



AHRC Capability for Collections Fund (CapCo) Call Guidance Document

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Summary

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) is pleased to invite applications to the Capability for Collections Fund (CapCo). It will support a series of targeted, capital investments to renew and upgrade research facilities within UK galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAMs), including university collections, focusing on conservation and heritage science facilities, digital capture equipment and specialist study spaces and reading rooms. Projects must be completed within the current Financial Year.

The scope of CapCo is in line with the strategic vision for future investment in arts and humanities infrastructure set out in Chapter 5 of UKRI’s [Opportunities to grow our capability](#) report. This noted that the ‘national GVA of the heritage economy is estimated at £29bn’ and identified that investment in conservation and heritage science facilities; and physical spaces bringing practitioners, curators and scientists together would be critical to the heritage sector’s continued success.

The investment will fund two types of activity for collections-led research in eligible institutions: (a) refresh / upgrade of major facilities, costed at up to £3M per bid and (b) urgent replacement or upgrade of core equipment and instruments, including instrumentation for spectrometry, spectroscopy, digitisation and imaging, and conservation equipment, costed at £10k-£1M per bid. The assessment of the applications will focus, in part, on feasibility of spend within Q3 and



Q4 of 20/21, and funds will only be committed where it can clearly be demonstrated that the project will be completed within the current Financial Year, i.e. by 31 March 2021.

Background

UKRI's 'World Class Lab' funding is for maintaining and refreshing existing UK scientific infrastructure, as well as funding allocated to bodies to spend in line with their own strategic interests, including those interests that are aligned with the grand challenge priorities that the Government has set out in its Industrial Strategy ([BEIS, 2018](#)).

AHRC's IROs, university collections and the wider GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) sector are major centres of inter and multidisciplinary research, with holdings ranging from herbaria and fossils to portrait miniatures and historic sites and monuments. Through tourism alone they generate c.£30bn GVA per annum and support over 400,000 jobs. Collections and collections-led research contribute to knowledge far beyond the heritage sector, not only underpinning public engagement and education, but advancing understanding of areas such as climate science, infectious disease and evolutionary biology; driving technological innovation in advanced visualisation, sensors, bio-imaging and, potentially, novel materials; and providing a rich stream of primary content for the creative industries. Within this context, the principal objective of this investment is to ensure baseline capability to enable these activities to happen at scale and to a broader base of researchers, so that innovation driven through heritage assets becomes the rule rather than the exception.

This call focuses on upgrade and renewal of existing conservation studios, heritage science labs, digital capture and imaging facilities and study spaces in collections organisations, and the items of equipment and instrumentation therein. Within collections organisations, these spaces function as hubs where new knowledge is created and interdisciplinary research, innovation and teaching facilitated. They also provide a vital service, ensuring that every object selected for public display is examined and made safe for handling, study, digital capture and conversion into a monetisable asset. Inefficiency or lack of capacity within these spaces will therefore have an immediate and prolonged knock-on effect on the heritage sector's ability to generate research or create, at scale, marketable products such as the immersive digital experiences that projects funded through AHRC's Creative Industries Clusters Programme and the ISCF Audience of the Future Programme are currently prototyping. It will also impede the sector's ability to exploit the current growing public demand for digital engagement with arts and culture.



Funding

The call has been broken down into two distinctive streams at 100% full economic costing (fEC): (a) refresh / upgrade of major facilities, costed at up to £3M per bid and (b) urgent replacement or upgrade of core equipment and instruments, including instrumentation for spectrometry, spectroscopy, digitisation and imaging, as well as conservation equipment, costed at £10k-£1M per bid.

Only capital funding is available from this call. Associated running and staff costs will need to be met by the institution.

The assessment of the applications will focus on urgency, plans for accessibility and use, and feasibility of spend within Q3 and Q4 of 20/21. Funds will only be committed where it can clearly be demonstrated that the project will be completed within the current financial year, by 31 March 2021. Application quality will form the primary assessment. However, given the nature of the call and funding, final outcomes will in part be guided by ensuring geographic spread of core capability upgrades and a sufficiently accessible distribution of instrumentation and equipment of different types.

Equipment & Facilities

Funding available through this call is exclusively for the procurement of equipment and the upgrade of physical laboratory, studio, study and collections spaces. Costs for operating and maintaining equipment are not eligible and should be borne by the applicant institution. Further details of the requirements of this call are listed below.

- AHRC will award costs at up to 100% full economic costing (fEC). There is no expectation of institutional contributions towards equipment costs.
- Equipment and facilities must predominantly support research that falls within AHRC's remit.
- Any equipment procured supports primarily the capacity for excellent research within the institution, with benefits to any wider sector community a secondary benefit.
- The requested items fulfil an urgent, strategic need and improve existing core capability.
- The bid must clearly demonstrate that the project (including procurement, delivery, installation, operation and spend) will be completed within the current financial year, by 31 March 2021.
- Only items of equipment over £10k in value (including VAT) can be purchased using the allocated funds. Purchase of components (not consumables), to upgrade and render instrumentation/equipment usable, in excess of £10k is permissible. Multiple items of equipment may be requested. Applicants must, however, clearly demonstrate the strategic need for each item and a cohesive narrative linking them within the Case for Support. Costings must be fully justified and fit within the scheme range. AHRC reserves the right to fund elements



of a multi-equipment bid, if the case for some components are demonstrably stronger than others.

- Costs for installation by the supplier, service contracts (i.e. annual maintenance visits) and upgrading computer workstations necessary to operate purchased instrumentation/equipment may be included.
- Refresh or upgrade of major facilities – including relocation - may include refurbishment costs, in combination with instrumentation/equipment costs. The equipment costs are only permitted where they are located within the refurbished space and similarly constitute a replacement or upgrade of existing equipment or instrumentation. Costs associated with temporary storage and transporting items (collections, equipment, instrumentation) to and/or from a newly refurbished space are eligible within the major facilities funding stream.
- A single application may be submitted from multiple institutions located with a single organisation (e.g. two museums umbrellaed under one university); if the infrastructure/equipment/facilities will be distributed across these institutions, this must be clearly outlined within the application, as well as provide a cohesive justification for the distributed infrastructure and how it will be accessed within the Case for Support. Institutional Letters of Support from each institution that will host a piece of equipment must also be included (see: Guidance on Application Section).
- This uplift call prioritises the replacement of existing capability – i.e. to replace obsolete or aging kit which a(n) RO/IRO already has rather than create new, additional capability. We will consider applications for new equipment or instrumentation that an organisation does not own, has not previously owned, and/or presently borrows/purchases time on if:
 - Expertise for using said equipment/instrumentation can be demonstrated;
 - Urgency and need for use can be demonstrated – e.g. your current access is insufficient for your needs;
 - Sustainable use and management of new equipment or instrumentation – i.e. a clear indication of additional research or other related outputs that would result directly from the purchase of the item.

Eligibility

This call is open to all Je-S registered organisations eligible to receive UKRI funding. For further details, on eligibility please consult the UKRI [eligibility page](#).

There is a cap in place on the number of application bids that can be submitted by a single organisation. Only one bid per stream per organisation is allowed (two bids in total).



Timeline

Activity	Timeline
Call for proposals opens in Je-S	2 September
Deadline for proposals	13 October 1600 GMT
Panel meeting	November
Outcomes	30 November
Earliest award start date	7 December
Latest award end date	31 March

Assessment process

Applications to this call will be reviewed directly by a specially convened assessment panel drawing on expertise across AHRC's remit and from across the GLAM sector. The panel will be provided with assessment guidance which will ask them to consider bids based on the following criteria within the overall objectives of the call:

1) Alignment to the specification of the call

- How does the investment proposed align with the objectives of the call?
- Does the proposed bid fit within one of the two categories?
 - 1) refresh / upgrade of major facilities, costed at up to £3M per bid
 - 2) urgent replacement or upgrade of core equipment costed at £10k-£1M per bid
- For those bids requesting new equipment not owned or never previously owned by an organisation, does the application make a compelling case demonstrating urgency and need for the requested infrastructure, and that there is sufficient expertise existing for the addition?
- Does the core capability and research to be enabled by the requested bid fit (by majority) within AHRC's remit? If on the periphery of remit, do these funding streams represent the only clear source of funding the RO or IRO can draw upon for capital uplift within the specified GLAM or university collections spaces?

2) Case for Urgent & Strategic Need

- Does the proposal align with the host institution's research strategy, particularly in respect to capital investment in research infrastructure? Does the bid clearly align with the collections held and/or the research focus of the facility?
- Does the proposed investment enhance the organisation's capacity to support and undertake excellent research? If so, can this be quantified in terms of actual research outputs with existing capability and projected ones following investment?
- Does the proposal present a cohesive case for need and urgency?



- Are requests for multiple pieces of equipment/instrumentation presented within a coherent strategic narrative?
- Do the deliverable outcomes set out in the Case for Support demonstrate continued underpinning research in the arts and humanities, with potential to contribute to inter- and multi-disciplinary collaborations?
- Do the deliverable outcomes contribute to or help maintain other areas of the heritage and aligned sectors? Are the benefits of value to the economic success of the UK and/or enable development of emerging industries?

3) Feasibility

- Does the named PI demonstrate the required knowledge and expertise to complete the planned programme?
- Does the application clearly demonstrate that the project will be completed within the current financial year, by 31 March 2021?
- To what extent is the timescale feasible and realistic for procurement, delivery, installation and operation?

4) Sustainability & Management

- To what extent are the plans for sustainability realistic?
- Are there cohesive sustainability and management strategies in place for the current equipment/instrumentation/facilities?
- Does the proposal demonstrate plans for the equipment to be sustained beyond the award, including running costs?
- Where provided, are the strategies for a wider user base, including those outside the host institution, cohesive and clear?
- Does the bid for facilities or equipment/instrumentation align with existing priorities in environmental sustainability, including institutional strategy?

5) Value for money

- Are the requested costs appropriate and justified?
- Does the proposal overall represent good value for money (i.e. the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcome)?



How to Apply through Je-S

To apply: Please select Document Type ‘AHRC Grant’, Scheme ‘Large Grants’ and “Capabilities of Collections 13 October 2020”.

Application Process and Format

Proposals, in the form of a Case for Support and additional attachments (see below), must be submitted via the Je-S system.

The following is a list of attachments that are permitted for this Call.

Attachment	Je-S Attachment Type	Required	Page Limit
Case for Support	‘Case for Support’	Yes	See below for sub-section details. No more than 6 pages A4
Workplan	‘Workplan’	Yes	No more than 1 side of A4
Quotes and Tenders	‘Quotes and Business Case’	See Quotes & Tenders	Maximum of 3 quotes per item of refurbishment
Institutional Letter of Support	‘Letter of Support’	Yes	No page limit
Letters of Support	‘Letter of Support’	Optional	Maximum 3 letters of support. No page limit
Justification of resources	‘Justification of Resources’	Yes	No more than 1 side A4

Guidance on Application

Summary

Within the Je-S form, describe the proposed research in simple terms in a way that could be publicised to a general audience [up to 4000 chars]. Note that this summary may be published on the AHRC's website in the event that a grant is awarded. Please see details in the [AHRC funding guide](#).

Case for Support

This section is to be no more than 6 pages of A4, expanding on the section above, allowing for more detail and an expanded narrative, as needed.



Context

Please provide details on the following, including details on the wider research and/or sector community that will benefit from this equipment. This may be within the institution (IRO/RO), regionally, nationally, or internationally.

- Institution background
- A clear definition of the equipment requested
- Role of equipment within the UK landscape
- How is this equipment an upgrade (details on existing equipment)

Strategic need

Please discuss the strategic need for this equipment.

- What is the urgent, strategic need for improving existing core capability?
- How does the requested equipment fit within the institution's strategy, aligning with existing and future vision and priorities?
- What is the institutional strategy for capital investment in instrumentation/equipment/facilities for conservation, heritage science, digital capture and specialist study spaces?
- Why the institution is appropriate to host the equipment item(s) requested? What is the added value from existing equipment, support or infrastructure in place at the institution?

Sustainability and Management

This section should cover plans for ensuring the future sustainability of the equipment/instrumentation or facilities and details of management.

- Provide details of the role of the named PI, and their capability to manage the bid and workplan.
- Provide a description of the overall management strategy, including usage, access, prioritisation, and a strategy for monitoring equipment/instrument usage where applicable.
- What is the organisation's strategy for managing the process of procurement internally?
- What sustainability strategy is in place for the current equipment/instrumentation or facilities? Will this strategy remain the same or alter after the upgrade takes place?
- How will the equipment be sustained beyond the award? How will running costs (staff time, consumables, maintenance etc.) be met and sustained?

If applicable, provide information on the wider user base, including those outside the host institution. Will other users have the opportunity to access equipment/instrument? If an existing user base is in place, provide examples of such activities.

Deliverable outcomes



The main criteria for this call highlights that applications be made for the refresh, upgrade, or replacement of existing facilities, equipment, and instrumentation. Please provide details of the research such an investment would enable and/or underpin.

- Detail outcomes that this equipment/instrumentation could enable (e.g. publications, capacity to host external researchers, income generation etc.)
- Indicate, where relevant, how this equipment will be used with existing AHRC funding and provide a selection of relevant projects and benefits
- Outline how research would contribute to or help maintain other areas of the heritage and aligned sectors, as well as contributes to current or future UK economic success and/or enables future development of key emerging industry(s).

Value for Money

How does the particular facilities or equipment/instrumentation specification requested represents best value for money (i.e. efficiencies and savings) and how it will meet the needs of the research. Please be specific in quantifiable terms (i.e. staff time/costs save, output enhanced).

Environmental sustainability

Earlier this year, UKRI launched its first [environmental sustainability strategy](#) and has priorities to lead the way in environmental sustainability across the research and innovation sector. UKRI invests, across remits, in cutting-edge research and innovation essential to understanding and tackling the environmental sustainability challenges that we face. Please highlight how the facilities or equipment/instrumentation bid aligns with existing priorities in environmental sustainability, including institutional strategy.

Workplan

This section should highlight evidence of feasibility, including tender timelines in the case of refurbishments. Identify whether this project can be completed within the timeline provided. A Ghant chart must be included within the attachment.

This should include:

- Details of the timescales for the procurement process.
- Timescale for delivery, installation and getting the equipment fully operational.
- Identify when potential risks may occur

Quotes & Tenders

Equipment Quotations are uploaded within the equipment item section, not within the attachments section.

- Under the major facilities stream, three written quotations and/or tenders are required for all facilities refit and refurbishment activities. If there is a sole supplier or fewer than three quotes/tenders provided, this should be discussed in the Justification of Resources.



- Under both streams, information on quotation requirement for equipment and instrumentation is found below. Costs are including VAT. This includes components of equipment.
- Please ensure that quotes are not attached as “Other” documents.

Equipment Type	Quotation requirements	Notes
£10K-£25K	No quotes required	
£25K-£138K	Three verbal quotes to be detailed in the Justification of Resources	Written quotes are optional. If there is a sole supplier or fewer than three quotes this should be discussed in the Justification of Resources
Over £138K	Three written quotes	If there is a sole supplier or fewer than three quotes this should be discussed in the Justification of Resources

Institutional Letter of Support

A letter from the appropriate senior member of staff (e.g. Director, Board Chair, Dean or equivalent) at the host organisation, supporting the application. The letter must reference the named PI, and attest that the named individual has the required knowledge and expertise to complete the planned programme within the timeline. There is no page limit for the Je-S attachment; letters should be on headed paper and be signed and dated within six months of the proposal submission date. If the infrastructure will be distributed across multiple institutions (e.g. several museums or collections) within a single organisation, Institutional Letters of Support are required from each institution and must stipulate support for the distribution plan.

Letters of Support

A maximum of three letters from the user base community supporting the upgrade of equipment/instrumentation or facilities can be included as **optional** attachments (e.g. letters of support from archives, galleries, or libraries supporting an upgrade of an existing microfiche reader that has been used to screen their collections). The letters should be on headed paper and be signed and dated within six months of the proposal submission date.

Justification of resources

Please justify all listed cost, this includes but is not limited to the choice of supplier, contractor, maintenance contract, and workstation upgrades where applicable.