EPSRC Strategic Infrastructure Full Opportunity Webinar

June 2024

Dr Katie Blaney, Dr Li Convey, Dr Rachel Rothwell, Dr Stephen Gilligan, Dr Afia Masood; EPSRC

Prof Kate Sang, Dr Clay Magill, Dr James Richards; Heriot-Watt University

Agenda

- **Introduction (5mins)**

- **Strategic Infrastructure Opportunity (20mins)**

- **Accessibility plan knowledge session (20mins)**

- **Q&A (45mins)**

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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

**Dr Katie Blaney,
Joint Head of Research Infrastructure,
EPSRC**

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

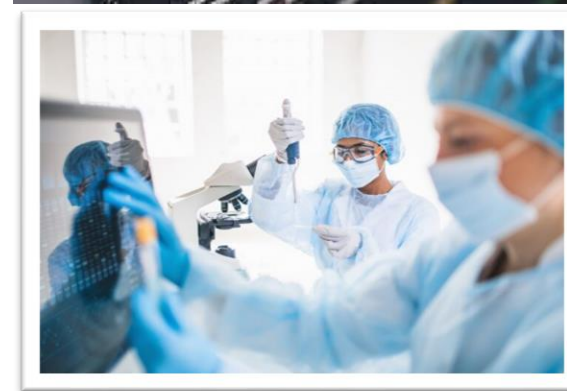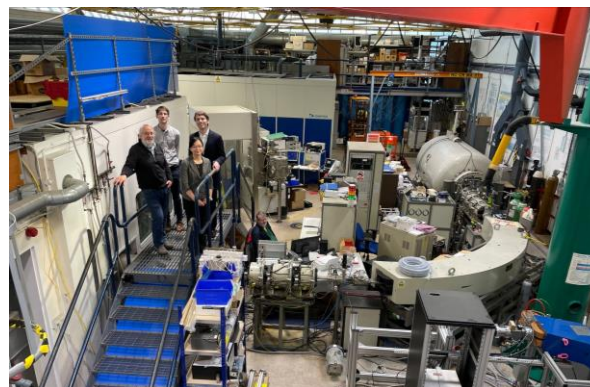**International**   **Talent and Skills**   **Place**   **World Class Infrastructure**   **Impact**   **Business Engagement**

An Effective Ecosystem for Engineering and Physical Sciences

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

UKRI

Research Infrastructure Vision

Invest future proofing state-of-the-art research infrastructure, provide research community with the world-class infrastructure to make world-leading discovery led science happen.
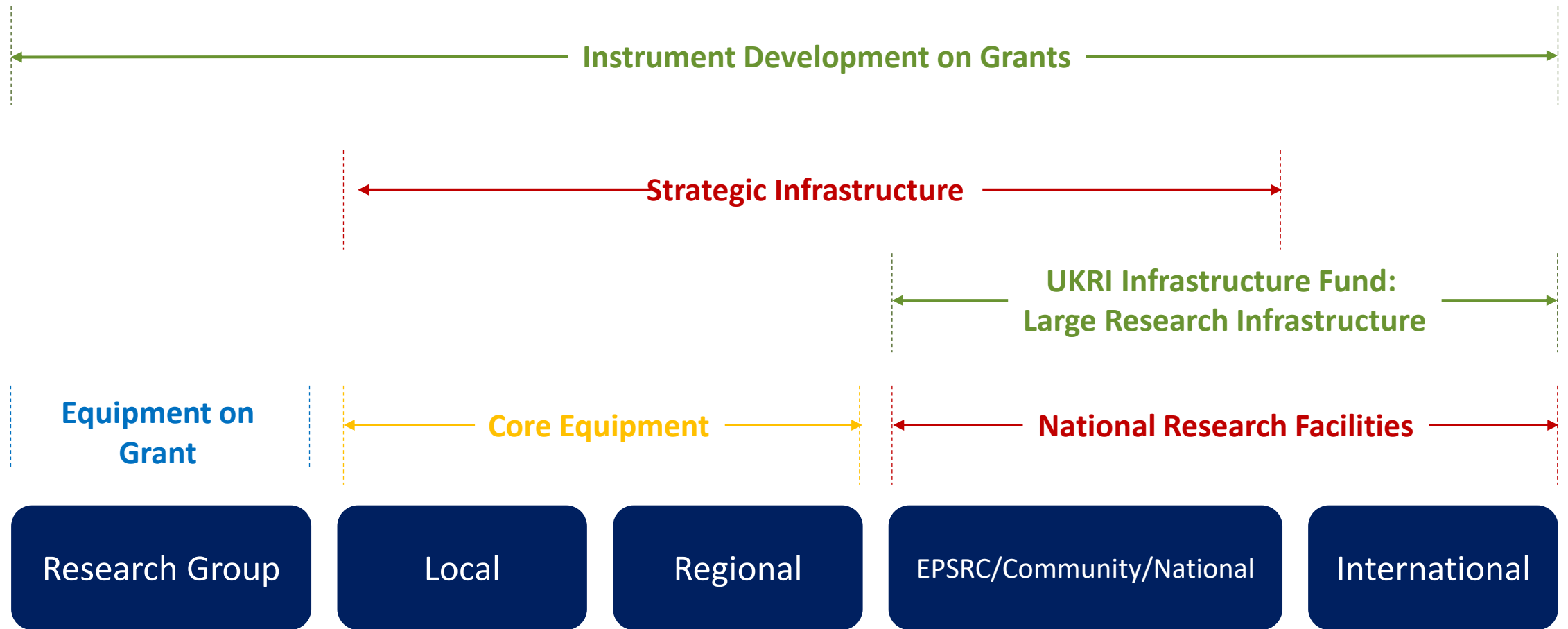
Infrastructure Budget

- 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 infrastructure 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.

*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 (RI) Capital Framework

Strategic Infrastructure Opportunity

Dr Li Convey,
Senior Portfolio Manager, Research Infrastructure
EPSRC

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.

- 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**.

- The request should fit within the **host institution strategy** and enable research that predominantly falls within EPSRC's remit.

- You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for EPSRC funding.

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

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Strategic Infrastructure Opportunity – Route 1

- Multi-user equipment **of strategic value** with a capital cost (to EPSRC) in excess of **£400k**. There is no formal upper limit but discuss your proposal with us if the value is **>£3m**.

- **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** and equipment sharing
    - 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)
    - 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 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

- Underpinning infrastructure that we would expect to see in a well-found lab

- Software, research software development or cloud computing credits

Resources to support existing strategic infrastructure:

- Capital costs over £10,000

- Long-term research projects

- Replacement of existing support, maintenance, service contracts or capital costs

How to apply

- **All strategic infrastructure opportunity applications must be submitted from the UKRI new Funding Service**
- **When applying** https://funding-service.ukri.org/OPP637/apply/665
  - Check that you have received an invitation to apply from EPSRC
  - Confirm you are the project lead
  - Sign in or create a UKRI Funding Service account
  - All questions and assessment criteria are listed in the How to apply section on Strategic infrastructure for engineering and physical sciences: June 2024 – UKRI
  - 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 **20 August 2024** at **4pm UK time**.

UK RI

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How to apply

- **Summary**

(550 words) – Succinctly describe your proposed infrastructure in terms of:

  - context
  - challenges
  - aims and objectives
  - potential applications and benefits
  - **not assessed – the purpose is for EPSRC to identify assessors**
  - **should be suitable for a variety of readers, including the public, wider community and policy makers**

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How to apply

- **Core team**

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](#)
- Postdoctoral research assistants should be included as **research and innovation associate**
- **RTP** can be listed as project lead or co-lead (UK), providing requirements are met

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Applicant questions and assessment criteria

Purpose: Why is this infrastructure needed and why should EPSRC support it?

Vision: What research will be enabled by this infrastructure?

Approach (new accessibility plan): What are your plans to manage the proposed infrastructure?

Sustainability: what are your plans for sustainability of the proposed infrastructure beyond the end of the funding?

Applicant and team capability to deliver: Why are you the right individual, team and place to procure and manage this infrastructure?
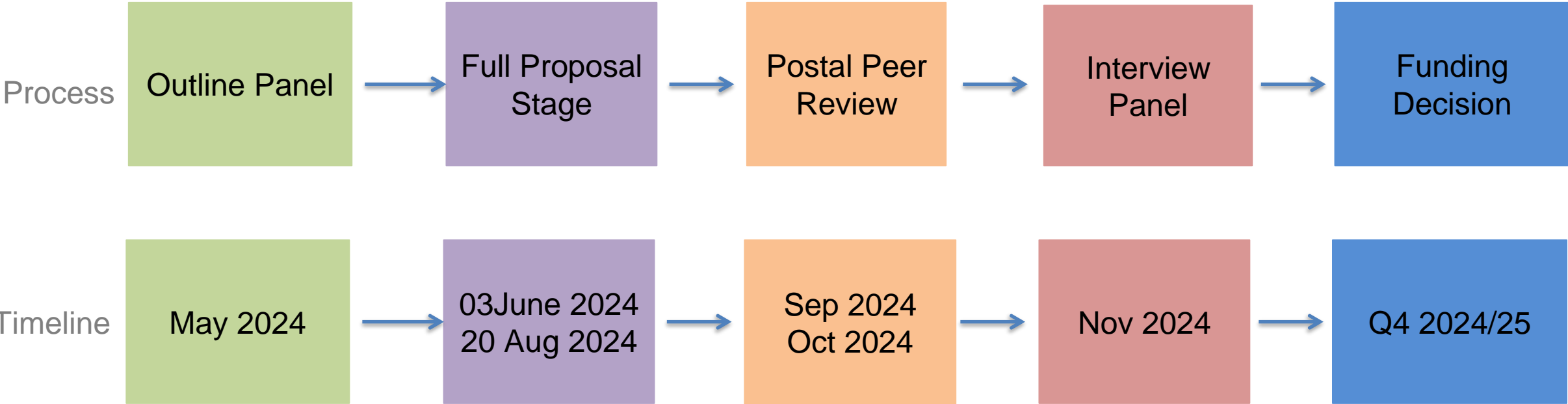
Your organisation's support: How are the contributions in line with the infrastructure requested?

Resources and cost justification: What will you need to procure and manage the infrastructure and how are these costs justified?

Resource and cost justification

Directly incurred

Total applied for £: 0 —

Fund heading	Full economic cost (fEC)	% of fEC	Applied for
Staff	-	80%	£0
Equipment	£	80%	£0
Travel and subsistence	£	80%	£0
Other	£	80%	£0

Exceptions

Total applied for £: 0 —

Fund heading	Full economic cost (fEC)	% of fEC	Applied for
Staff	-	100%	£0
Equipment	£	100%	£0
Travel and subsistence	£	100%	£0
Other	£	100%	£0

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Strategic Infrastructure Process and Timeline

Process	Outline Panel	Full Proposal Stage	Postal Peer Review	Interview Panel	Funding Decision
Timeline	May 2024	03June 2024 20 Aug 2024	Sep 2024 Oct 2024	Nov 2024	Q4 2024/25

Key messages

- EPSRC would like to emphasise that the submissions made should be considered as **strategic necessity** for the host institution which enhances and compliments the institutional long-term strategy, **NOT** an infrastructure 'nice to have'. Institutions should be **highly selective** about which applications they put forward taking into account the **strategic importance** of the infrastructure to the host institution.

- EPSRC expects institutions to take a strong strategic approach to the submission of draft applications and to **prioritise the submissions** that are of the highest strategic importance to the institutions.

- Next strategic infrastructure outline will open in June 2024 as an **open call**. This means that there **won't be a fixed deadline** and applicants can **submit at any time** across the year.

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Accessibility plan knowledge session

Prof Kate Sang, Heriot-Watt University

Associate Prof James Richards, Heriot-Watt University

Associate Prof Clay Magill, Heriot-Watt University

What we will talk about

- Social model of disability and intersectionality

- Accessibility

- 'Nothing about us, without us': co-production

- Monitoring and evaluation

- Code of conduct

EDICa

Social model of disability

- Rooted in political organising of disabled people in the 1970s
- Aimed to move away from viewing disability as negative feature of the individual towards an understanding of the oppression and barriers faced by disabled people.
- Differences between impairment (the condition someone has) and disability (the social oppression which arises from a person with an impairment interacting with an environment designed by, and for, able-bodied people).
- Disabled person rather than person with a disability

EDICa

Social model of disability and neurodiversity

Neurodivergent people are disabled by neurotypical workplaces

– built environment, workplace policies, practices, as well as

social norms

EDICa

Intersectionality

- Origins in Black feminist legal research – Kimberle Crenshaw

- How do two or more social locations/identities intersect?

- Relevant to disability – disabled people's experiences and needs are affected by disability and other identities/characteristics such as gender and race.

EDICa

Accessibility – what does our research tell us?

Disabling barriers can be physical, policy, practice and attitudes

Barriers	Example
Physical	Lighting, sound, access to WASH facilities, lab coat fabrics, signage, step access,
Policy	Health and safety, lack of intersectionality, attendance, promotions, recruitment and selection
Practices	Socialising, unspoken or written expectations, communication styles, BSL interpreting
Attitudes	Explicit & implicit ableism, assumptions

EDICa

Nothing about us without us – co-production

- Do with and not for (avoid paternalistic assumptions)

- Co-design workshops – to identify issues and potential solutions

EDICa

Monitoring and evaluation

- Equality Impact Assessments
- User accessibility surveys (staff, students and visitors) - may find a qualitative approach better
- Monitor declaration rates of disability – ideally, these would increase in the short term
- Health and Safety

EDICa

Code of conduct

- To cover all aspects of work – including events, social activities, staff, students and visitors

- Consider a complaints process

EDICa

Key ideas to remember

- The social model of disability – identify and remove disabling barriers

- Nothing about us, without us – do **with** and **not for**

- Heterogenous experiences and needs

EDICa

Q&A

Contact us via:
Epsrcequipmentfunding@epsrc.ukri.org