



Engineering and Physical Sciences  
Research Council

## Call for National Research Facility Statements of Community Need

Call type: Invitation for outlines

Closing date: 31 October 2019, 16:00

**Funding Available:** No direct funding is available through this call. Where a clear need for a facility has been identified, the responsible EPSRC theme will convene a specification panel to further identify the facility requirements and an open call will be issued for a full facility.

**How to apply:** Submission of full Statements of Community Need. This call is not on J-eS and should be applied for via smart survey. An e-mail intention to submit is required in advance also.

**Assessment Process:** Statements of Community Need will be assessed by a prioritisation panel covering a wide range of expertise, across the EPSRC remit will meet in December 2019 to assess the Statements of Need for both new and existing facilities according to the published assessment criteria.

Applicants must inform EPSRC by July 31 (see contacts below) of their intent to apply via e-mail. A full submission via smart survey will then be expected by 31 October.

### Key Dates:

| Activity   | Date                   |
|--|------------------------|
| Intention to Submit e-mail   | 16:00, 31 July 2019    |
| Statement of Community Need Submission deadline (via Smart Survey) | 16:00, 31 October 2019 |
| Prioritisation panel   | December 2019          |

**Contacts:** For any questions regarding the general process, please contact: [MidrangeFacilities@EPSRC.ac.uk](mailto:MidrangeFacilities@EPSRC.ac.uk).

Dr Simon Crook – 01793 444343 ([simon.crook@epsrc.ukri.org](mailto:simon.crook@epsrc.ukri.org))



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# Call for National Research Facility Statements of Community Need

**Call type: Call type: Statements of Need**

**Closing date: 31 October 2019, 16:00**

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

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## Summary

This is the sixth call for **Statements of Community Need** 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 capability/facility owner or by any community leader and must show the need for particular infrastructure 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.

Communities who wish to apply for a new National Research Facility must contact the appropriate EPSRC theme/s and talk to them in advance of applying.

**Current National Research Facilities with contracts coming to an end in 2020/early 2021 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.

## Background

National Research Facilities 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.

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

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

EPSRC is offering research communities regular opportunities to submit Statements of Community Need for National Research Facilities. Submissions are restricted to **one statement per given type of facility/capability per call.**

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/>

It is also crucial that the Statement of Community Need addresses the question of why the National Research Facility 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/sub themes/access/midrange/mrfvsse/](http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/research/ourportfolio/themes/researchinfrastructure/sub%20themes/access/midrange/mrfvsse/)

The balance of facilities 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.** 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 Community Need.

In the Statement of Need we ask for an indicative estimate of the likely cost of the facility taking into account currently existing capability. Requirements should be split into capital and recurrent costs. The likely scale of costs are expected to be within the range of current National Research Facilities funding, of a scale of £2 million to £10 million over 5 years.

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 required to ensure maximum benefit for the UK engineering and physical sciences research community.

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The long term strength of the UK research base depends on harnessing all the available talent and the Research Councils have together developed the ambitious RCUK Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/diversity/>

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.

## Guidance on Journal-based metrics

As part of our commitment to support the recommendations and principles set out by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA; <https://sfdora.org/read/>), UKRI reviewers and panel members are advised not to use journal-based metrics, such as journal impact factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an investigator's contributions, or to make funding decisions.

The content of a paper is more important than publication metrics, or the identity of the journal, in which it was published, especially for early-stage researchers. Peer review and panel members are encouraged to consider the value and impact of all research outputs (including datasets, software, inventions, patents, preprints, other commercial activities, etc.) in addition to research publications. We advise our peer reviewers and panel members to consider a broad range of impact measures including qualitative indicators of research impact, such as influence on policy and practice.

## 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

EPSRC asks research communities to submit only **one** Statement of Community Need for a particular facility. **The majority of use for the proposed facility 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

Applicants must inform EPSRC by July 31<sup>st</sup> of their intent to apply prior to submitting a proposal. This should be an e-mail sent this address:

[MidrangeFacilities@epsrc.ukri.org](mailto:MidrangeFacilities@epsrc.ukri.org)

This should briefly contain the suggested facility area, an outline of the community research need, approximate scale of funding, contacts to reply to and the benefitting research areas.

All Statements of Community Need must use the electronic "Statement of Community Need" template provided as a web form, using the following:

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/YJTIG/>

The form must be submitted by **16:00 on 31 October 2019**.

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 2020 or early 2021:

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

## Guidance on writing an application

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

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

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

(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 Community Need. 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 the proposed facility will address a genuine UK need. The Statement of Community Need should address existing capabilities of equipment and access to it and how an existing facility is a vital part of the landscape or how a new facility would enhance the landscape if none exist in this area.

How the facility would 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 facility 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. For further guidance, please refer to:

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

(3,000 characters incl. spaces)

e) **Justification:** Justify why the National Research Facility 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 type of facility proposed and its primary function, including an indication of what the facility 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 the facility 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 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.

(3,000 characters incl. spaces)

h) **Authors and Community Engagement:** A list of who was directly involved in writing the Statement of Community 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

The intention to submit will aid EPSRC in choosing a wide panel in advance in advance of the meeting and informing EPSRC of potential demand. We may wish to contact you to discuss your proposal.

A prioritisation panel covering a wide range of expertise, across the EPSRC remit will meet in December 2019 to assess the Statements of Community Need for both new and existing facilities according to the assessment criteria published below. The panel members will receive the Statements of Community Need in advance of the panel and we will collate any clarification questions from panel members for applicants to reply to in time for the panel itself. The panel will meet to produce a prioritised list of Statements of Community Need.

Following the panel, EPSRC will decide which facilities 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 Community Need using the following criteria:

- a. **Quality (Primary):** World leading science must be enabled by the proposed facility, the funding of such a facility in the research area should lead to new scientific progress and be of central importance to the research community.
- b. **Usage (Secondary Major):** 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 as 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 a National Research Facility 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, including the pathway to accelerating these impacts which is both realistic and clearly described. A National Research Facility 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 for a National Research Facility (Secondary):**

The NRF 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 proposed facility as described 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 facility.

g. **Resources (Secondary):**

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 community backing the Statement of Community Need must be convincing and of a scale required to justify a National Research Facility.

## Moving Forward

The panel will create a list of Statements of Community Need with priority to go forward/not proceed. After the prioritisation panel, the final decision on which prioritised Statements of Community Need go forward will be decided by the respective EPSRC themes. 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 step 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.

As this is a call to operate a facility on behalf of the wider community this application will not count towards the Repeatedly Unsuccessful Applicants Policy. Further information about the policy can be found at:

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/howtoapply/basics/resubpol/rua/>

## Key dates

| Activity             | Date            |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| Intention to Submit  | 31 July 2019    |
| Submission deadline  | 31 October 2019 |
| Prioritisation panel | December 2019   |

\*EPSRC aims to adhere to the key dates as published, however there may be exceptions where the prioritisation meeting may have to change due to panel member availability.

## Contacts

For any questions regarding the general process, please contact: [MidrangeFacilities@EPSRC.ac.uk](mailto:MidrangeFacilities@EPSRC.ac.uk)

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

- **Physical Sciences:** Lisa Coles, e-mail: [Lisa.Coles@epsrc.ukri.org](mailto:Lisa.Coles@epsrc.ukri.org) or telephone: 01793 44 4578.
- **Engineering:** Lucy Hackett, e-mail: [Lucy.Hackett@epsrc.ukri.org](mailto:Lucy.Hackett@epsrc.ukri.org) or telephone: 01793 44 4461
- **ICT:** Joanne Holbourn, e-mail: [joanne.holbourn@epsrc.ukri.org](mailto:joanne.holbourn@epsrc.ukri.org) or telephone: 01793 44 4397

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

## Change log

| Name        | Date       | Version | Change |
|-------------|------------|---------|--------|
| Simon Crook | 26/06/2018 | 1       |        |

| <b>Name</b> | <b>Date</b> | <b>Version</b> | <b>Change</b>   |
|-------------|-------------|----------------|---|
| Simon Crook | 24/06/2019  | 2              | Changes to criteria and template questions to fit updated requirements and peer review policy |