Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council

EPSRC Core Equipment Award 2024 Webinar

25 July 2024

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Agenda

- Introduction (10 mins)
- Background to Core Equipment (5 mins)
- How to Apply (15 mins)
- Assessment Process (5 mins)
- Q&A (55mins)

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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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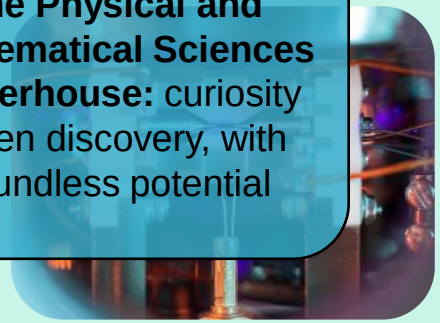
Introduction

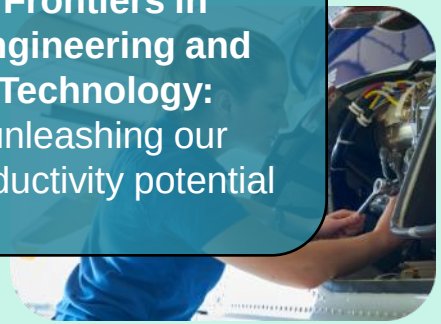
EPSRC's Strategic Priorities

Core Disciplines

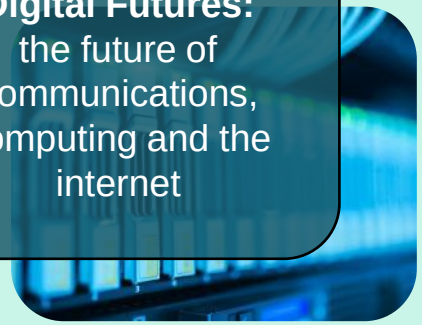
The Physical and Mathematical Sciences Powerhouse: curiosity driven discovery, with boundless potential



Frontiers in Engineering and Technology: unleashing our productivity potential

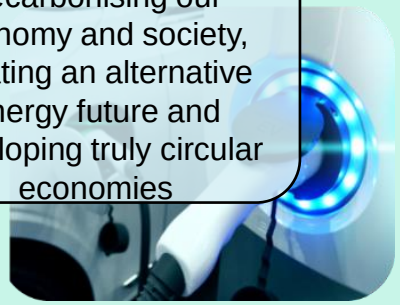


Digital Futures: the future of communications, computing and the internet

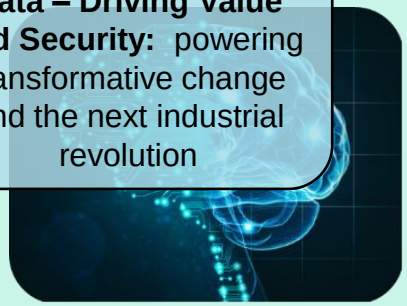


Mission-Inspired and Translational Research

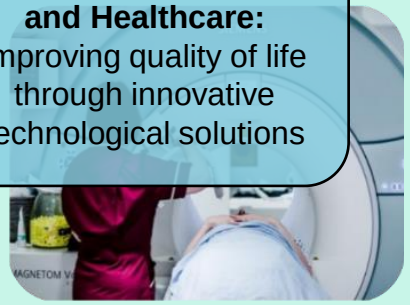
Engineering Net Zero: decarbonising our economy and society, creating an alternative energy future and developing truly circular economies



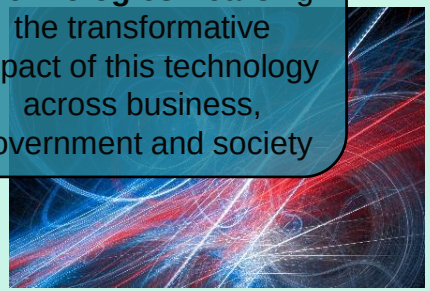
AI, Digitalisation and Data – Driving Value and Security: powering transformative change and the next industrial revolution



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



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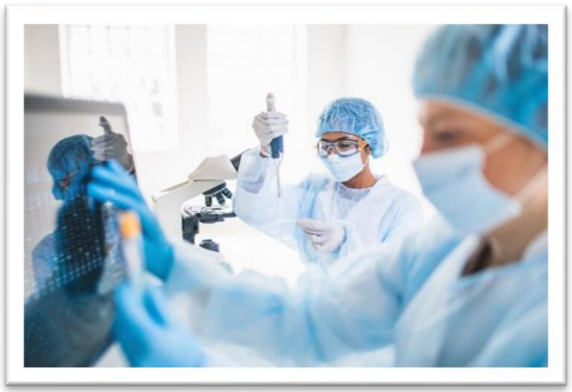
International | Talent and Skills | Place | World Class Infrastructure | Impact | Business Engagement

An Effective Ecosystem for Engineering and Physical Sciences

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.



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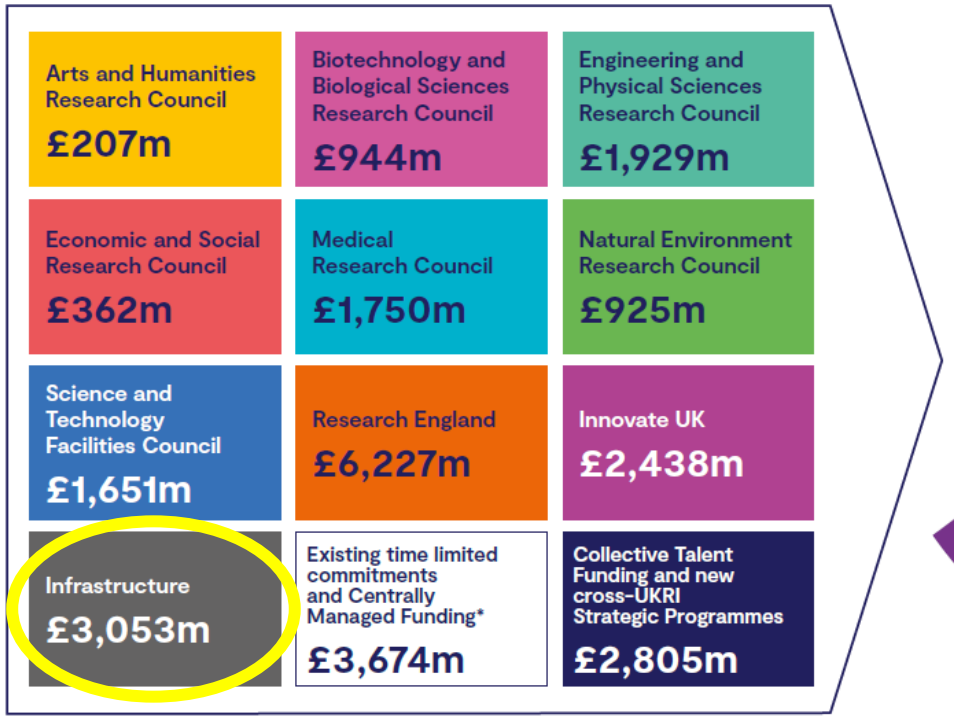
Infrastructure Budget

- 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

Five cross-cutting priorities

World-leading discovery-led science cannot happen without world-class infrastructure. It creates an ecosystem where research infrastructure underpins all EPSRC research areas.

Data	EDI	People	Place	Sustainability

- Data: optimising data usage, management and accessibility
- EDI: improve and widen participation for infrastructure universal accessibilities
- People and skills: promoting RTPs, RSEs and ECRs
- Place: scale and distribution of infrastructure across the nations
- Sustainability: ensuring environmental, operational sustainability of infrastructure

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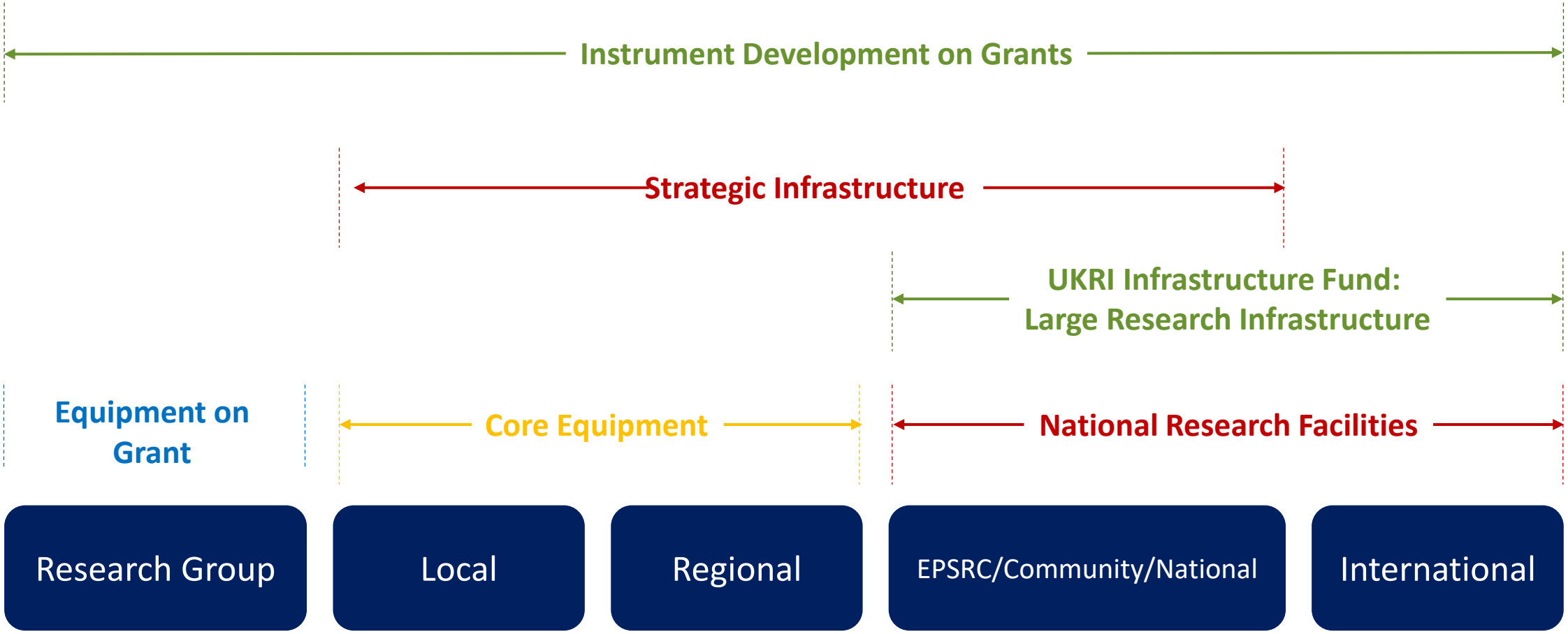
Background to Core Equipment

EPSRC (RI) Capital Framework



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State of the Art Enabling or Enhancing Enhancing Enabling

Overview of Capital Funding

The overall EPSRC **World Class Labs (WCL)** budget covers six main areas of investment:

- **Equipment on Grants:** applicants can request individual items of equipment between £10k and £400k at 80% fEC to be dedicated to the project for its duration.
- **Strategic Infrastructure:** Equipment in excess of £400k with significant strategic value to the UK academic research portfolio. No upper limit, but practically ca. £4.5m.
- **Core Equipment:** Fixed award by EPSRC based on performance in peer-reviewed funding. To support underpinning equipment up to £400k in value
- **Digital Infrastructure capital investments:** to replace HPC hardware such as Tier 2. Funded through Strategic Infrastructure.
- **National Research Facilities:** Unique capabilities of need to a large user community.
- **Subscriptions to Large Facilities and international NRFs:** to allow access to various facilities for EPSRC researchers.

Background to Core Equipment

- This is the fourth Core Equipment call run by EPSRC since 2019.

- This is an institutional-level award to provide funding for underpinning, multi-user equipment for use in engineering and physical sciences research.
  - Invitation only – if you have not received an invitation letter, you are not eligible to apply.
  - A block award that can be augmented with a university contribution.
  - The size of award is variable between institutions, based on past performance at winning funding from the World Class Labs budget (excluding non-competitive calls).
  - Overall funding is based on the available budget.

EPSRC Core Equipment Award 2024

- For multi-user equipment mostly enabling research (as opposed to mainly commercial use).
- We provide the basic funding; the host institution decides internally how best to use this money.
- EPSRC has some basic requirements:
  - Individual items of equipment with a total value of between £10K and £400K are eligible.
  - The maximum value of any individual item should be £400k.
  - Items over £400K allowable if agreed by EPSRC, with balance supported by the institution.
  - Multiple items can be bought, if the budget allows this.
  - The host institution can give additional funding if it wishes to do so.
  - University contributions were not mandatory. Items can be requested up to 100% fEC.

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EPSRC Core Equipment Award 2024

- **Investments must meet at least one of the following objectives:**
  - Underpinning multi-user equipment benefitting one or more departments.
  - Invest to save:
    - Upgrades and improvements to existing equipment to:
      - extend its lifespan through the replacement of obsolete or worn-out components;
      - expand its capability to be of value to a wider range of users;
      - improve efficiency of the equipment.
    - Enhancing environmental sustainability (e.g. through recycling cryogenic cooling liquids).
    - Capital costs incurred in co-locating existing or new equipment to provide enhanced sharing, usage and collaboration.
  - Capital investment for the benefit of early career researchers and doctoral training activities that they are involved in, to promote a culture of collaboration, equipment sharing and maximising usage.

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How to Apply

How to apply

- **All core equipment applications must be submitted from the UKRI Funding Service**
- **When applying** https://funding-service.ukri.org/OPP651/apply/695
  - 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 EPSRC Core Equipment Award 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 **19 September 2024** at **4pm UK time**.

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How to apply

- **Summary**

(550 words) – Succinctly describe your proposed work 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**
  - **SHOULD NOT include confidential information**

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

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Applicant questions and assessment criteria

Vision and Approach: What's your institution's strategy for the allocation and why should EPSRC fund it?
Items of equipment and cost justification: What items of equipment does your institution intend to purchase and how are these justified?
Benefits realisation: What are your plans for identifying and realising the benefits and added value of the investment? To what extent are these plans realistic, measurable, deliverable and over what timescale?
Sustainability: How will this investment consider financial, user base, people, equipment and environmental sustainability to sustain research excellence?

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Applicant questions

- **Vision and Approach**
  - (2,200 words) – Evidence how your institution's strategy and decision-making process for the allocation meet at least one of the three funding opportunity objectives
    - The strategic alignment should be up to 1,500 words and demonstrate that an appropriate decision-making process has been undertaken to decide the allocation of funding
    - Your response should also include a workplan of up to 500 words
    - You may display elements of your responses in the visual form if relevant

Applicant questions

- **Items of equipment and cost justification**
- (1,650 words) – For each item or group of items:
  - A brief description of the item(s)
  - Cost of the item(s)
  - How the equipment fulfils one or more objectives of your opportunity
- Demonstrate how the items you anticipate needing for your proposed work:
  - are comprehensive, appropriate and justified
  - represent the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes
  - maximise potential outcomes and impacts

Applicant questions

- **Benefits Realisation**
- (1,650 words) – Evidence to what extent:
  - this investment will enable the institution to maintain and improve your world class lab provision and therefore facilitate the undertaking of high-quality research and training by your academic community.
  - This investment is in addition to any planned investments in capital equipment at the institutional level and is not used to replace existing investment.
    - How will this investment enable research that otherwise wouldn't be enabled?

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Applicant questions

- **Benefits Realisation**
- Will this investment develop anticipated benefits and how will they be realised:
    - What will success look like and how will it be achieved?
    - What steps will be taken to identify, monitor and evaluate the benefits of this investment
    - What activities will be put in place to ensure the research community (including ECRs, PhDs and RTPs) benefit from the equipment
    - For underpinning equipment, how will you monitor the number and type of users; enhanced sharing, usage and collaboration?
    - For invest to save elements, how will you quantify this in terms of money saved, staff time saved, increased efficiency or productivity?
    - For ECRs and doctoral training, how will you establish a culture of collaboration, equipment sharing and maximising usage among your ECRs and students
        - What other benefits will ECRs/students gain?

Applicant questions

- **Sustainability**
- (1,100 words) – Evidence to what extent the investment has realistically demonstrated:
  - Financial Sustainability
    - Have you established the lifetime costs of the equipment you are requesting?
    - Can you describe your approaches to making sure that equipment across your institution is operated to minimise the financial impact on the university?
  - Sustainability of the user base
    - How will you sustain and evolve a diverse and inclusive user base throughout and beyond the lifetime of the equipment?
  - Sustainability of the people
    - What steps will you take to champion the visibility, recognition and career development of research technical professionals and other technical staff that help sustain infrastructure capability across your institution?

Applicant questions

- **Sustainability**
  - Sustainability of the equipment
    - How will you sustain the equipment in terms of maintenance, repairs, consumables, staff time throughout its lifetime?
    - What has been your institution's track record of sustaining previous core equipment investments?
  - Environmental Sustainability
    - How will you improve your understanding of the environmental impact of these investments?
    - What steps will be taken at an institutional level to enhance the environmental impact of your research infrastructures?

Resources and costs

This section is for entering the costs of equipment, justification of costs should be entered under “Items of equipment and cost justification.”

Only equipment costs are eligible costs for this opportunity.

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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

Spend Profile

- The spend profile for the award is front loaded towards Q4 2024-2025 (January 1st – March 31st 2025)

Quarter	Q4 2024/25	Q1 2025/26	Q2 2025/25	Q3 2025/26	Q4 2025/26	Q1 2026/27
Spend (%)	50%	34%	4%	4%	4%	4%

- Starting procurement and/or placing an order with a company would be considered "starting the grant."

- Spend would usually be considered to have occurred when the equipment is delivered rather than it being ordered.
  - The exception would be if there was a deposit or similar that was needed to be paid on order, in which case that can be counted as spend when it is paid.

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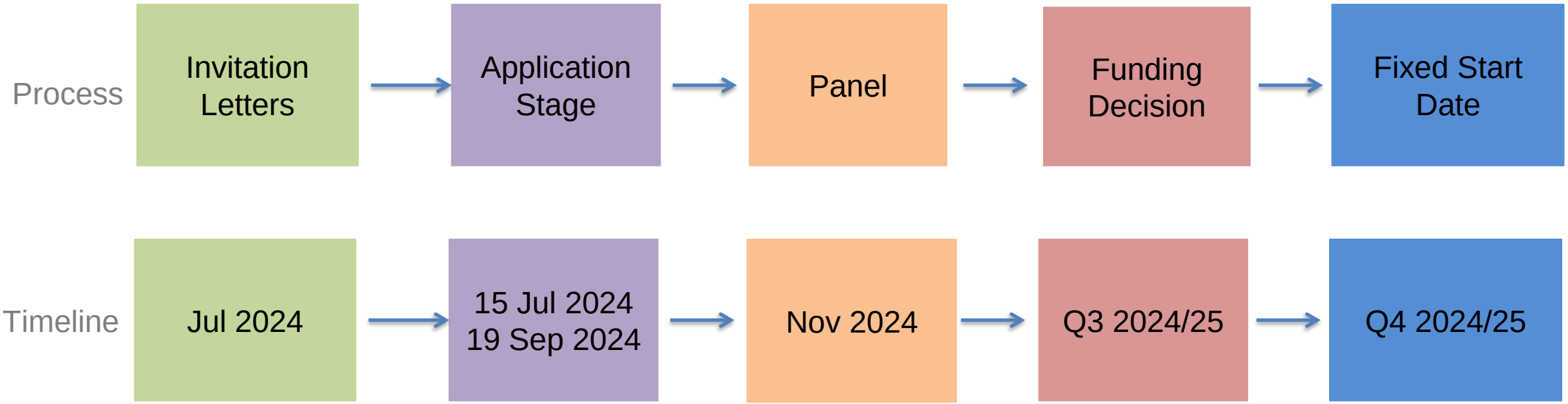
Assessment Process

Core Equipment Process and Timeline



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Potential Panel Outcomes

- If your proposal meets the call criteria, your institution will be awarded the full amount bid for.
- If your proposal does not sufficiently meet the call criteria, the panel will request amendments or clarifications for your proposal, which must be provided to EPSRC before funds are released.
- EPSRC reserves the right to withhold funds, either partially or completely, if the panel's feedback is not addressed sufficiently.

Key messages

- This is an assurance process rather than a competitive process; the aim should be to ensure that your proposal meets the assessment criteria for the opportunity.
- The proposal is judged as a whole, so each item of equipment should meet at least one of the call objectives.
- The call is equipment only; requests for consumables and staff costs are not permitted.

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Q&A

Contact us via:
Epsrcequipmentfunding@epsrc.ukri.org