Frequently Asked Questions for the ECR Capital Award

Je-S

1) I can’t find the call in Je-S – where is it?

The call will open in Je-S on 31st May 2018 and will close on 14th June

When adding a new proposal, you should select:

Council ‘EPSRC’

Document type ‘Standard Proposal’

Scheme ‘Standard’

On the Project Details page you should select the ‘Capital Award in Support of Early Career Researchers’ call.

2) Do I need to fill in the text boxes on Je-S?

Yes, as with all EPSRC grants you will need to complete the text boxes in Je-S, however we are not expecting reams of words. The ‘Summary’ box will be published on Grants on the Web so this section needs to be suitable for an external audience.

3) Do I need to upload equipment quotes or a business case?

No, please upload dummy documents if Je-S requests these attachment types

4) Do I need to upload a Justification of Resources?

No, please upload a dummy document. We will however require a justification of expenditure at the end of the award.

5) Which routing classification should I use?

Proposals will automatically be routed to the relevant people at EPSRC therefore it does not matter which routing classification you choose. Please select the classification which is the best fit to your proposal.

Dates

6) What is the start date for the grants?

The start date of all grants should be 1st October 2018 and have a duration of 18 months.

Applicants

7) Should the PI be the Equipment Account holder? Who should the Co-Is be?

The Principal Investigator of the proposal should be the current EPSRC Equipment Account holder or a senior staff member responsible for the institution’s equipment strategy.

Co-Is should be any academic would might be involved in the management/distribution of the funds.
8) Can Co-Is be added at a later date?

Yes, Co-Is can be added to the grant at a later date.

Eligibility of the recipient of the Equipment

9) Is the award for those who won grants via the mention schemes or can it be used more broadly for ECRs?

The award can be used to provide equipment for any Early Career Researcher who would be eligible to apply to EPSRC New Investigator Awards, First Grants, Early Career Fellowships, Career Acceleration Fellowships, Challenging Engineering and Healthcare Technology Challenge Awards, as well as those who have been eligible to apply to these schemes in the past eight years. There is no requirement that the award should be used for those who have received funding through the calls mentioned above. The award can also be used for those who have received funding from other sources providing they meet the eligibility and are within EPSRC remit.

Recipients should meet the eligibility criterion as on 1st October 2018 in order to receive funds from the award.

University Contributions

10) Is there a requirement for matched funding from the university?

No, there is no expectation for a university to contribute towards the purchase of any equipment as ESPRC will pay for 100% of the costs. However, if an institution wishes to purchase an item in excess of the grants awarded, the balance must be provided by the institution or another source of support (providing the total cost of the item is below £400K including VAT).

11) Where should we detail any university contributions?

Please detail any university or other contributions in the Institutional Strategy section of the case for support. Do not use the cover letter attachment type to discuss these contributions as this attachment will not be seen by the panel.

Use of the Award

12) Can we use the award to purchase software?

Software licences don’t come under Equipment funding so these wouldn’t be an eligible cost. However, if an item of equipment required software to run and the vendor sold this as part of an equipment package, then this would be ok.

13) Should the equipment be specific items for specific ECRs or should the items be aimed at a cohort of ECRs?

Either or both of these scenarios are acceptable.

14) Can we use the funds to purchases items less than £10K if they are going to be used as one whole system?

Yes, provided the items are to be used as a combined asset that totals more than £10K

15) If the award was to be used to purchase an item to be shared across two departments it is likely that the equipment will also be used by senior academic. Is this allowed and should we monitor usage to ensure that ECRs get the majority of usage?

Yes, this is allowed, however you will need to articulate in your proposal how ECRs will benefit from such an item. If monitoring usage helps you to demonstrate that ECRs are the main beneficiary of the equipment then please do so.

16) Can equipment be placed into a local facility? Obviously the usage will not be solely for ECRs.

Yes, provided you can demonstrate how ECRs will benefit from the equipment. Also placing the equipment into a sustainable facility may help instil a culture of sharing and maximising usage into the ECRs.

17) Can we use 50% of the funds for equipment for ECRs and 50% of the funds for equipment for all?

Yes, again you will need to show that the ECRs will gain benefits from the purchase of the equipment.

18) Can the award be used to fund field equipment and well as lab based equipment?

Yes, however you will need to demonstrate that the ECRs will gain benefits from the purchase of the equipment.

19) Can the equipment purchased via the award be shared with institutions outside the university?

Yes, we wish to instil a culture of equipment sharing within the ECR recipients of this award. Sharing with external users in order to foster collaborations with the ECRs is one of the ways in which the benefits to ECRs can be demonstrated.

20) Can the award be used for lab refurbishment where non-standard equipment is being purchased?

Laboratory refurbishment would not be an eligible cost for the award; given the scale of the award in at least some cases, refurbishment costs may make up most if not all of the grant. If this is required the institution can choose to support this through additional funding.

21) Can the award be used for service and maintenance costs?

Yes if included on your quotations as part of an equipment package.

22) Should the award be used for exciting, high specification equipment or underpinning equipment?

Either or both. The award should be used for equipment that will make a difference to your ECRs.
23) Can it be used for a high specification 3D printer?

Yes, providing that the main beneficiaries are ECRs.

High Performance Computing and other Computational Infrastructures

24) Is High Performance Computing allowed via this call?

The scale of the awards to be made are too small to make a significant investment in a High Performance Computing system and would not be a good use of the funding, therefore HPC systems cannot be purchased via this award. Adding additional capability to an existing HPC system would also not be an eligible cost as it would be difficult to track how this investment would be of specific benefit to ECRs.

Access to EPSRC HPC facilities such as ARCHER and the Tier 2 HPC centres can be made via standard research proposals or via Resource Allocation Panels. For RAP applications you do not have to be an existing EPSRC grant holder.

25) Can we purchase work stations to run the equipment via the award?

Only if the work station is essential for the running of the equipment and is purchased as part of an equipment package provided by your vendor.

Desktop computers and laptops are not an eligible cost for these awards.

26) Can the funds be used for computational/IT infrastructure that is not HPC?

Bespoke computing solutions that are beyond standard specifications but not in the category of HPC could be procured at the scale of the awards available. Such systems could be used for applications including data visualisation, large-scale modelling and analysis of substantial data sets requiring significant, dedicated computing power. They would also be expected to be accessible by multiple users. Such systems would be eligible for the award, but as with other equipment, you would need to clearly demonstrate where and how the ECR cohort in your institution will benefit from such an investment.

Case for Support Expectations

27) The word ‘evidence’ is used a lot in the assessment criteria. What evidence do you expect us to supply?

By ‘evidence’ we mean the information provided by the university in the requested documentation. There is no requirement for you to provide further documents or attachments other than those listed in the call. Please do not use the cover letter attachment to provide additional information as this will not be seen by the panel.

28) What ‘evidence’ are you expecting to demonstrate Additionality?
It is sufficient for you to describe your current mechanisms of support and strategies for both equipment and ECRs and how this award will differ to/compliment that already in place. If you have made recent investments in this space then it would be helpful for you to describe these investments in the case for support.

29) What level of specificity do you require in the methodology for distributing the award as universities will have differing values of awards?

As each university will have different drivers that will influence how they distribute the award we are deliberately not being prescriptive on how the award should be managed to allow universities to be flexible. The mechanism of distribution should be appropriate to the size of award.

30) If we know what equipment we would like to buy should we list it in the proposal?

Providing that detailing the equipment adds to either the case for your Institutional Strategy; your argument for Additionality of Investment; or demonstrates the benefit to ECR then yes you can. However the case for support is only 6 pages so don’t list the equipment for the sake of listing the equipment as the panel will only be assessing the proposals against the three criteria in the call document.

Panel

31) How will the panel process work?

The panel process in this instance will be similar to that used to review the Statements of Intent for the Doctoral Training Partnerships. A panel will be convened to review the documentation and where appropriate, feedback will be given whether that is specific to the university or more general feedback that will be applicable to all. If the panel decides that the proposal does not meet all the assessment criteria, applicants will be given an opportunity to submit a revised proposal.

Reporting

32) What are reasonable ‘outcomes’ of the awards given the short timeframe of the grant?

The grant period should cover the procurement and purchase of the equipment so the reporting via the Justification of Expenditure required at the end of the grant should focus on what items were purchased, the costs, the selection process and how the items fulfil the assessment criteria. If you are in a position to provide other ‘outcomes’ by the end of the grant these would be welcome but aren’t a requirement.

33) Should we provide details of papers and/or case studies in our post award reports?

If these can be obtained within the 18 month timeframe of the award then yes, however these will not be a mandatory section of the Justification of Expenditure.

34) Will we need to report via Researchfish?
Yes, as with all other EPSRC grants you will need to report via Researchfish.

Other Equipment Schemes

35) How does this award fit with the Strategic Equipment Process?

The ECR capital award is separate from the Strategic Equipment process. The ECR award should not replace planned investment in a Strategic Equipment bid. The Strategic Equipment process is for items over £400K and the ECR award should not be used to purchase any single item in excess of £400K as outlined on page 5 of the call document.

The next deadlines for Strategic Equipment are:

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<tr>
<th>Outline Submission Date</th>
<th>Outline Panel Date</th>
<th>Full Proposal Deadline</th>
<th>Interview Panel Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>08 May 2018</td>
<td>May/June 2018</td>
<td>July 2018</td>
<td>November 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>05 September 2018</td>
<td>Sept/Oct 2018</td>
<td>November 2018</td>
<td>March 2019</td>
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<td>04 December 2018</td>
<td>January 2019</td>
<td>March 2019</td>
<td>July 2019</td>
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36) Will there be further ECR calls?

We have no current plans to have further calls/awards for ECR capital. ECRs will be expected to come in via normal business by submitting New Investigator Awards, Fellowships, Standard Mode research proposals.

We may however do something similar in the capital equipment space using the award mechanism but with different foci.

Other Questions

37) Is there any further information on the World Class Lab strategy?

There are no official documents for the World Class Lab strategy. All the information needed on this aspect is within the call document.