EPSRC AS A SPONSOR – WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

What does a sponsor do?

**Leadership**
- A sponsor gives a sense of direction

**Two-Way Communication**
- A sponsor provides and expects regular feedback

**Responsibilities & Obligations**
- A sponsor expects commitment and engagement

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Why does it matter?

Need for **clear strategic direction** and **shared agenda** in the context of wider societal and economic benefits

Need to **manage scarce resources** most effectively and efficiently for the greater good

Need to **deepen relationships** with those supported to allow greater scope for creativity and systematic capture of successful outputs and impacts

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**Grand Challenges**
- Understanding the Physics of Life

**Societal Challenges**
- Digital Economy

**Strategic Partnerships**
- Connecting Business with EPSRC Portfolio

- Advocating for the UK EPS

- Long-term vision

- Equipment sharing

- Mentoring
Funder – ‘Old’ approach

- Responds to bids from community – processes applications
- ‘Fund and forget’ model
- Reactive recipient of progress/final reports
- Focus on processing guidelines rather than project outcomes
- ‘Hands off’ approach to how funded activities are carried out, delivered and promoted
- Nice to be acknowledged but not critical

Sponsor – ‘New’ approach

- Provides a general sense of direction, proactive signposting of priorities backed by resource
- Active engagement with / from research and user community
- Expects regular feedback used to stage-gate future funding and wider opportunities
- Sets out expectations and responsibilities in partnership with those we support to help yield desired outcomes
- Expects commitment, engagement and advocacy from those sponsored in meetings goals and needs
- Requires use of logo, branding in all comms/publicity material

New approaches – from Funder to Sponsor

- Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs)
- PhD plus
- Shaping Capability / Defining National Importance
- Stage-gating
- Institutional sponsorship
- Strategic Partnerships
- Demand management
- Sandpits/ The Big Pitch
- Larger Longer Grants
- Creativity@home
- Mentoring programme
- Longer-larger grants / Hubs
- Influential evaluations (e.g. Economic Impact of Maths)
EPSRC SPONSORSHIP – FUNDER VS SPONSOR

What does it mean for me as a researcher?

- Take time to understand strategic priorities and respond to those as appropriate
- Discuss my research ideas with EPSRC Staff in advance of submission
- Engage in consultation with EPSRC directly or through others (e.g. learned societies)
- Engage in peer-review e.g. postal or panel
- Provide evidence of research outcomes and impact
- Advocate for the Engineering and Physical Sciences

Triggering a change in culture – Equipment sharing

What we’ve done: Provided financial support for Universities (and regional groupings of HEIs (e.g. N8,M5) working together to build registers of capital equipment available across institutions.

What this has led to: Universities have a much better handle on what equipment they have and can make it available to others UK-wide (universities and industry). It has also helped secure new additional capital investments from Government.

Impact (so far): Equipment databases run across universities (e.g. equipment, data), better deals from equipment suppliers (procurement), better use of UK capital resource.
VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT – National Graphene Institute (NGI) AND ARCHER

• **What we’ve done:** Undertaken VfM Assessments and developed specific conditions around the funding for major capital grants.
• **What this is leading to:** Grants for NGI and ARCHER Facility both within short timescales and containing conditions to ensure the long term requirements of EPSRC will be met.
• **Impact (expected):** Greater value for money and long term return on the investment.

TRAILBLAZING NEW APPROACHES – MENTORING RESEARCH LEADERS

• **What we’ve done:** Paired recognised research leaders with industrial leaders (11 pairs).
• **What this is leading to:** Opening new directions for research leaders and helping them to develop collaborations and open up new avenues.
• **Impact (expected):** more ‘rounded’ leaders receiving outstanding support at the right time in their career.

CAPITAL EQUIPMENT AND 8 GREAT TECHNOLOGIES

• **What we’ve done:** developed business cases, in partnership with the research community, for additional capital investment in priority areas (robotics, advanced materials, energy storage).
• **What this has led to:** £100M additional investment from HMG provided to EPSRC to support capital equipment in priority areas + additional leverage from business.
• **Impact:** Enable researchers to carry out the highest quality research using the most up-to-date equipment, much of which in partnership with industrial partners, and with pooling of resources.

CHALLENGING THE STATUS-QUO: CATALYSIS HUB

• **What we’ve done:** Worked with the research and business community to bring key players who could work together to form a UK catalysis Hub, aligned with Chemistry Grand Challenges.
• **What this has led to:** Development of a £13M catalysis hub which: a) has strong leadership, b) is interdisciplinary, c) has significant backing from industry and d) is a long-term endeavour.
• **Impact (expected):** Generation of high-quality research outcomes with impact on priority sectors i.e. energy and manufacturing

WORKING WITH OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERS TO INCREASE INVESTMENT IN THE UK

• **What we’ve done:** Help them understand University system within innovation landscape (advice on where to focus their resource).
• **What this is leading to:** SPs being much better connected to UK university research.
• **Impact (expected):** Increase SPs linkages with best UK Universities + help protect inward investment into UK.

Providing direction to the research community - ICT

• **What we’ve done:** ran a strategy workshop in 2010 with key researchers.
• **What this has led to:** sponsored 3 projects looking at cross-community areas of interest (data visualisation to enable collaboration, responsive innovation in ICT and feasibility account for small projects).
• **Impact:** community leaders working very closely with EPSRC - they understand our strategy.