EPSRC Strategic Infrastructure Outline Opportunity Webinar

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Dr Li Convey, Senior Portfolio Manager, EPSRC
Dr Stephen Gilligan, Portfolio Manager, EPSRC

epsrcequipmentfunding@epsrc.ukri.org
Agenda

▪ Introduction

▪ Application routes

▪ How to apply?

▪ How we assess your applications?

▪ Q&A
At the Q&A session

▪ We will address questions about
  ▪ Strategic infrastructure opportunity details
  ▪ Eligibilities, Resources, Funding scale and values etc
  ▪ TFS questions in the context of applying to the strategic infrastructure opportunity – e.g. changes to the outline assessment criteria, what to include in each section, what staff roles should I use etc.

▪ We will not address questions about
  ▪ The new funding service operations – e.g. why a particular functionality is not available, if a functionality will be added to the funding service in the future, questions about other UKRI opportunities that use the funding service etc.
  ▪ Questions only related to full proposals – we will have another webinar in November for the full proposal stage
TFS Operation Contact Details

▪ TFS operational questions at platform level should be referred to the TFS IT Helpdesk.
  ▪ Email support@funding-service.ukri.org
  ▪ Telephone 01793 547490

▪ EPSRC policy related TFS questions should be referred to the business improvement team
  ▪ Email epsrcpeerreviewpolicy@epsrc.ukri.org
Introduction
EPSRC’s Strategic Priorities

Core Disciplines

The Physical and Mathematical Sciences Powerhouse: curiosity driven discovery, with boundless potential

Frontiers in Engineering and Technology: unleashing our productivity potential

Digital Futures: the future of communications, computing and the internet

Mission-Inspired and Translational Research

Engineering Net Zero: decarbonising our economy and society, creating an alternative energy future and developing truly circular economies

AI, Digitalisation and Data – Driving Value and Security: powering transformative change and the next industrial revolution

Transforming Health and Healthcare: improving quality of life through innovative technological solutions

Quantum Technologies: realising the transformative impact of this technology across business, government and society

An Effective Ecosystem for Engineering and Physical Sciences

International
Talent and Skills
Place
Impact
Business Engagement

World Class Infrastructure
What is Research Infrastructure?

Research Infrastructure in EPSRC covers capital equipment, facilities, high-performance computing (HPC), access to facilities, software, and people. It is vitally important to every area of EPSRC.
Infrastructure Budget

• In our last budget settlement, UKRI received a total budget of £25.1bn for three FY (22-23 – 24-25). Of this, the core EPSRC budget is £1.9bn (£620m - £660m per year).

• On top of this, across UKRI, there is a total budget for Infrastructure of £3.05bn over this period. Of this, £1.07bn is classed as WORLD CLASS LABS. This is the source of the EPSRC RI core budget, which is approximately £60m per year. This is our budget, where we have the greatest degree of autonomy over spending. Other sources of funding include the UKRI Infrastructure Fund and short-notice funding.
Enabling

Enhancing

State of the art

Equipment on grants (£10K – 400K, 80% fEC)

Core Equipment (£10K – 400K, 100% fEC)

Strategic Infrastructure (>£400K, up to 100% fEC)

Instrument Development (100% fEC)

UKRI Infrastructure Fund: Large Research Infrastructure

National Research Facilities

Project specific

Local

Regional

National

International

EPSRC Capital Framework

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
Strategic to whom?

An appropriate Strategic Infrastructure case can be made in a number of ways at a number of different levels. It does not necessarily have to have national significance or be unique if the strategic argument in support of it will lead to world leading science being enabled.
Application routes
Strategic Infrastructure Opportunity Details

• Intended to enhance UK scientific capability and support a portfolio of high-quality, cutting-edge research of high priority to EPSRC.

• The request should fit within the host institution strategy and enable research that predominantly falls within EPSRC’s remit.

• Two routes:
  • Route 1: Strategic infrastructure
  • Route 2: Resources to support existing strategic infrastructure

• Infrastructure must be multi-user in nature and non-project specific.

• EPSRC wishes to encourage a culture of sharing with regards to strategic equipment in order to gain appropriate maximum usage.

• You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for EPSRC funding.
Strategic Infrastructure Opportunity – Route 1

• Individual items of equipment over £400,000 or a suite of equipment intended to be combined in a single asset of total value over £400,000.

• Resource costs to cover procurement, installation and initial testing can be included (i.e. funding to undertake research is not a valid cost).

• Applicants need to demonstrate plans to ensure maximum usage.
  • This could include research across a number of Higher Education Institutions (HEI), or across a number of departments within a single HEI (provided a valid strategic case is presented)
  • As well as maximising usage, applicants should consider the quality of proposals and how this will be assessed as part of an access mechanism.
  • Long-term sustainability of funded equipment is an important consideration.
Strategic Infrastructure Opportunity – Route 2

Resources to support existing strategic infrastructure

• Only for invited applicants by the relevant theme leads in EPSRC where strategic needs are identified.

• Intended to maximise utilisation of existing infrastructure that has already been procured, delivered and installed.

• This funding route supports improved access and approaches to enable a better sharing of existing infrastructure. We expect that funding will provide seed or invest-to-save funding to initiate increased use and sustainability of the existing infrastructure.

• We do not expect that you will need more funding through this funding route after the first application. You must articulate clear plans for sustainability in your application.
What we will not fund

Strategic Infrastructure:
• Costs associated with the support of individual research projects or groups
• Underpinning infrastructure that we would expect to see in a well-found lab
• Software, research software development or cloud computing credits

Resources to support Strategic Infrastructure:
• Capital costs over £10,000
• Long-term research projects
• Replacement of existing support, maintenance, service contracts or capital costs
How to apply?
How to apply

▪ The application platform has changed from Joint Electronic Submissions to the UKRI new Funding Service

▪ When applying Strategic infrastructure outlines – UKRI
  ▪ Confirm you are the project lead
  ▪ Sign in or create a UKRI Funding Service account
  ▪ Answer questions in the text boxes. All questions and assessment criteria are listed in the How to apply section on the Funding finder page
  ▪ Send the completed application to your research office for checking
  ▪ Your research office will submit the completed and checked application to UKRI
  ▪ We must receive your application by 31 August 2023 at 4pm UK time.
Moving from Je-S to TFS – Key Differences

• EPSRC Strategic Infrastructure opportunity evolved from the previous Strategic Equipment grant to reflect:
  • Both equipment and resources can be requested
  • Both capital and digital infrastructure can be requested

• Each assessment criteria mirrors one section in the new application form

• The distinction between primary, secondary major and secondary criteria has been removed. All criteria are assessed equally on TFS

• The assessment criteria are phrased differently to house the TFS style. The content of the assessment criteria stays largely similar

• Outline introducer form mirrors the assessment criteria to ensure increased transparency and consistency
How to apply

- **Summary**
  (200 words) – Succinctly describe your proposed infrastructure in terms of:
  - What the proposed infrastructure is
  - Its context
  - Not assessed – the purpose is for EPSRC to identify panellists

- **Applicants**
  List the key members of your team and assign them to one of the roles listed on the application page.
  - You should only list 1 individual as project lead
  - Information on UKRI's new grant roles can be found [on the UKRI website](https://www.ukri.org)

[UKRI logo]
How to apply

- **Purpose and vision** (300 words)
  
  Provide evidence on how the infrastructure sought will:
  - enable transformative research that cannot be achieved elsewhere
  - enhance and complement the existing regional and/or national research capability
  - underpin [EPSRC research areas](https://www.epsrc.ukri.org/research/areas) and meet [EPSRC’s six world-class objectives and eight strategic priorities](https://www.epsrc.ukri.org/about/objectives-strategic-priorities)
  - have a strong demand from the user base
How to apply

- **Approach and sustainability** (350 words)

Explain how in your approach to the proposed infrastructure you will:

- manage access to the infrastructure,
- identify, prioritise and support users across the landscape
- maximise the utilisation of the infrastructure
How to apply

▪ **Approach and sustainability** (350 words)

Explain how you plan to ensure sustainability of the proposed infrastructure including:

▪ an appropriate cost recovery model
▪ training and development of specialist technical staff
▪ development or expansion of the user base after the initial period of funding
How to apply

- **Applicant and host institution capability to deliver** (250 words)

Provide evidence of how you, and if relevant your team, have:

- the relevant experience, appropriate to your career stage, to deliver the proposed work
- the right balance of skills and expertise to cover the proposed work, including the appropriate leadership and management skills on your approach to develop others

Provide evidence of why/how your host institution:

- is the most appropriate place for the proposed infrastructure
- will use its existing capacity to best complement the proposed infrastructure
How to apply

**Resource and cost justification** (250 words)

You will be asked to provide the expected costs of the proposed infrastructure in pounds sterling (including VAT). Make a clear distinction between cost of equipment items and the cost of any associated resources. State the anticipated funds that would be requested from:

- EPSRC
- host institution and project partners including the nature and level of contributions if applicable
How to apply

▪ **Resource and cost justification** (250 words)

▪ describe the timescales associated with procurement of the equipment and when you anticipate you will spend any capital provision made

▪ ensure the costs are as accurate as possible at this stage. The costs in a full proposal must be within + or -10% of the outline proposal
How to apply
- **Resource and cost justification** (250 words)

For each of above, demonstrate how the resources you anticipate needing:
- are comprehensive, appropriate and justified
- represent the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes
- maximise potential outcomes and impacts
How we assess your applications?
## How we map the application and assessment process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>App questions &amp; New assessment criteria</th>
<th>Previous Je-S business case requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>Description of equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section: Purpose and vision</td>
<td>Strategic Case, Alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section: Approach and sustainability</td>
<td>Support, Usage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section: Resource and cost justification</td>
<td>Cost, Vendor, Contributions from other sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section: Applicant and host institution capability to deliver</td>
<td>Ensuring maximum value</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Assessment Criteria:

- **Purpose and vision** (300 words) – Why is this infrastructure needed and why should EPSRC support it?
- **Approach and sustainability** (350 words) – What are your plans to manage and sustain the proposed infrastructure during and beyond the end of this funding
- **Applicant and host institution capability to deliver** (250 words) – Why are you and your host institution the right individual, team and place to procure and manage this infrastructure
- **Resource and cost justification** (250 words) – Are the resources requested from EPSRC and the contributions from host institution justified?
Strategic Infrastructure Process and Timeline

Outline Stage → Full Proposal Stage → Postal Peer Review → Interview Panel → Funding Decision

Timeline:
- 10 Jul 2023
- 31 Aug 2023
- 03 Oct 2023 (w/c 25 Sep)
- 01 Dec 2023
- 08 Jan 2024 (23 Feb 2024)
- w/c 25 March 2024
- Q1 2024/25
Strategic Infrastructure Process

• Key messages:
  • EPSRC expects universities to take a strategic approach to the submission of draft business cases, prioritising submissions if necessary.
  • Outline sift panel is an EPSRC internal staff panel. Your outline proposal should be aimed at this audience instead of the peer review community.
  • Postal peer review and interview panel will be assessing on the same set of full proposal assessment criteria.
  • Proposals for resources to support existing infrastructure that are invited to interview will be assessed using the same process as strategic infrastructure proposals but on a separate funding list.
How do we score your outline?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Invite to submit a full proposal as a high priority</td>
<td>The proposal clearly evidenced and justified that it meets all of the assessment criteria. It strongly aligns with EPSRC’s strategy and will enable world-leading transformative research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Invite to submit a full proposal stage as a low priority</td>
<td>The proposal clearly evidenced and justified that it meets most of the assessment criteria. The assessment criteria that are not fully addressed could be addressed in a full submission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Invite to an outline resubmission</td>
<td>The proposal meets most of the assessment criteria but has weaknesses that should be addressed before the proposal can progress to the full proposal stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Do not invite to an outline resubmission</td>
<td>The proposal does not meet all assessment criteria and is not competitive. It should not be invited for a resubmission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Out of scope</td>
<td>The proposal does not fit into the scope or the remit of the EPSRC strategic infrastructure opportunity. The applicants should not be invited to resubmit.</td>
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Strategic Infrastructure Future Directions

- From FY 2024/25, we will be running the Strategic Infrastructure Opportunity on TFS twice a year. The plan on the time period for each call is yet to be confirmed. We expect the next outline call to be around early 2024
- The number of proposals funded will not change. The budget line for Strategic Infrastructure will not change
- This will provide a greater clarity on timelines for the community
- This ensures a consistent application processing time for the community
Q&A

Contact us via:
Epsrcequipmentfunding@epsrc.ukri.org