

Call for Statements of Need for National Research Facilities

Call type: Invitation for outlines

Closing date: 30th November 2020, 16:00

Funding Available: No direct funding is available through this call. Where a clear community need for a facility has been identified, the responsible EPSRC theme will convene a specification panel to further identify any requirements and either an open call will be issued for a full facility, or, in the case of larger strategic bids, these will go forward for consideration at the appropriate time and meeting.

How to apply: Submission of full Statements of Need. This call will be available on Smart Survey at this [link](#).

Assessment Process: Statements of Need will be initially filtered by EPSRC for fit to remit, strategy and the call. Submissions which go forward will be assessed by a prioritisation panel covering a wide range of expertise across the EPSRC remit. This will meet in December/Jan 2020/21 to assess the Statements of Need for both new and existing facilities and large capability infrastructure according to the published assessment criteria.

Applicants must inform EPSRC by August 31st of their intent to apply prior to submitting a statement of need proposal via a short smart survey at this [link](#).

Key Dates:

Activity	Date
Intention to Submit	16:00, 31st August 2020
Submission deadline	16:00, 30 th November 2020
Prioritisation panel	December 2020/Jan 2021

Contacts: For any questions regarding the general process, please contact: MidrangeFacilities@EPSRC.ac.uk.

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Engineering and Physical Sciences
Research Council

Call for National Research Facility Statements of Community Need

Call type: Call type: Statements of Need

Closing date: 30 November 2020, 16:00

**Related themes: Engineering, Manufacturing, ICT,
Physical Sciences, Energy, Healthcare Technologies,
Research Infrastructure**

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Summary

This is the seventh call for **Statements of Need**.

Initial peer review will involve a joint panel of experts in facility management, equipment techniques and research involving large infrastructure.

National Research Facilities

For new and existing National Research Facilities that will support excellent engineering and physical sciences research. These facilities provide leading edge capabilities and technique development at a national level and/or access to European research facilities.

Statements of Community Need should be led by an individual but co-created by a research community.

Research communities are asked to submit one Statement of Community Need only for any proposed facility. This may be led by a facility owner or by any community leader and must show the need for a particular capability for the UK research community. The strength and breadth of the community need is important in establishing an NRF.

All Statements of Community Need, for both new and existing facilities, will be tensioned against each other and the current EPSRC National Research Facilities portfolio by a panel. EPSRC will then make the final decision about which facilities will be supported. Expert panels will then be convened to specify the requirements of facilities which go forward and an open call will be announced to identify where and who runs the facility.

Current National Research Facilities with contracts coming to an end in 2021/early 2022 must submit a Statement of Community Need in order to be considered for renewal. All Statements of Community Need will be tensioned according to the same assessment criteria.

Statements of Community Need must be able to put forward convincing evidence that there has been strong engagement and community support during the development of the submission. It must be clear how the proposed facility complements and adds value to the existing and future research landscape. The Statement should also describe how it aligns with EPSRC's strategic priorities as well as broader policy initiatives:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/about/plans/strategicplan/>

The current EPSRC National Research Facility portfolio can be found here:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/facilities/access/currentmidrangefacilities/>

Background

Statements of Need submitted to this call will potentially provide access to research facilities and expertise to the engineering and physical sciences research community on a scale where there is limited availability in the UK for reasons such as:

- the relative cost of the equipment
- efficiencies of scale

- the expertise needed to operate the equipment and interpret results
- it makes sense to share information or software.

It is also crucial that the Statement of Community Need addresses the question of why the applied for funding model is the most appropriate, as opposed to other approaches. We encourage applicants to think about this question particularly with respect to the Strategic Equipment process:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/themes/researchinfrastructure/su b themes/access/midrange/mrfvsse/>

The balance of funding as part of the entire EPSRC portfolio is an important consideration within the assessment of the Statements of Community Need. For more information about EPSRC's portfolio and strategies, see our website:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/>

Funding available

No direct funding is available through this call. Following the initial Statement of Need panel any Identified Statements of Need, if selected, will move to a specification panel to identify further the facility requirements and an open call for a full facility.

Where a clear need for a facility has been identified, the responsible EPSRC theme will convene a specification panel and following open call. There is **no guarantee** that funding for the facility would be awarded to the lead author(s) of the Statement of Need.

In the Statement of Need we ask for an indicative estimate of the likely cost of taking into account currently existing capability. Requirements should be split into capital and recurrent costs for upto 5 years.

Funding, for which a need has been identified, can be deferred if the budget is not available at this point in time or further consultation is required to ensure maximum benefit for the UK engineering and physical sciences research community.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In line with the RCUK Diversity Principles, EPSRC expects that equality and diversity is embedded at all levels and in all aspects of research practice. We are committed to supporting the research community in the diverse ways a research career can be built with our investments. This includes career breaks, support for people with caring responsibilities, flexible working and alternative working patterns. With this in mind, we welcome applications from academics who job share, have a part-time contract, need flexible working arrangements or those currently committed to other longer, large existing grants. Please see our Equality and Diversity webpages

<https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/equalitydiversity/> for further information.

Equipment

Equipment (including upgrades or renewals of existing equipment) above the current OJEU threshold can be suggested in the Statement of

Community Need where appropriate. An estimate of the costs should be included.

Eligibility

The majority of use for the proposed work should be within the EPSRC domain and submitted by an EPSRC eligible PI.

For information on the eligibility of organisations and individuals to receive EPSRC funding, see the EPSRC Funding Guide:

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/fundingguide/>

A list of eligible organisations to apply to EPSRC is provided at:

<https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/>

How to apply

Submitting an application

All Statements of Community Need must use the electronic "Statement of Community Need" template provided as a web form, using the following [link](#)

The form must be submitted by **16:00 on 30 November 2020**.

Applicants should carefully read the guidance provided in this call document and address all of the assessment criteria. EPSRC will not accept more than one Statement of Need per type of facility. EPSRC will not accept a Statement of Need for a facility where an existing National Research Facility is already providing services to the community, unless the contract for the existing facility is about to expire in 2021 or early 2022:

<http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/facilities/access/currentmidrangefacilities/>

Important

Applicants must inform EPSRC by August 31st of their intent to apply prior to submitting a statement of need via a short smart survey using the following [link](#). This should contain the suggested facility and benefitting research areas.

Guidance on writing an application

The questions you will be asked when filling in the "Statement of Need" template are as follows:

- a) **Vision/Quality:** Present the science that will be enabled by the proposed Statement of Need. Applicants should provide evidence of the quality of research to be enabled and the research areas which will be supported alongside why this facility/large infrastructure capability is now needed and will be needed over the proposed 5 years of running.

If this would enable cross-disciplinary research, please state which other council's remit(s) this would fall.

(6,000 characters incl. spaces)

- b) **Users and Community Engagement:** There must also be information and evidence on the level of community engagement and support that has led to the Statement of Need.

In the case of a **National Research Facility** this is especially important and the Statement of Community Need must be presented as a community backed document.

A description of the UK communities that will benefit from the usage of this facility needs to be present, including the expected number and type of users (both academic and other stakeholders). Specific information should be provided on key research groups and their underpinning funding portfolio. Projected growth of the user base over the next 5 years should be indicated.

(6,000 characters incl. spaces)

- c) **National Importance and Context:** A clear explanation of the existing UK and international landscape, in terms of the available facilities and equipment, and how this will address a genuine UK need. The Statement of Need should address existing capabilities of equipment and access to it and how this capability/facility is a vital part of the landscape or how a new investment would enhance the landscape if none exist in this area.

How would this Statement of Need deliver against EPSRC published balancing the portfolio and strategic priorities should also be addressed.

Reference should be made to any relevant roadmaps, for example the EPSRC equipment roadmaps:

<https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/themes/researchinfrastructure/strategy/equipmentroadmaps/>.

(4,500 characters incl. spaces)

- d) **Impact:** What potential impact will the proposed Statement of Need have on the research community and how will it work with industrial interests, across the range of types of impact (scientific/academic, people, economic, skills and training, socio-economic etc.), and is there a clearly thought through pathway for expanding the user base and accelerating the identified impacts. How can such a facility support training of skilled people, or enable potentially transformative research with impact on the society and/or the economy.

(3,000 characters incl. spaces)

- e) **Justification:** Justify why this model is the most appropriate, as opposed to other approaches (such as local provision / strategic equipment, etc.). Reasons to be considered may include the need for specialised expertise in the technique, a new technique that is still at the early stages, unique capabilities (rather than just extra capacity), efficiencies of scale, fostering new communities or any other well founded and clearly explained justifications for a National Research Facility.

(4,500 characters incl. spaces)

- f) **The potential facility:** A description of the facility proposed and its primary function, including an indication of what the facility/infrastructure should provide to be of maximum benefit to the research community (what technologies and capabilities should be available, what services should it provide, what type and number of staff would it need). How will it link to

other capabilities (for example other NRFs, large scale laboratories, institutes etc).

(6,000 characters incl. spaces)

- g) **Indicative resources:** There will be a future steps to establish the scope and scale for any funded activity. At this point we require indicative costs only over 5 years of operation. These should be split into capital requirements and yearly recurrent costs.

In cases where there are existing UK capabilities or equipment that the proposed activity could utilise, the Statement of Need should describe both:

- The costs of supporting this if the existing capabilities or equipment did not exist.
- The costs of this if it were to use existing capabilities and equipment.

(3,000 characters incl. spaces)

- h) **Authors and Community Engagement:** A list of who was directly involved in writing the Statement of Need (name, institution / company and research interests).

(4,500 characters incl. spaces)

For advice on writing proposals see:

<https://www.epsrc.ac.uk/funding/howtoapply/preparing/>

Assessment

Assessment process

A prioritisation panel covering a wide range of expertise, across the EPSRC remit will meet in December/Jan 2020/21 to assess the Statements of Need for both new and existing facilities and large equipment capabilities according to the assessment criteria published below. The panel members will receive the Statements of Need in advance of the panel. The panel will meet to produce a prioritised list of Statements of Need.

Following the panel, EPSRC will decide which Statements of Need will be taken forward for support via an open call.

In the event of this call being substantially oversubscribed as to be unmanageable, EPSRC reserve the right to modify the assessment process.

Assessment criteria

Panel

The Panel will prioritise the Statements of Need using the following criteria:

- a. **Quality (Primary):** World leading science must be enabled by the proposed investment, the funding of such a facility/capability in the

research area should lead to new scientific progress and be of central importance to the research community.

b. **Usage (Secondary Major): For NRFs** The Statement of Community Need must demonstrate a strong community demand and that there has been sufficient engagement with the community to back up and focus the need for a facility. The breadth of interested users and potential for further users should be evident, including an assessment of how the user base may grow and develop. The Statement of Community Need **must** be presented as a document developed with the community.

c. **National Importance and Context (Secondary):** Taking into account the existing landscape of National Research Facilities and other existing capability provision in this area, the Statement of Community Need is required to be justified in terms of presenting a genuine UK need and alignment of the National Research portfolio to EPSRC priorities. Sufficient evidence will need to show that such an investment will provide added benefit to the existing landscape and how this will deliver against EPSRC published balancing the portfolio and strategic priorities.

d. **Impact (Secondary):** The relevant potential impacts should be identified which is both realistic and clearly described. This investment will have benefits beyond the core science community, for example support training of skilled people, aid collaborations with industry and the third sector, or enable potentially transformative research with impact on the society and/or the economy.

e. **Justification (Secondary):**

The National RF should offer maximum benefit to the user community and EPSRC

The Statement of Need should show the need for specialised expertise in the technique, any new techniques that are still at the early stages and will enable new science, unique capabilities (rather than just extra capacity), efficiencies of scale, and the potential to foster new communities. The statement will explain why other funding routes (Strategic Equipment, University support etc.) do not offer the best support of the scientific community and value for money.

f. **The Facility (Secondary):**

The Statement of Need should be relevant and of a scale appropriate to the scientific demands expected from the community engagement. There needs to be a good outline of the sustainability models sufficient for this activity.

g. **Resources (Secondary):**

The suggested scale of the proposed resources need to represent good value for money. There will be a specification panel to decide the final needs for an open call for the facility if successful at the statement of need stage. At this point we require indicative costs only over 5 years of operation. These should be split into capital requirements and yearly recurrent costs.

In cases where there are existing UK capabilities or equipment that the proposed facility could utilise, the Statement of Community Need should describe both:

- The costs of supporting the facility if the existing capabilities or equipment did not exist.
- The costs of the facility if it were to use existing capabilities and equipment.

The suggested scale of the proposed resources need to represent good value for money. The capital investment must be appropriate against the wider landscape of equipment provision.

h. **Authors and Community Engagement (Primary):**

The backing of the Statement of Need must be convincing and of a scale required to justify a National Research Facility/Large Research Infrastructure.

Moving Forward

The panel will create a list of Statements of Need with priority to go forward/not proceed. After the prioritisation panel, the final decision on which prioritised Statements of Need go forward will be decided by the respective EPSRC themes/Executive group. Feedback will be sent to all full Statement of Community Need Principle Authors and information from the prioritised Statements of Community Need will be published on the EPSRC website. EPSRC themes will work with the individual research communities on the appropriate downstream process for prioritised facilities that EPSRC decides to support.

The next steps for National Research Facility will be to convene a Specification Panel which will take as a starting point the written community statement of need and the statement of need panel advice to draft an open call for a National Research Facility in the area.

Funding for facilities for which a need has been identified can be deferred if the budget is not available at this point in time or further consultation is needed.

This panel will be given information about existing facilities and those currently going through an open call.

Key dates

Activity	Date
Intention to Submit	31 st August 2020
Submission deadline	30 November 2020
Prioritisation panel	December 2020/Jan 2021

Contacts

For any questions regarding the general process, please contact: MidrangeFacilities@EPSRC.ac.uk

For theme specific questions, please contact the respective EPSRC theme:

- **Physical Sciences:** Alex Bromsgrove, e-mail: Alex.Bromsgrove@epsrc.ukri.org or telephone: 01793 84 4589
- **Engineering:** Lucy Hackett, e-mail: Lucy.Hackett@epsrc.ukri.org or telephone: (01793 44) 4461
- **ICT:** Jessica Bonham, e-mail: Jessica.Bonham@epsrc.ukri.org or telephone: (01793 44) 4553

Existing facilities should use their established EPSRC contacts for any facility specific questions.

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Simon Crook	08/07/2020	1	
Simon Crook	30/7/2020	2	Repaired broken link and some editing of spellings and year