EPSRC Strategic Infrastructure Outline Opportunity Webinar

Aug 2023

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Agenda

- **Introduction**

- **Application routes**

- **How to apply?**

- **How we assess your applications?**

- **Q&A**

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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

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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**

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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

International   **Talent and Skills**   **Place**   **World Class Infrastructure**   **Impact**   **Business Engagement**
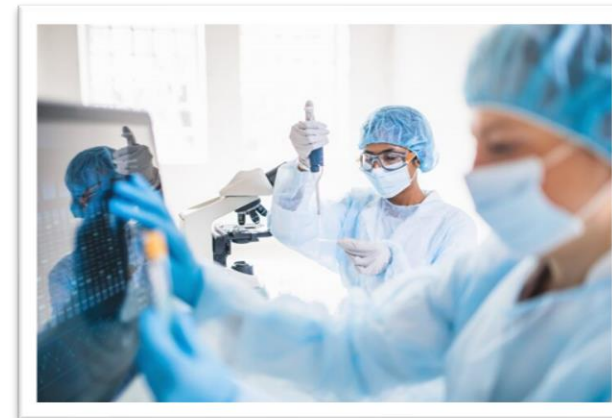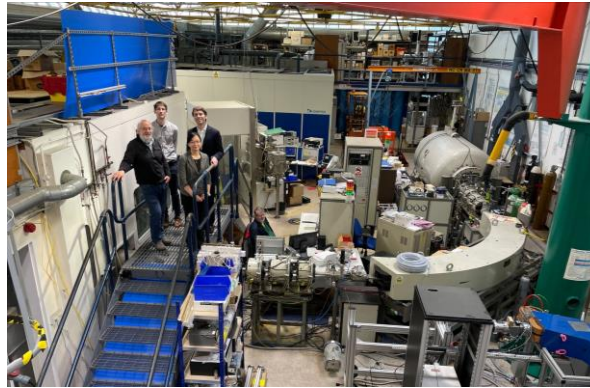
An Effective Ecosystem for Engineering and Physical Sciences

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.
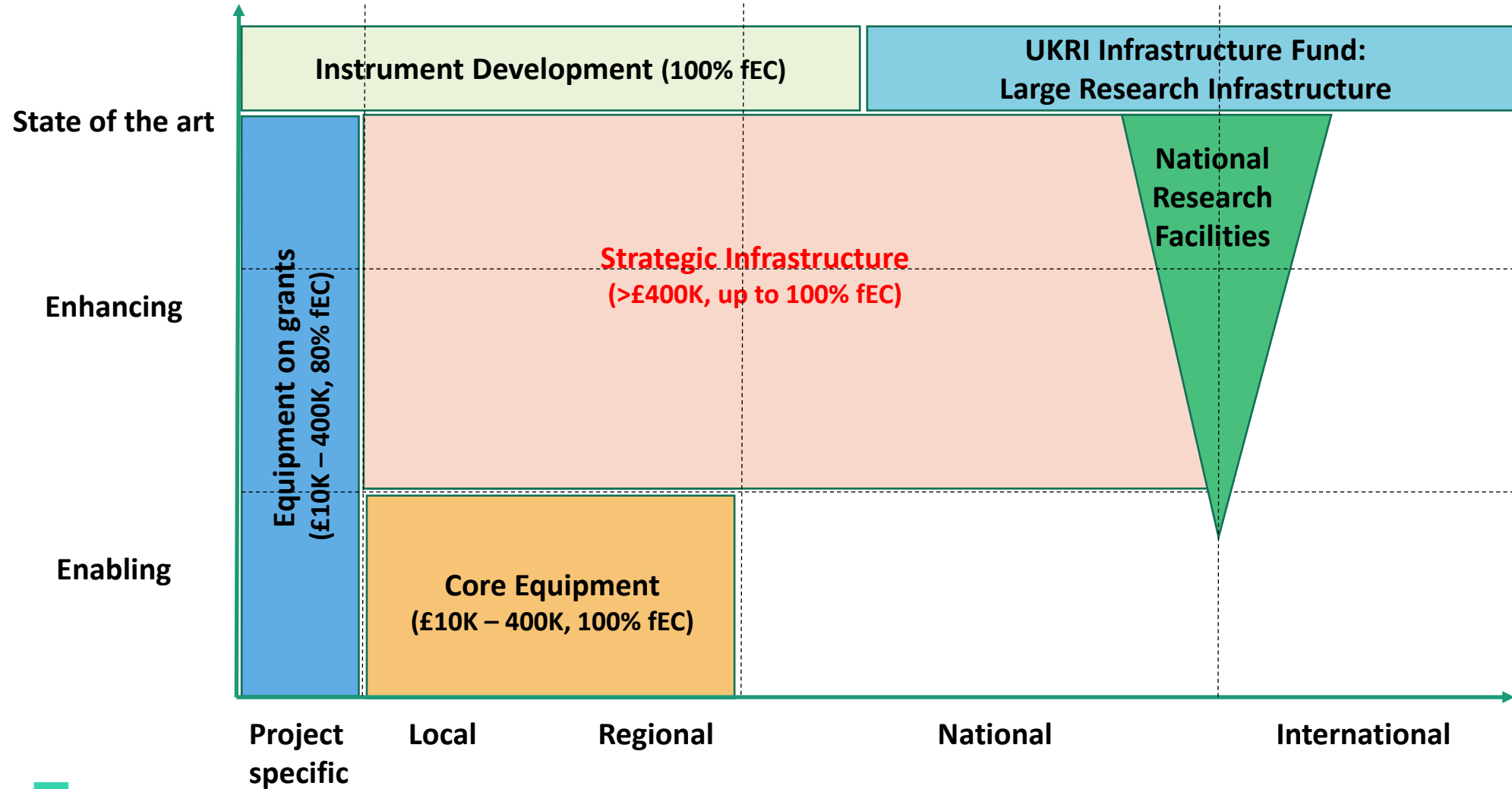
Infrastructure Budget

- 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.

Arts and Humanities Research Council **£207m**	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council **£944m**	Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council **£1,929m**
Economic and Social Research Council **£362m**	Medical Research Council **£1,750m**	Natural Environment Research Council **£925m**
Science and Technology Facilities Council **£1,651m**	Research England **£6,227m**	Innovate UK **£2,438m**
Infrastructure **£3,053m**	Existing time limited commitments and Centrally Managed Funding* **£3,674m**	Collective Talent Funding and new cross-UKRI Strategic Programmes **£2,805m**

*includes existing cross-UKRI Strategic Programmes (and other time limited commitments such as COVID interventions), support for UKRI transformation, public engagement, and open access

EPSRC Capital Framework

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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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**.

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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

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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](#)

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 and meet EPSRC's six world-class objectives and eight 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

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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

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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

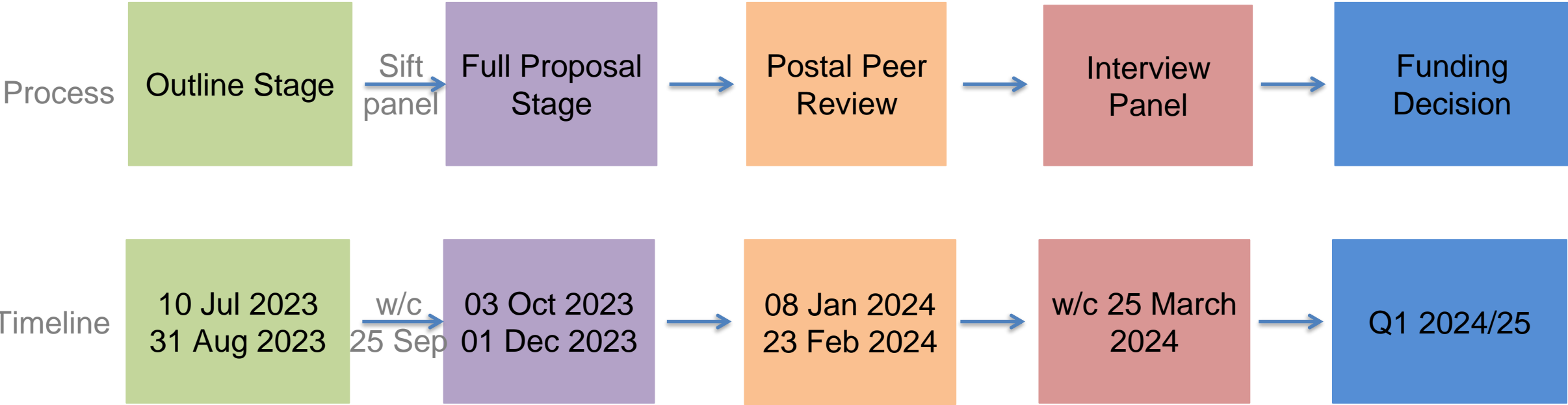- maximise potential outcomes and impacts

How we assess your applications?

How we map the application and assessment process

App questions & New assessment criteria	Previous Je-S business case requirements
Summary	Description of equipment
Section: Purpose and vision	Strategic Case, Alternatives
Section: Approach and sustainability	Support, Usage
Section: Resource and cost justification	Cost, Vendor, Contributions from other sources
Section: Applicant and host institution capability to deliver	Ensuring maximum value

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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

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

Timeline	10 Jul 2023 31 Aug 2023	w/c 25 Sep	03 Oct 2023 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.

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How do we score your outline?

Score	Description	Definition
5	Invite to submit a full proposal as a high priority	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.
4	Invite to submit a full proposal stage as a low priority	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.
3	Invite to an outline resubmission	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.
2	Do not invite to an outline resubmission	The proposal does not meet all assessment criteria and is not competitive. It should not be invited for a resubmission.
1	Out of scope	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.

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