

Experimental Equipment Call

Call type: Invitation for proposals

Closing date: December 9th 2014

Related themes: Energy, Engineering, Healthcare Technologies, ICT, Manufacturing the Future, Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Research Infrastructure

Summary

EPSRC is making available up to £50 million of its capital budget to refresh and update experimental equipment in universities. This funding is available for all research areas in EPSRC's remit. Funding will be allocated as institutional awards and it is expected that around 20 such awards will be made. Applications to this call will be judged directly by a specially convened peer review panel drawn from across EPSRC's remit. Only capital funding is available from this call, associated running costs and other resources will need to be met by the institution. Only one application per university is allowed, with a minimum value of £1 million.

Background

Internationally leading science requires state of the art experimental facilities providing modern equipment. In engineering and physical sciences (EPS), lab-based equipment for research is ubiquitous. A wide range of equipment is used; examples include materials processing, characterisation and analysis; microscopy, metrology, spectroscopy, tomography, and lasers.

EPSRC advised in its submission to the recent BIS consultation on capital that investment in lab-based equipment at universities was absolutely essential to support our portfolio of world-class research, to ensure the next generation are trained in the usage of the most up-to-date techniques, and to create internationally leading facilities that are attractive to industry. As a demonstration of our commitment to this view, EPSRC is making available up to £50 million of its capital budget to refresh and update experimental equipment in universities.

Applications are encouraged across all research areas in EPSRC's remit. As an example, applications aligned to the broad field of research in Advanced Materials would be welcomed. Previous investment in capital infrastructure helped to support the research base in Advanced Materials as well provide additional capability for materials discovery and development in UK universities. However, as identified by an expert panel at the Materials Research Exchange 2014, there is still a need to focus capital investment on the upgrade of existing materials processing and characterisation equipment to support advancements in theoretical and modelling capabilities.

As in its Strategic Equipment process for large items of equipment, EPSRC will be looking for the equipment's usage to be maximised, through managing and sharing access. There is continuing pressure to improve the capital efficiency of the capital base underpinning science which then leads to improved sustainability.

For more information about EPSRC's portfolio and strategies, see our website: <http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/ourportfolio/>

Funding available

Up to £50 million capital funding is available. It is likely this will be allocated as institutional awards through the Equipment Account, and it is expected that around 20 such awards will be made.

Institutions are invited to submit applications consisting of separate bundles of equipment. An application may be fully or partially awarded, with the Peer Review panel identifying the bundles to be supported. Unless strongly advised otherwise by the panel, bundles will be funded in their entirety or not at all. Whilst applications relating to Advanced Materials are welcomed, allocation of funding will be based on the quality of the application as defined by the assessment criteria stated in this call document.

Bundles can consist of:

- Equipment meeting particular departmental or discipline requirements
- Equipment for multi-disciplinary research areas (for instance straddling several departments or for research centres)
- Equipment that will be used across a regional grouping of universities

Please note the following:

- Only capital funding is available from this call. Associated running costs and other resources such as technical staff costs, will need to be met by the institution.
- Only one application per university is allowed, with a minimum value of £1 million.
- The Principle Investigator on the application should be the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research or equivalent.
- Each bundle should have a minimum value of £500k.
- Only items over £10k are allowable.
- EPSRC will award costs at 100%. The quoted cost of an item should include VAT, delivery charges and have any academic or other discount subtracted. Particular care must be taken where currency conversions are required. EPSRC will not adjust awards on the basis of incorrect calculations.
- Equipment must be supporting research that is very clearly centred in EPSRC's remit.
- As the focus of the call is experimental equipment, high performance computing equipment is excluded.
- Laboratory refurbishment costs are allowed IF these can be shown to be directly related to the housing of the equipment requested.

Eligibility

Only higher education institutions are eligible to apply. The Principle Investigator on the application should be the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research or equivalent.

How to apply

Submitting application

You should prepare and submit your proposal using the Research Councils' Joint electronic Submission (Je-S) System (<https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/>).

When adding a new proposal, you should select:

- Council 'EPSRC'
- Document type 'Standard Proposal/Outline Proposal/Fellowship Proposal'
- Scheme 'Standard/Outline/Advanced Research Fellowship/...'
- On the Project Details page you should select the 'Experimental Equipment' call.

Note that clicking 'submit document' on your proposal form in Je-S initially submits the proposal to your host organisation's administration, not to EPSRC. Please allow sufficient time for your organisation's submission process between submitting your proposal to them and the call closing date. EPSRC must receive your application by 16:00 on 9th December 2014.

Guidance on the types of support that may be sought and advice on the completion of the research proposal forms are given on the EPSRC website (<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance/>) which should be consulted when preparing all proposals.

Guidance on writing application

Applications must include the following documentation:

- Host Organisation Statement (1 side)
- Case for Support (3 sides **per bundle**)
- Pathways to Impact (2 sides)
- Work Plan (1 side)
- Project Partner Letter(s) of Support (only to be included from organisations contributing financially to the proposal)
- Equipment Quote – This should be a tabulated summary of equipment quotations (only to be included for equipment over the OJEU threshold, the current OJEU threshold is available on the EPSRC website <http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/facilities/equipment/process/>).

Applications not conforming to this format will not be considered further.

Host Organisation Statement (1 side of A4)

A statement from the PVC Research or equivalent, outlining how the requests align to the University's own priorities and strategies for equipment. This should include: how the university approaches the sustainability of its experimental capital equipment base; and how the university manages its equipment base to maximise usage and encourage sharing. The statement should explain, in general terms, how the equipment will be supported (technical expertise and

running costs), maintained and updated during and beyond the duration of this funding. Any direct institutional contributions to these purchases should be clearly stated. The statement should describe how the proposed equipment underpins and adds value to the organisation's EPSRC funded research portfolio.

Case for Support

This should provide a **business case for each bundle** (3 sides **per bundle**)

Please include the following information for each bundle:

- *descriptive overview* of the equipment requested and why a particular choice has been made (justification of resources)
- *scientific excellence*: details of the research capability that will be enabled by this equipment. In particular, explain how the equipment will underpin a portfolio of research.
- *national importance and strategic context* of the application: how the equipment fits within the broader UK context e.g. the strategy of the institution, existing investments in the UK research base by EPSRC, TSB, government departments, industry.
- *management and sustainability*: how access to the requested equipment will be managed to maximise its usage and where appropriate shared, and who will be responsible. How the equipment will be supported, maintained and updated during and beyond the duration of this funding. A clear view as to the medium term sustainability of the equipment should be provided.
- *financial summary*: an overview of the costs of the equipment requested, and an itemisation of any contributions from the institution and industrial partners.

Pathways to Impact (2 sides of A4)

Describe the kinds of impact envisaged, how the requested equipment will be managed to engage users and beneficiaries and increase the likelihood of impacts.

Work Plan (1 side of A4)

The procurement, anticipated delivery date, installation and 'available for use' date of the equipment should be illustrated with a simple diagrammatic work plan, for example, a PERT or Gantt chart.

Project Partner Letters of Support (no page limit)

Statements should only be included from industrial organisations who are contributing financially to the proposal, whether it be direct or in kind.

Equipment Quote

Provide a table for each bundle, summarising three quotations (cost and name of supplier) for all items of equipment requested over the OJEU threshold, and highlighting which quote will be accepted and why. If there are not three suppliers, as many quotes as possible should be obtained. The quotations themselves are not required.

If the attachments are uploaded as Word documents, please be aware that once the application has been submitted to the Council/Funder, all the attachments will be converted and held as an Adobe Acrobat file (PDF). Also please note, that whilst we support a wide range, **we do not support all MS Word font types**. Therefore if an unsupported font type is used a different font type may be substituted which may result in changes to the layout of the document. For this reason we recommend that the documents are converted to PDF files before uploading.

Also, please note that on submission to council **all** non-PDF documents are converted to PDF, the use of non-standard fonts may result in errors or font conversion, which could affect the overall length of the document.

In addition, where non-standard fonts are present, and even though the converted PDF document may look unaffected in the Je-S System, when it is imported into the Research Councils Grants System some information may be removed. We therefore recommend that where a document contains any non-standard fonts (scientific notation, diagrams etc.), the document is converted to PDF prior to attaching it to the proposal

For advice on writing proposals see:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance/preparing/>

Assessment

Assessment process

Applications to this call will be judged directly by a specially convened peer review panel drawn from across EPSRC's remit. Decisions to fund will be made on the criteria below. As this call will operate a single stage peer review process with no postal refereeing stage, there will be no opportunity for applicants to respond to the decisions made at the Panel meeting. Feedback will only be provided where the Panel feel it appropriate.

Assessment criteria

- Quality of the research portfolio(s) under-pinned by the proposed equipment
- Strategic fit: how the proposed equipment supports strategic priorities and adds value to previous investments
- Appropriate pathways to impact
- Strength of the institutional strategy for the equipment, including the added value of supporting resources, and plans for financial sustainability
- Strength of the proposed processes for management of access to the equipment and maximising usage

Key dates

| Activity | Date |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Call opens | October 2014 |
| Closing date for receipt of applications | 9 th December 2014 |
| Assessment panel | January 2015 |
| Applicants informed of outcome | End of January 2015 |
| Grant announcements | February/March 2015 |
| Spend of capital completed | March 2016 |

Contacts

General Enquiries

Susan Morrell

susan.morrell@epsrc.ac.uk

01793 44 4462

Michelle Lascelles

michelle.lascelles@epsrc.ac.uk

01793 44 4461

Nigel Birch

nigel.birch@epsrc.ac.uk

01793 44 4224

Natasha Richardson

natasha.richardson@epsrc.ac.uk

01793 44 4401

Theme Contacts – for theme specific enquiries

(Click on the relevant name to email – or use *first name.last name@epsrc.ac.uk*)

- Physical Sciences - [Christina Turner](#) or [Martin Sweet](#)
- ICT - [Diane Howard](#)
- Engineering - [Michelle Lascelles](#)
- Maths - [Philippa Hemmings](#)
- Healthcare Technologies - [Mark Tarplee](#)
- Manufacturing - [James Fleming](#)
- Energy - [Neil Bateman](#)

Change log

| Name | Date | Version | Change |
|--------------------|----------|---------|--------|
| Michelle Lascelles | 06/10/14 | 1 | N/A |
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