



Funding opportunity

EPSRC strategic technical platform: outline stage

Opportunity status:	Closed
Funders:	Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)
Funding type:	Grant
Total fund:	£6,500,000
Award range:	£750,000 - £2,000,000
Publication date:	3 May 2023
Opening date:	24 April 2023
Closing date:	27 June 2023 4:00pm UK time

Is this page useful?

This funding opportunity supports research technical professional (RTP) groups in the UK. This is an outline stage. Successful applicants will be asked to submit a full proposal.

You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for EPSRC funding. RTPs may apply as principal investigator or co-investigator.

These will be regional or national, encompassing physical or digital research groups. Activities may be directed at either individuals or the community.

The full economic cost of your project can be up to £2 million and up to four years duration. EPSRC will fund 80% of the full economic cost (FEC).

Who can apply

Standard EPSRC eligibility rules apply. Research grants are open to:

- UK higher education institutions
- research council institutes
- UK Research and Innovation-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. Applications are explicitly welcomed from RTP, who may apply as either principal investigator or co-investigator
- 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)

For this funding opportunity, we specifically welcome applications led by RTPs who meet these conditions, who may apply as principal investigator or co-investigator.

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

Submissions to this funding opportunity will not count towards the [EPSRC repeatedly unsuccessful applicants 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

For over three years EPSRC has championed the role of the RTP and the research software engineer (RSE). These highly skilled and versatile community within the university sector have become increasingly prominent in the research community in this time due to initiatives such as the TALENT Commission, the Warwick Analytical Science Centre (WASC) and the Technician Commitment, among others.

While UK Research and Innovation has set a strategic objective of developing world class people and careers across the academic spectrum, this period has also

seen increasing recognition of the need to encourage more people to take up technical roles across universities and promote technical careers as a positive opportunity, due to the high demand for skilled technical staff nationwide.

Over this period EPSRC has begun to open up funding opportunities for RTPs that were not previously accessible. We are now launching this funding opportunity to fund strategic investments for systematic support, training and development to promote, enable and empower the RTP community in UK universities. These investments can be made in support of RTPs in both the physical and digital domains. Proposals should have a strategic regional or national focus, and may be based around a group of institutions or a particular scientific field or technology.

The proposals should offer a combination of personal and community-based activities and investments. You will need to describe how these investments will lead to the relevant RTP community gaining increased knowledge, skills and opportunities, and what the strategic benefit of this would be.

Examples of activities that could be considered include, but are not limited to:

- training opportunities (both in terms of new techniques and career development)
- secondments to other institutions or industries to train on new methods
- pump-priming access for facilities
- importing skills into the UK through visits to international facilities or hosting RTPs from internationally competitive institutes
- raising awareness of opportunities and community development
- conferences and workshops
- pilot projects and feasibility studies
- promotion and development of the role of RTPs in the context of universities in the UK (comparable to the 'plus' option of the current EPSRC Fellowship scheme)

Although not a funding opportunity requirement, applicants may wish to include a senior member of the host institution (such as a Dean of School or Pro Vice-Chancellor for example) to act as a champion to promote the RTP community at a high level.

The assessment will be a two-stage process:

- outline stage (this stage)
- full proposal stage: successful applicants at the outline stage will be invited to submit a full proposal, which will be assessed by an expert interview panel

The invited full proposal stage of this funding opportunity is likely to run on the [Funding Service](#), our new funding platform, rather than via the [Joint Electronic Submissions \(Je-S\) System](#).

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.

Funding available

A total of £6.5 million is available for this investment. Individual proposals should be in the range £750,000 to £2 million.

Awards should be up to four years in duration. A funding decision will be made in late 2023, with awards expected to start in April 2024.

Funding should be in addition to any existing support provided to RTPs in the host institution(s).

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](#).

Responsible innovation

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

International collaboration

Applicants planning to include international collaborators on their proposal should visit Trusted Research for [guidance on getting the most out of international collaboration while protecting intellectual property, sensitive research and personal information](#).

Is this page useful?

How to apply

You must apply using the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system.

You can find advice on completing your application in:

- the [Je-S handbook](#)
- [EPSRC guidance on writing applications](#)

We recommend you start your application early.

Your host organisation will also be able to provide advice and guidance.

Submitting your application

Before starting an application, you will need to log in or create an account in [Je-S](#). All investigators involved in the project need to be registered on Je-S, with an upgraded or investigator-level Je-S Account.

Any investigators who do not have a Je-S account must register for one at least seven working days before the funding opportunity deadline.

When applying:

1. Select 'documents', then 'new document'.
2. Select 'call search'.
3. To find the funding opportunity, search for: EPSRC Strategic Technical Platform Outlines.

This will populate:

- council: EPSRC
- document type: Outline Proposal
- scheme: EPSRC Outline
- call/type/mode: EPSRC Strategic Technical Platform 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.

Deadline

EPSRC must receive your application by 27 June 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.

Please note that due to the timing of this outline activity, invitations to submit a full proposal may be received within the school holiday period.

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](#).

Your application must also include the following attachments:

- case for support (four pages, one on your track record, two on the strategic objectives and proposed activities and one for an outline workplan, approximate costings and their justification)

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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'.

How we will assess your application

Assessment process

This will be a two-stage assessment process and this outline funding opportunity is stage one. Outlines submitted will be assessed by an external sift panel. Outlines that successfully pass this stage will be invited to submit a full proposal for stage two. At stage two, full proposals will be assessed by an expert interview panel. There will be no postal peer review stage.

At stage one, we are looking for applications that are a good fit for the funding opportunity. Any outline proposals EPSRC consider to be outside the scope of the funding opportunity, or not primarily within the remit of EPSRC, will be rejected prior to assessment without recourse to an expert panel. Outline proposals that meet the scope and remit will be assessed by an expert panel.

In addition to the recommendations of the panel, EPSRC will take a strategic, portfolio approach into account as part of the outline process. We do not plan to fund multiple activities in the same research area.

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

Stage one assessment criteria

Fit to scope

Quality and strategic vision

The strategic rationale for an investment in the relevant community, the relevant scale (regional or national), or the scientific field (for example, a particular discipline or technology).

Approach to the development of the community

The suitability of the proposed methodology and the appropriateness of the approach to achieving impact.

Resources

Resources requested are within the scope of the funding opportunity and fund activities appropriate to the strategic vision.

Applicants

The applicants have appropriate experience and understanding of the RTP community and the capability to deliver the proposed activities.

Remit

The proposed activity will benefit RTP communities working on science within the EPSRC remit

Stage two assessment criteria

Stage two will be undertaken using the Funding Service. At this stage, panel members will assess the full proposals using the following indicative criteria headings:

- vision: what are you hoping to achieve with your proposed work?
- approach: how are you going to deliver your proposed work?
- environmental sustainability: how will you embed environmental sustainability within all the hub activities?
- applicant and team capability to deliver: using the principles of Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI), write a narrative demonstrating you and your team's ability to successfully deliver the proposal
- resources and cost justification: what will you need to deliver your proposed work and how much will it cost?
- ethics and responsible research and innovation: what are the ethical or responsible research and innovation considerations of the proposed work?

These are subject to change. Full details will be provided in the stage two guidance.

Feedback

Feedback will be provided to successful applications following the outline process. Successful applicants will be expected to take account of this feedback when preparing their full proposal.

Guidance for reviewers

There will be no postal peer review of applications at either outline or full proposal stage.

Is this page useful?

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

Tony Chapman, Senior Portfolio Manager, research Infrastructure

Email: antony.chapman@epsrc.ukri.org

Mobile: 07768 032108

Research Infrastructure team inbox

Email: researchinfrastructure@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

Links to wider programme or area

This funding opportunity is of interest across the EPSRC remit.

Background

High-quality science is rarely, if ever, an individual pursuit. The wide number of roles involved in delivering the scientific output supported by EPSRC and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is now being recognised at a strategic level through the EPSRC and UKRI delivery plans, and initiatives such as UKRI's 101 jobs.

The TALENT Commission have pushed for increased recognition and support for technical staff across universities, and opportunities have gradually opened up for RTPs following this change of perspective. EPSRC has proactively encouraged RTPs to apply as principal investigator and co-investigator on equipment-based awards since 2020. RTPs have also been involved in funding panels and have been actively engaged in providing EPSRC with strategic advice through various routes.

Against this background, EPSRC is taking a further proactive step by providing this opportunity to create a co-ordinated structure to help the long-term development of RTPs.

Grant additional conditions

Grants will be awarded under the standard [UKRI grant terms and conditions](#). EPSRC reserves the right to include additional grant conditions.

Responsible innovation

EPSRC is fully committed to develop and promote responsible innovation. Research has the ability to not only produce understanding, knowledge and value, but also unintended consequences, questions, ethical dilemmas and, at times, unexpected social transformations.

We recognise that we have a duty of care to promote approaches to responsible innovation that will initiate ongoing reflection about the potential ethical and societal implications of the research that we sponsor and to encourage our research community to do likewise.

Reports and information

You should be aware of the following reports and information:

- the [Institute for Technical Skills and Strategy](#) was launched earlier this year
- [UKRI Technician Commitment Action](#)
- [TALENT Commission report \(2022\)](#)

Timeline

○ **24 April 2023**

Opening date

○ **27 June 2023 4:00pm**

Closing date

○ **July 2023**

Outline panel

○ **July 2023**

Full proposal stage opens

○ **October 2023**

Full proposal stage closes

November 2023

Full proposal panel

December 2023

Funding decision

Guidance on good research

[Good research resource hub](#)

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<https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/epsrc-strategic-technical-platform>