

## Infrastructure Potential New Funding Opportunities

### Compiled FAQs from the Q&A Event – 10 August 2020

Since the Q&A event on Monday August 10, the AHRC Infrastructure team has taken on board some of the comments and suggestions from participants who were in attendance on the day. The recorded event should be viewed as an initial iteration, which has been adjusted, so far as the constraints of the funding will allow, to better reflect communities' needs and priorities. The questions below have been compiled, condensed, and formalised for circulation.

Details of the upcoming Capability for Collections Fund call alongside existing timelines can be found in [the pre-call announcement](#) on the AHRC website.

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### On the Specifications of the Call

#### **1) Are the bid streams mutually exclusive? What is meant by refurbishment?**

Bid streams are divided by maximum eligible costings and by overall purpose. Refurbishment is a significant refit or remodel of existing spaces, i.e. laboratory, reading space, studio, collections stores, or another 'back of house' research space, and can also include the purchase upgraded equipment or instrumentation.

#### **2) Does the funding opportunity also include improvements to Reading Room facilities, including structural work?**

Yes, reading rooms and study spaces (especially those requiring controlled climate/additional mechanisms to protect vulnerable collections) are eligible provided that structural work can be completed within the 31 March 2021 timeline.

**3) Does upgrading/replacing existing collection storage systems count? If we can demonstrate this will improve access for research and use as well as care.**

Yes, however, applicants must be confident that a project can be completed, installed and operational, by the end date.

**4) Can relocation, i.e. lab refurbishment a new lab space or digitisation services from a tiny studio to a larger space that is more fit for purpose, in refurbishment bids?**

Yes. Relocation, provided it is sufficiently justified in the Case for Support, can be included in a refurbishment bid.

**5) Can we refurbish a research space in a building that we don't own but lease for a long period of time, e.g. next 30+ years?**

Yes.

**6) Do university heritage science labs qualify for the WCL call?**

Yes. Heritage science laboratories situated within universities are eligible to apply for the call.

**7) As we are considering purchasing of an item of capital equipment for an existing lab would we need to demonstrate in the application that we are replacing a pre-existing instrument (that is now getting past its useful life) so we can continue to meet our historic set of user requirements or would we be free to expand the technical capacity of a lab by purchasing a new tool to meet a novel set of analytical requirements for our users?**

This particular uplift will prioritise replacement of existing capability – i.e. to replace obsolete or aging equipment and instrumentation which a RO (research organisation) already has rather than create new, additional capability.

We will consider applications for new equipment or instrumentation that a RO does not own, or 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 this kit.

**8) Are we able to bid for an instrument that we don't currently have?**

Please see Question 7.

**9) Some of our existing kit are managed by other services in the university which we pay for - upgrading for example by acquiring digitisation kit - could that be termed upgrade of existing?**

Please see Question 7.

**10) Can 'new' equipment be purchased even under the 'refurbishment' stream?**

Please see Question 7.

**11) If our current suite of analytical equipment used to determine factors affecting the preservation of our collection could be enhanced by adding a new and different piece of kit which will be used for the same output would that be allowable?**

Please see Question 7.

**12) If we have so far borrowed/paid to use equipment in order to undertake certain types of analyses, can we bid to purchase our own?**

Please see Question 7.

**13) Do we require partnerships for these streams?**

No. Partnerships are not necessary for the two streams, but due consideration will be given to applications that demonstrate reach beyond their own institutions.

**14) Can the bid involve refurbishment/upgrade of infrastructure that also benefit non-UK partner institutions?**

Yes. Please make the strategic case within the Case for Support.

**15) Are collaborative bids encouraged? (e.g. one bid from more than one organisation)?**

Collaborative bids are not a requisite for this call. See Question 13.

**16) Can we purchase an instrument with multi-year support from the supplier?**

Yes. It is encouraged that multi-year engineering/maintenance support be included in the application. Please justify the selection.

**17) Is there scope for digitisation as part of this?**

Applications related to the upgrade or refurbishment of equipment, instrumentation, and/or facilities relevant to digitization would be considered eligible.

**18) Would there be any capacity for creating new reference collections and / or digitising current collections, or making databases searchable?**

Creating new reference collections/digitising content or improving databases are not eligible under this call but may be eligible in future calls.

**19) Does this include upgrade of software/ computing technology to improve accessibility to archives?**

Yes. This can include upgrading software and computer workstations. Staff resources to run the software is not eligible.

**20) Does 'replacement of existing capability' include cloud-based technology and other such technologies that are usually subscription-based, i.e. 1-year cloud-service fees, etc. ?**

The purchase of cloud-based technology to upgrade an existing infrastructure would be considered eligible. On-going operational costs (i.e. service fees, subscription fees, etc.) are eligible provided applicants state the amount required for the lifetime of the infrastructure, or the number of years required before the next upgrade (i.e. 5 years access to cloud platform).

**21) Are web-based research databases included?**

No. The purchase of research database subscriptions are not eligible under this call.

**22) Can library services be included (e.g. access to digital library services from an academic partner)?**

No. Access to library services would not be eligible under this call.

**23) Does an interdisciplinary lab need to demonstrate a predicted level of AHRC utilisation of the facility and what evidence would we need to submit? Could usage from another instrument be provided as evidence (i.e. we might want to upgrade one CT scanner, could we use evidence from another)?**

Applicants must demonstrate that the majority of research conducted with the requested instrumentation/equipment/facilities space fits within AHRC's remit. Applicants can use evidence from existing facilities, research programmes etc. to support this need.

## Operational & Eligibility

### **24) Are organisations allowed to apply if they are not an IRO?**

Applicants must be from an eligible organisation to apply for [UKRI funding](#).

### **25) Do university collections have to have any form of accreditation to be eligible?**

The applying institution must be eligible for UKRI funding. Please visit the [UKRI website](#) for details.

### **26) Are all university museums or collections eligible, or do you need to also be in receipt of HEFCE museums fund?**

Applicants must be from an eligible organisation to apply for [UKRI funding](#). University museums or collections do not need to be in receipt of HEFCE Museums Galleries and Collections funding as well.

### **27) Are institutions allowed to submit more than one bid as part of several independent projects?**

Eligible institution will be allowed to submit one bid per stream, therefore there can be a maximum of two bids submitted by an institution.

### **28) Are multiple bids from multiple museums/collections under a single umbrella institution allowed?**

No. Only one bid per stream per institution is allowed (totalling two bids per institution).

### **29) Would collaborations across one institution be welcome (i.e. as a kind of distributed infrastructure but across one institution)?**

Yes, however, it is recommended that applicants make it clear that it is distributed infrastructure within the application and provide a coherent justification for its distribution within the Case for Support.

### **30) Would refurbishment of an exhibition gallery be eligible?**

No. The refurbishment of exhibition spaces is not eligible under the current call.

### **31) How will decisions be made?**

Decision will be made by a panel convened by AHRC. The panel will be held in mid-November 2020.

**32) How will you deal with multidisciplinary projects that go across two or more Research Councils? Is that allowed?**

AHRC encourages multidisciplinary research. For equipment/instrumentation/facilities requests to be eligible for this call, applicants must demonstrate that where multiple disciplines would utilise the requested infrastructure, the majority of research conducted be within the Arts and Humanities remit (at least 50%).

**33) Where collections have mixed use in Sciences and Arts/Humanities what proportion of collection use would need to be in the Arts/Humanities area for the collection to qualify? I run a University herbarium used in Biology, Archaeology, Typography & Design, and we are discussing uses in fine art. I'm not sure if our collection would qualify or qualify for full or part funding?**

Please see Question 32.

## Timelines

**34) Is 31 March the ultimate deadline for project completion?**

The current end date for project completion is 31 March 2021. Where completion by 31 March 2021 is not possible owing to extenuating circumstances, grantees should inform AHRC as soon as possible.

**35) Can we include software as a standalone ask i.e., we have the equipment, but it needs a software upgrade?**

Yes, this can be requested.

**36) Does there need to be a narrative that connects the equipment together?**

The strategic need for the upgrade must be demonstrated within the Case for Support. If applicants are requesting to purchase multiple pieces of equipment/instrumentation, it would be expected that a narrative tie together multiple purchases, particularly if such requests sit within different departments of the organisation.

**37) Should we prioritise the equipment within our ask?**

No. Prioritisation will not be a requisite within the application.

## Costs & Finance

### **38) Is there an upper limit per bid for each stream?**

The major facilities stream has a maximum costings limit of £3M, while with equipment and instrumentation upgrade stream is between £10,000 and £1M.

### **39) Given the short period for project realisation, can costs for overheads (i.e. project management) be included in the bid?**

Overheads could be included only if they qualify as capital uplift and they should be costed at 100% fEC. In cases where additional activities (such as project management) are related to the installation of the equipment, they would be eligible as part of the funding package. Additional job posts are not eligible for funding under the scope of the current bid.

### **40) Can 'people' be included in the bid (other than for immediate project realisation) and if yes, what happens at the end of this Financial Year?**

Staff costs are ineligible.

### **41) Given some infrastructure projects (large instruments or complete laboratory refurbishment) can take many months from ordering/starting to completion, what level of completion would be expected by 31 March 2020?**

One of the assessment criteria for applications submitted to this call would be assessing the feasibility of completion by 31 March 2020. As part of the application process, the call guidance will stipulate that it is required to demonstrate that for major refurbishment projects and smaller purchase bids alike, we would expect to see quotes/tenders alongside a feasibility timeline to demonstrate that you would be able to complete the project.

### **42) Would the applicants be expected to spend the funding from the first funding call in the 20/21 financial year and would capital funding be fully paid in advance or in arrears?**

A single payment will be made in Q4.

**43) Can our institutions underwrite the cost of equipment – i.e. if the order is placed now, but payment for this is only fulfilled the results of the applications are known?**

Underwriting the cost of equipment would be at the discretion of the research organization. However, equipment must be purchased within the lifetime of the grant. In the case of the call, that would be between 7 December 2020 and 31 March 2021.

**44) Could you clarify dates for current financial year please?**

UKRI works to the Treasury financial year, which is April 2020 – March 2021.

**45) How might match funding work with a bid that aims to revamp storage and access?**

Applications may include evidence of funding support from other sources to further demonstrate strategic need within the application. This is not a requisite, as capital costs for equipment, facilities, and instrumentation will be funded at 100% fEC.

**46) Will we need to demonstrate value for money through procurement in cases where purchasing equipment can be done from different suppliers?**

Yes. Applicants will be expected to provide a justification of resources, demonstrate value for money and environmental sustainability, as well as a case for sustainability and management.

**47) Is this funding ring-fenced to AHRC or are we in competition with projects even within the same institutions that may be directed towards the natural sciences?**

This funding is ring-fenced to AHRC. There will be no competition between disciplines within different Research Council remits.

**48) Does it include support and maintenance costs? e.g. I purchase some equipment or data centre services which would normally have an ongoing support agreement to safeguard operation of it.**

Support and/or maintenance costs can be included provided they are offered from the supplier. Please justify package selection within the application.