partnership with the best international collaborators for their research.

For this funding opportunity:

- we will consider proposals to collaborate with one or more international research organisation (including universities, public sector research organisations and publicly funded research institutes)
- although the majority of the application should lie within [EPSRC remit](#), multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaborations with international partners are welcomed
- partnerships can involve one or more overseas research organisations in one or more countries
- we are open to proposals to either develop new international collaborators or to build on existing relationships
- partners may be in a low or middle income country. However, we do not require compliance with Official Development Assistance (ODA) criteria for this funding opportunity
- industry engagement is strongly encouraged where appropriate, applicants are encouraged to engage with their strategic partners and co-develop ideas early in the process

If you have any doubts on these points please contact EPSRC before applying. Proposals not meeting these requirements in the judgement of EPSRC staff will be rejected without recourse to peer review.

Funding available

Up to £15 million is available from EPSRC for this funding opportunity. We aim to fund 10 to 15 research consortia through this activity for projects of three to five years' duration. Proposals may consist of a single research project, or a suite of related research activities in a defined research area.

Support for the proposed international collaboration is subject to [standard EPSRC funding rules](#). International co-investigators may not be requested for this funding opportunity. We expect to see contributions from overseas partners to the project but recognise that it will depend on the nature of the project whether those are cash or in-kind contributions. Aspects of the fit to the funding opportunity criterion in particular will assess the contribution of the overseas partner (see the 'How we will assess your application' section).

In terms of staff resource, we expect at least two full-time equivalent postdoctoral research staff to be requested on each proposal. If appropriate for the proposed project's direction and objectives, you can request postdoctoral researcher positions that do not necessarily span the full length of the project or include part-time positions. However, we do not expect the proposal to include request for short-term postdoctoral researcher positions.

PhD studentships or funding associated with PhD studentships are not eligible for inclusion in the costs sought from EPSRC.

We would expect to see funding requests to support travel, subsistence and consumables for the UK investigators and research staff to visit or have extended work placements at a partner's laboratory overseas. Requests can also be made for resources to enable different approaches to building and sustaining collaborations, which reduce the need to travel. We would expect the budget requested for the travel or alternative resources to be sufficient to support the collaboration between the centres.

Overseas partner organisations can be universities, public sector research organisations or publicly funded research institutes. International collaborators should be included in proposals as either:

- **[project partners](#)**: project partners can receive small amounts of funding from the grant, such as for travel and subsistence to attend project meetings. Extended visits should be listed as visiting researchers. Project partners estimated financial contribution to the research consortium should be indicated on the Je-S form as cash or in-kind contributions as appropriate. A short description of types of costs that international partner's planned financial contribution will cover (for example, staff costs, travel, laboratory access) should be included in the justification of resources. International partner contributions do not need to be new funding they are applying for from equivalent international funding bodies, their contribution can take the form of aligned existing funds
- **[visiting researchers](#)**: support may be requested for visits by overseas collaborators to the UK for up to 12 months per individual. The application may include estates and indirect costs for any visiting researcher, regardless of whether the support being requested includes a salary contribution or is only travel and subsistence. Visiting researchers should be of acknowledged standing, individuals who hold an academic lectureship position (or equivalent) or above

Equipment over £10,000 in value (including VAT) is not available through this funding opportunity. Smaller items of equipment (individually under £10,000) should be in the 'Directly Incurred – Other Costs' heading.

[EPSRC approach to equipment funding](#).

[EPSRC standard guidance on intellectual property](#) applies to projects supported by this funding opportunity.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

The long-term strength of the UK research base depends on harnessing all the available talent. UKRI expects that equality and diversity is embedded at all levels and in all aspects of research practice and funding policy.

We welcome applications from academics who job share, have a part-time contract, or need flexible working arrangements. We are committed to a policy of equal opportunities for our applicants for funding and encourage applications from those from under-represented groups.

Recognising the international nature of this opportunity, we welcome applications including additional care costs. Requests can also be made for resources to enable different approaches to building and sustaining collaborations, which reduce the need to travel. [Further information on the types of support we can provide](#).

At the full proposal stage, you will be required to provide an EDI plan. Resources allocated to address EDI challenges are an eligible cost for this funding opportunity. See the additional information section for further details.

[Find out more about EDI at EPSRC](#).

Trusted research and innovation

UKRI is committed in ensuring that effective international collaboration in research and innovation takes place with integrity and within strong ethical frameworks.

Trusted research and innovation is a UKRI work programme designed to support cross-sector campaigns that protect all those working in our thriving and collaborative international sector.

Our [trusted research and innovation principles](#) set out UKRI's expectations of organisations funded by UKRI in relation to due diligence for international collaboration.

Applicants are encouraged to read these principles and should familiarise themselves with the resources referenced, including for example, the guidance on Trusted Research from the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure, in order to get the most out of the international collaboration while protecting intellectual property, sensitive research and personal information.

Responsible innovation

You are expected to work within the [EPSRC framework for responsible innovation](#).

How to apply

This funding opportunity will have a two-stage application process:

1. Outline proposal.
2. Invited submission of a full proposal, if successful at the outline stage.

Although proposals may be multi-institutional, only one application form should be submitted for each bid. Single-form applications are required in order to facilitate integration across the UK research partners. Joint proposals on separate Je-S forms will not be accepted.

The lead institution must be based in the UK and must be eligible to hold EPSRC grants.

Webinar

Prospective applicants are invited to join a webinar on 29 March 2023 at 2:00pm UK time.

[Join the webinar](#)

The webinar will last for an hour, it will begin with a presentation from the EPSRC international team and will be followed by an opportunity to ask questions about the funding opportunity.

Questions can be submitted prior to the event using the EPSRC international team email address or during the webinar using the question and answer function.

The questions raised and answers will be compiled into a frequently asked questions document, which will be published shortly after the webinar. A recording of the webinar will also be published.

Stage one: outline proposal

You should ensure you are aware of and comply with any internal institutional deadlines that may be in place. You should prepare and submit your proposal using the research councils' [Joint Electronic Submission \(Je-S\) system](#).

Before starting an application, you will need to log in or create an account in Je-S.

When applying:

- select 'documents', then 'new document'
- select 'call search'
- to find the opportunity, search for: International Centre to Centre Research Collaborations: Outlines

This will populate:

- council: EPSRC
- document type: standard research
- scheme: standard
- call/type/mode: International Centre to Centre Research Collaborations: Outlines

Once you have completed your application, make sure you 'submit document'.

You can save completed details in Je-S at any time and return to continue your application later.

If successful at the outline stage, you will be invited to submit a full application. We will send you guidance on completing a full application at this next stage.

The invited full proposal stage of this opportunity is likely to run on [The Funding Service](#), our new funding platform, rather than through Je-S.

The Funding Service has a digital form-based format. This means that the exact application requirements and assessment criteria may alter from what is currently

published. Further information will be published in the full proposal funding opportunity.

Deadline

EPSRC must receive your application by 18 May 2023 at 4:00pm UK time.

You will not be able to apply after this time. Please leave enough time for your proposal to pass through your organisation's Je-S submission route before this date.

You should ensure you are aware of and follow any internal institutional deadlines that may be in place.

Attachments

Your application must also include the following attachments.

You should attach your documents as PDFs to avoid errors. They should be completed in single-spaced Arial 11 font or similar-sized sans serif typeface. EPSRC will not accept any other attachment types under this funding opportunity.

Read our advice on [writing proposals for EPSRC funding](#).

Case for support (six pages), including:

- two pages on the track record of the applicants. This should include the track record of the overseas academic partners
- four pages on a description of the proposed research. This should focus on the additionality of the proposed partnerships, and what this grant would enable which would not otherwise be feasible. This section should also describe in brief the whole planned research project or programme, including the contribution of overseas partners. Make sure you address all the assessment criteria, see 'Assessment Criteria' section

Justification of resources (two pages)

For this outline stage, a brief justification for the UK resources should be given. A short description should be provided of types of costs that the international partner's planned financial contribution will cover (for example, staff costs, travel, laboratory access).

Proposal cover letter (two pages)

This should be used to detail which eligibility criterion is fulfilled and through which EPSRC grants.

If the overseas partners are applying for or plan to apply for funding in parallel to enable their participation in the consortium this should also be specified in the proposal cover letter. Further details are not required at the outline stage but will be required at the full proposal stage.

If the required information is not included in the cover letter the outline proposal will be rejected without consideration by the shortlisting panel.

Please use a table with the following heading and complete the information in each column:

- EPSRC Grant Reference Number
- Principal Investigator name
- Holding research organisation
- Grant type (for example, Programme Grant)
- EPSRC grant value
- Grant end date

Ethical information

EPSRC will not fund a project if it believes that there are ethical concerns that have been overlooked or not appropriately accounted for. All relevant parts of the 'ethical information' section must be completed.

[Guidance on completing ethical information on the Je-S form.](#)

EPSRC guidance can be found under 'additional information'.

Is this page useful?

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

Outlines will be considered by a peer review panel; invited full proposals will undergo postal peer review, followed by a prioritisation panel, resulting in a rank-ordered list.

At the shortlisting and funding prioritisation panel meetings, proposals may be grouped by topic and ranked on separate lists, as required. If there is significant demand, then we may group the applications by topic and run two or more prioritisation panels. The panels will assess the proposals against the assessment criteria.

In the event of this funding opportunity being substantially oversubscribed as to be unmanageable, EPSRC reserve the right to modify the assessment process.

Assessment criteria

Outline stage

Fit to funding opportunity (primary)

This includes:

- added value to the UK research base of the proposed international research partnership

- unique features of the joint research team
- appropriateness and timeliness of proposed international partnership
- track record of UK applicant team working together
- meets national and international needs by establishing or maintaining a unique world leading activity

Quality (secondary)

The research excellence of the proposal, making reference to:

- the novelty, relationship to the context, timeliness and relevance to identified stakeholders
- the ambition, adventure, transformative aspects or potential outcomes
- the suitability of the proposed methodology and the appropriateness of the approach to achieving impact. For multidisciplinary proposals please state which aspects of the proposal you feel qualified to assess

Note that the quality of the proposed research will also be assessed in more detail at the full proposal stage.

Full proposal stage

The invited full proposal stage of this funding opportunity is likely to run on [The Funding Service](#) (TFS) our new funding platform, rather than via Je-S. The Funding Service has a digital form-based format. This means that the exact application requirements and assessment criteria may alter from what is currently published. Further information will be published in the full proposal opportunity.

Invited full proposals will undergo postal peer review, followed by a prioritisation panel. The assessment of the full proposals will take into account:

- the effectiveness and appropriateness of the approach to deliver the proposed work
- the applicant and teams capability to deliver, including the added value to research outcomes from the international partnership
- resources and cost justification

Feedback

Feedback will not be provided on unsuccessful outline proposals.

Contact details

Get help with developing your proposal

For help and advice on costings and writing your proposal please contact your research office in the first instance, allowing sufficient time for your organisation's submission process.

Ask about this funding opportunity

EPSRC International Team

Email: international@epsrc.ukri.org

Get help with applying through Je-S

Email

jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org

Telephone

01793 444164

Opening times

[Je-S helpdesk opening times](#)

Is this page useful?

Additional info

Background

Research is an international endeavour and many challenges that we face are global. As well as maintaining the strength of UK research, we want UK researchers to be able to work with the best collaborators around the world.

This funding opportunity is the third round of an EPSRC funding initiative, which aims to provide opportunities for leading UK research groups to work in partnership with the best international researchers for their research.

The objectives of this funding opportunity are:

- to enable high-profile, world-leading international collaborations focused on excellent research with impact
- to contribute to EPSRC's strategy by supporting high-quality research collaborations which align with our research area strategies and address priorities related to our [strategic delivery plan](#)
- to further the UK's strategic needs in international science and innovation partnerships

Full proposal stage

Documents we are likely to require at the full proposal stage include:

- project partner letters of support
- CVs of visiting researchers
- equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) plan
- justification of resources

- case for support
- workplan
- technical assessment for the use of any major facility, where applicable

EPSRC aims to support a diverse and inclusive research environment where there is equality of opportunities. As such, we will be asking for an EDI plan at the full proposal stage of this funding opportunity. These plans should describe the approaches and activities you will employ to enable and facilitate greater EDI in their project.

While we do not expect project teams to have specific expertise in EDI, the plans should still demonstrate an understanding of any EDI challenges associated with the project. EDI outcomes and the methods required to reach them should also be identified.

These plans should be feasible and have appropriate resources allocated to address the challenges.

Examples of what could be included in the EDI plan are:

- actions to promote inclusive participation in international collaboration activities
- EDI research
- EDI advocacy
- budgeting for activity and building a small team to deliver if necessary

However, applicants are not expected to include all of these examples.

The EDI plan should be project-specific, and focus on activities beyond any institutional EDI activities already in place.

[Further information on the types of we can provide.](#)

[Find out more about EDI at EPSRC.](#)

Supporting documents

[Equality impact assessment \(PDF, 167KB\)](#)

[Webinar output: international centre to centre research collaborations \(PDF, 1.3MB\)](#)

Timeline

9 March 2023 10:00am

Opening date

29 March 2023 2:00pm

Webinar

18 May 2023 4:00pm

Closing date

September 2023

Invited full proposal closing date

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/international-centre-to-centre-research-collaborations-2023>