

# EPSRC Core Equipment Webinar Q&A

This document collates answers to the questions asked at the EPSRC Core Equipment Award 2024 webinar held on 25 July 2024.

## Eligible Equipment

- 1. Are universities permitted to purchase several smaller items of equipment for benefit across multiple schools or would EPSRC prefer that we buy one or two pieces of larger equipment?**

It's up to the institution. There is a lower limit on equipment of £10,000, but if it meets at least one of the objectives of the call, is within your budget, is in EPSRC's remit and is to support underpinning research then it can be a large or small piece of equipment.

The equipment purchased should ideally benefit multiple departments at your institution.

- 2. Do the smaller pieces need to have a central theme tying them together?**

The items of equipment purchased under this call don't have to be related to each other or have a central theme if you are clear what the decision process followed was and that you've met the assessment criteria for the call.

- 3. Is digital infrastructure eligible for funding in this call? For example, computing hardware and software.**

Computer hardware is eligible, such as GPU clusters. Software is not eligible as it is not a capitalisable cost, the exception is if software is inherently associated with any computer hardware being requested.

- 4. Are repairs to equipment covered?**

Upgrades and improvements to existing equipment would count under the objective 'Invest to save'. A detailed breakdown of that objective is available on the Funding Finder [EPSRC Core Equipment Award 2024 – UKRI](#). This includes extending equipment lifespan through the replacement of obsolete or worn-out components.

- 5. Are Healthcare Technology related equipment items covered?**

Yes, if most of the research enabled is within EPSRC's remit. If you are uncertain about this, you should check with the EPSRC Healthcare Technologies theme ([healthcare@epsrc.ukri.org](mailto:healthcare@epsrc.ukri.org)).

- 6. We wish to purchase a camera which requires a dedicated server - would it be possible to confirm whether the server is eligible for the call?**

If the server and the camera were both being purchased on the grant, this would be eligible, as the software is inherently associated with the equipment requested.

**7. Are service contract costs eligible in the award?**

Our policy states that if a service contract is included within the cost of a quote, then it is considered part of the capital cost and therefore eligible. But an independent service contract (one not included in the original quote) would not come under equipment, so wouldn't be eligible for this route.

**8. According to the documentation, laboratory refurbishment funding may be requested. Would this also allow funding to be requested for renting the required laboratory space?**

Laboratory refurbishment is only eligible where it is associated with the co-location of equipment with the aim of providing enhanced sharing, usage and collaboration benefits to a wider research community.

EPSRC normally considers laboratory refurbishment a host institution contribution; we would not normally allow funding for the costs of renting laboratory space but may support modifications to laboratory space needed to install equipment in some circumstances.

**9. As long as the equipment benefits users locally and regionally is there any problem with the equipment benefitting users nationally?**

Equipment that has a national range would normally be requested through the strategic infrastructure opportunity [Strategic infrastructure – UKRI](#).

Core equipment can benefit multiple users, enhance sharing, usage, and collaboration in one or more departments (or institutions), so can benefit researchers outside the university, including at a national level.

## How to Apply

**10. Where's the best place on the TFS form to demonstrate our organisation's support for and commitment to the bid (as it's not mandatory, and therefore doesn't require a separate host organisation statement)?**

Host Organisation Statements aren't required.

Vision and Approach should be used for talking about the decision process behind choosing the equipment. Host institution contributions to equipment should be mentioned in Items of equipment and cost justification. Benefits realisation should be used when talking about how the university will maximize the benefits of the equipment, and Sustainability used when talking about how the equipment will be made sustainable.

**11. Could you explain the process for securing agreement for equipment >£400k and how you will make that decision?**

You should contact the research infrastructure theme in advance of submitting your

application, so we know in advance how many items above £400,000 are going to be requested and so that we can be assured that the host institution is able to cover the excess, and that the item is within the scope of the call (i.e. that it is underpinning multi-user equipment).

**12. Is there recommendation on the % to be requested?**

EPSRC will fund up to 100% of the full economic cost.

**13. Do we need to include letters of support in our application?**

You don't have to include letters of support in your application.

If an industrial partner is contributing to the cost of equipment, you can add them as a project partner, but we aren't expecting project partners on applications for this opportunity.

**14. If requesting more than one piece of equipment coming from different departments or faculties should the project lead be the person responsible for the equipment portfolio?**

The project lead should be someone responsible for managing the equipment portfolio for your institution. Project co-leads can be included if they have made a significant contribution to the bid or are responsible for managing individual items of equipment on the bid.

Research technical professionals can be a project lead or co-lead if they are the most appropriate person.

**15. Can project co-leads be from other institutions?**

These are institutional bids, so we would expect project co-leads to be from the invited institution.

For invited investments housed across multiple universities that are part of the EPSRC National Research Facilities portfolio or are EPSRC-supported Infrastructure Fund investments, co-leads can be from more than one institution as long as all the project co-leads are involved in the investment.

**16. You ask for assurance that an appropriate decision-making process has been undertaken - do you have a view on what that should look like?**

What is appropriate will be determined by the panel, but it should consider the assessment criteria and the call objectives set out in this webinar and on the Funding Finder [EPSRC Core Equipment Award 2024 – UKRI](#).

**17. If we have various items of equipment being championed by different academics at our institution, can we put each of them as a project co-lead?**

Yes, if they're managing the equipment or are making a significant contribution to the bid.

## Spend Profile

### **18. Could you please clarify how you start the grant? What happens if you start the grant after the fixed start date of 2 January?**

The grant is considered to have started when an order or procurement is made. 2 January is the first date that you can procure equipment, you cannot start the grant before this. The start date is fixed, so whilst you could start procurement on a different date, this won't change the official start date or end date of the grant and you cannot request to delay the start date.

### **19. How flexible is the spend profile?**

There is flexibility in the spend profile provided the spend is in the correct financial year. Most of the items requested will be low value items with short lead times. We would like applicants to keep as close to the advertised spend profile as possible.

Because the first quarter of spend is at the end of the financial year, these funds should be spent in the first three months.

### **20. Can items exceeding the allocated spend amount per quarter be purchased, utilising university funds to cover the difference in cost, and then charge EPSRC at the rates specified per quarter in the spend profile thereafter?**

In theory yes, but front-loading the profile is acceptable to us, so it shouldn't be necessary to do this.

### **21. What counts as spend?**

Spend is normally considered to be on delivery, but there is an exception if a deposit is paid upfront.

### **22. How flexible is the deadline for expenditure?**

We appreciate that delays in delivery of equipment can occur. If you experience problems with delays, please contact us and we will provide advice.

You can tender subject to funding, thus then being able to place the order if successful, to allow spend profile to be met.

### **23. Please can you clarify that your financial years run April to March?**

Yes, that is correct.

**24. If the start date is 2 January, is it reasonable to assume we will know the outcome in late November or December?**

We aim to send out outcomes as soon as possible after the panel. Decisions may be delayed if we need to allow time for applicants to make amendments requested by the panel.

## **Other**

**25. Could you give us information on the total budget for the current call?**

The budget for the call is around £25 million. Each invited institution has been given a block allocation in their letter of invitation which is the maximum amount they can bid up to.

**26. This is an assurance process rather than a competitive process. From past calls, can you let us know whether many applications have had the budget reduced?**

Ideally, we would like to be able to fund all of them at the maximum amount. However, some amendments may be requested for the applications.

**27. Assuming EPSRC continue to provide such opportunities, please could you advise about how institutions can ensure they can be invited?**

Invitation is determined by previous success in receiving funds for equipment through EPSRC's World Class Labs budget. This includes grants funded through EPSRC responsive mode that include equipment, as well as grants funded through competitive EPSRC funding opportunities where equipment is an eligible cost.