STFC Early Technology Development Capital Funding

Call Guidance

Proposals to be submitted through UKRI Joint Electronic Submissions to the 'STFC Horizons (Open) Call'

Important Dates

Event	Date	Time GMT
Call open	20/09/2021	09:00
Submission deadline	27/10/2021	16:00
Assessment Panel Meeting	Late November 2021	
Outcomes Announced	December 2021	
Start of successful projects	Before 01 January 2022	

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the guidelines for STFC Early Technology Development Capital Funding Call. While the document provides specific guidance concerning this grants round, it should be read in conjunction with the [STFC Research Grants Handbook](#).

1.2 The grants round and these guidelines have been developed to ensure that the process is:

- transparent and accountable, particularly with respect to the means of research prioritisation;
- efficient, both in terms of the requirement for applicants and the reviewers – both panels and peer reviewers, and the use of STFC office resources; and
- provides a timely outcome.

2. Background

2.1 This early technology development call will provide capital funding to support the development of basic technologies, that build upon STFC's [core capabilities and core programme,](#) in areas such as sensors, imaging and detector development. Disruptive changes in science and technology require paradigm shifts in both thinking and in the tools and skills we have to 'make, measure and model' the World around us.

2.2 In this call, Early Technology Development includes Basic Technologies, which are the earliest stage of the emerging technologies pipeline, and Transformative Technologies, which are the underpinning technologies of the future, e.g. AI, Quantum etc.

2.3 Applications are expected to demonstrate how early-stage technology development that has the potential to:

- Result in transformative, enabling, and/or critical technologies, applicable across disciplines.
- Contribute to fundamental knowledge, world class infrastructure, and/or enhancing the environmental sustainability of the research base.

3. Guidelines for Projects

3.1 This funding call is an opportunity for existing STFC projects to request up to £200k of capital funding for equipment purchases and technology development. Applicants can also request up to £5k of resource funding to support commissioning related activities.

3.2 **Please note, any capital funding that is awarded will be profiled in this financial year and must be used by the end of the current financial year (March 31st 2022), this is a fixed end date. Any capital funding unspent by this date will be lost.** Applicants should not apply for any equipment purchases that cannot feasibly be received and receipted before 31st March 2022. Successful projects should expect to submit a mid-term expenditure statement in late February 2022.

3.3 Applicants are allowed to request a maximum of 3 items of equipment. No single piece of equipment should cost more than £138k.

3.4 The maximum award available for each successful proposal will be £205k. Successful grants can have a duration of up to 6 months and **must start before 1st January 2022**. The total budget available is expected to be approximately £1M.

3.5 This is predominantly an equipment grant round and applicants should refer to [the Research Grants Handbook and Je-S helpdesk for guidance on equipment rules](#) when preparing submissions. In particular, it should be noted that:

- Equipment means any individual items of equipment costing £10k (inclusive of VAT) or more. Please note, if the item being requested is for a prototype and needs individual components, the prototype as whole is classified as a single item.
- Capital requests can be for up to 80% fEC final purchase price and STFC will expect the research organisation or project partner to contribute the remainder. Matched funding from industrial partners or research institutions for more than 20% is welcomed and will be considered during assessment. STFC contribution to the resource funding will be at 80% fEC.
- Contributions of at least 20% of the full cost of the equipment will be expected from the research organisation or project partner. The full economic cost value in the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system should be the total, quoted cost of the equipment. The research council contribution should be the amount requested from STFC, that is, 80%. Applicants must attach a letter of support from the research organisation or project partner detailing the proposed contribution to the cost of the equipment.
- Individual items of minor research equipment below £10k (inclusive of VAT) cannot be requested as part of this equipment round.

3.6 The applicant must show that they have they have the resources available to use the purchased equipment. All costings should be at current prices, inclusive of VAT and other taxes where applicable, with no allowance for inflation. Any capital application requests made in this call are done so under STFC's Terms & Conditions, as stated in the [Research Grants Handbook.](#)

4 Eligibility

4.1 Proposals for funding must clearly demonstrate the link to the science, technology, applications and expertise originating from the [STFC core Science Programme](#) or STFC core programme research conducted at the STFC national facilities and laboratories. STFC core Science Programme includes Nuclear Physics, Particle Physics, Astrophysics, Space Science, Accelerator Science, or computing in support of these, or STFC core programme research conducted at the STFC facilities, CERN, ESO or ESRF is also welcome.

4.2 **To be eligible, proposed activities must include a PI from an STFC-funded department at an eligible research organisation or from an STFC lab/facility.** The lead PI must be currently funded by the STFC core Science Programme (nuclear physics, particle physics & particle astrophysics, astronomy & space science, and accelerators & computing in support of these). Only academic partners may request funding. If there are any queries around eligibility, please contact STFCHorizons@stfc.ac.uk

4.3 Applicants must demonstrate the existence of an active relevant STFC core programme grant or STFC lab programme that would be supported by this funding and be benefitted by early-stage technology development activities. The applicant must have the resources available to use the purchased equipment and be able to demonstrate that the equipment they are requesting can be received and receipted before 31st March 2022 (e.g. lead times provided by supplier).

4.4 For further information on eligibility, applicants should refer to the [STFC Research Grants Handbook](#) and the [UKRI eligibility page](#).

5 Application Process

5.1 Final proposals should be submitted online using the [Je-S login](#). This screen also has links to tutorials and system help. In the event of any queries relating to the Je-S system please contact the Je-S helpdesk directly. See [Section 13](#) for contact details.

5.2 Once logged in, follow the steps below to start your application
Documents screen: select 'New Document'
Add new document screen: Select 'Call search' (highlighted at top of screen). When prompted, type in the call title "STFC Horizons (Open) Call" and select from the list created.

The remaining three selection fields will be automatically populated. These should read:
- Council: STFC
- Document Type: Standard Proposal
- Scheme: Futures
- Select the Create Document button.

5.3 Failure to select the correct options at this stage could result in your application not reaching the correct council or call. This will lead to your application not being considered for this call.

5.4 Applicants must ensure that they have obtained permission of any other person named on the proposal form (for example any Co-Investigators or Project Partners) for the provision of their personal information to UKRI and the processing of their data by UKRI for the purpose of assessing the application and management of any funding awarded.

5.5 Any co-investigators that will be named on the application must have an individual Je-S accounts for themselves or will need to create an account in order to be added to an application.

5.6 All documents should use 11pt sans serif font throughout, with a minimum of 2 cm margins around each page. Please submit all application attachments in pdf format to Je-S to avoid any issues with corrupt files. Refer to the Je-S Handbook for details.

5.7 The table below sets out the requirements for documents to be submitted as part of your proposal:

Je-S proposal proforma	Mandatory, exactly 1
Case for Support	Mandatory, exactly 1 Including 2 sections: project overview and equipment justification
Letter of support	Applicants must attach a letter of support from the research organisation or project partner detailing the proposed contribution to the cost of the equipment. Applicants must attach a signed and dated Letter of Support from the Lead Institution's Finance/Procurement team (or Research Office) that they agree and understand that the equipment must be received by 31st March. Up to 3 attachments permitted
Data Management Plan	Mandatory, exactly 1
Gantt chart	Optional, exactly 1
Covering letter	Optional

5.7.1 **Case for Support** should include two sections:
3-page project overview: This section should be a description of the STFC project(s) that the capital funding will support, highlighting any key findings to

date, and if the project is on track. This will be used to determine if the requested capital can be justified within the remit of the project as a whole. The case for support should also detail any resource funding needed for commissioning activities and how this funding will be used.

- How the equipment requested will support early technology development within the project(s)
- How the resource requested will support equipment commissioning activities within the project(s)
- The link to science, technology or expertise capabilities arising from the STFC core Science Programme (nuclear physics, particle physics, astronomy, space science) or core programme research in the national facilities (CLF, ISIS, Diamond)
- Demonstrate the existence of an active relevant STFC core programme grant that would be supported by this funding

1-page equipment justification per item: Applicants are permitted to request a maximum of 3 items of equipment. Applicants must ensure full justification (including commercial value) for the items is clearly stated in the case for support. This section should describe the cost of the equipment, including any quotes already obtained, and a brief business case stating why the equipment is needed, and how it will add value to the existing STFC project. Applicants must attach a letter of support from the research organisation or project partner detailing the proposed contribution to the cost of the equipment.

Please note, if the item being requested is for a prototype and needs individual components, the prototype as whole is classified as a single item.

The quotation information you need to provide depends on the equipment value. (Equipment values include VAT.):

- Equipment £10k to £25k – no quotes required.
- Equipment £25k to £138k – three verbal quotes to be detailed in the Justification of resources (JoR). Written quotes are optional. If there is a sole supplier or fewer than three quotes this should be justified in the JoR.
- This call does not allow for individual items of equipment worth more than £138k

i. **Letter of Support** (maximum 2 pages each)
   Please include letters of support (dated within 3 months) for the following:
   - From the partner country institutions involved in the project
   - Any organisations entered on the Je-S form as project partners. (A project partner is an organisation which contributes in cash or in kind to the project, but which is not requesting any money.)
   - **A signed and dated Letter of Support from the Lead Institution's Finance/Procurement team (or Research Office) that they agree and understand that the equipment must be received by 31st March 2022.**

Resources to be provided by any project partners, whether in cash or in-kind contributions, should be clearly identified in the proposal. Project partners' contributions in cash or in-kind should be seen as additional to the STFC's contribution.

The Je-S system only allows for a maximum of three attachments. If the proposal is benefited by additional letters of support, please combine multiple letters into one document before uploading it. Further guidance can be found on the [STFC website](#).

ii. **Data Management Plan** (maximum two pages): guidance can be found on the [STFC website](#).

iii. Full details of the terms and conditions under full economic costing (fEC) principles can be found in the [Research Grants Handbook](#)

iv. It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to ensure that any information is worded in such a way to protect commercially confidential or sensitive areas. STFC will assume that the applicant has obtained necessary permission from any party that may be involved in the application.

v. Any queries relating to Je-S should be directed to the Je-S helpdesk (see [Section 13](#) for contact information).

vi. Do not attach any documents additional to those listed in the table above even though Je-S allows other documents, such as CVs, list of publications etc. The proposal will be returned to you for these to be removed before being sent for peer review. This will delay the peer review process.

vii. We recommend you start your application early. You can save completed details in Je-S at any time and return to continue your application later.

6 Submitting proposals with applicants from both UK ROs and STFC Labs

6.1 Finances that are associated with the STFC Labs should be separated from those of the UK ROs. This is best done by submitting joint proposals with lead and non-lead organisations. There is no specific condition on who should be the lead organisation. This is entirely up to the project team and how the project is designed.

6.2 The lead applicant should create their proposal first following the steps below

- Select "Edit Joint Proposals"
- Select yes to "is this a joint proposal", Select yes to "are you the lead RO", the Joint reference number is generated. The following information will appear under the heading of Joint documents:
  - Lead document (detailing Principal Investigator, RO and Department)
  - Non-lead (same details as lead document displayed at this stage) with the option to assign owner or delete.
- Select Assign Owner to add the details of the Principal Investigator to the non-lead. An email alert will be generated to the PI of the non-lead that the document is available in their Je-S account

6.3 It is mandatory for the non-lead application to submit a completed Je-S proposal form. This form will not include all the sections which are available to the lead. It is most important to complete the sections on finances. The non-lead part can view the attachments on the lead part. All other attachments are optional. Documents mentioned is [Section 5](#) are relevant only to the lead grant.

7 **Submission**

7.1 Your proposal must be submitted by 16:00 GMT on Wednesday 27th October 2021.

7.2 Note that clicking 'Submit document' on your proposal form in Je-S initially submits the proposal to your host organisation's administration, not to STFC. Please allow sufficient time for your organisation's submission process between submitting your proposal to them and the call closing date.

7.3 Applicants can view the status of their proposal online by logging into the Je-S system. STFC office staff are unable to view the proposal until it is finally submitted by the institution's administration department and has undergone initial checks by the UKRI grants team.

7.4 It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator (PI) to ensure their institution's administration department submits the proposal before the submission deadline. Proposals submitted after the closing date WILL NOT be considered.

8 **Peer review process**

8.1 **Panel meeting** – Applications submitted to this call will be assessed by an independent panel comprised of expert assessors. This meeting will take place to consider all the proposals and will make funding recommendations to STFC.

8.2 **Introducers** – A member of the panel will be allocated as "introducer" for each proposal. As in previous rounds, the Introducer's role is to clarify any issues which are unclear in the grant proposal documentation and lead the discussion at the Panel Meeting.

8.3 The UKRI principles of peer review can be found on the STFC website.

9 **Assessment**

9.1 The panel will assess proposals against the following:

- **Strategic value within the STFC programme:** fit to the scope of the call and application of STFC capabilities and expertise.
- **Timeliness:** including demonstration that the equipment requested can be received and receipted before 31st March 2022.

10 COVID-19 Guidance

10.1 UKRI recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major interruptions and disruptions across our communities. We are committed to ensuring that individual applicants and their wider team, including partners and networks, are not penalised for any disruption to their career(s) such as breaks and delays, disruptive working patterns and conditions, the loss of on-going work, and role changes that may have been caused by the pandemic.

10.2 Panel members will be advised to consider the unequal impacts of the impact that COVID-19 related disruption might have had on the track record and career development of those individuals included in the proposal and will be asked to consider the capability of the applicant and their wider team to deliver the research they are proposing. Where disruptions have occurred applicants can highlight this within their application, if they wish, but there is no requirement to detail the specific circumstances that caused the disruption.

10.3 UKRI acknowledges that it is a challenge for applicants to determine the future impacts of COVID-19 while the pandemic continues to evolve. Applications should be based on the information available at the point of submission and, if applicable, the known application specific impacts of COVID-19 should be accounted for. Where known impacts have occurred, these should be highlighted in the application, including the assumptions/information at the point of submission. There is no need to include contingency plans for the potential impacts of COVID-19.

10.4 Reviewers will receive instructions to assume that changes that arise from the COVID-19 pandemic, post-submission, will be resolved and complications related to COVID-19 should not affect their scores.

10.5 Where an application is successful, any changes in circumstances that affect the proposal will be managed as a post-award issue.

11 Additional Information

11.1 **Framework for Responsible Innovation -** Applicants should confirm that they have considered whether the proposed work raises any particular issues relating to Responsible Innovation and, where relevant, briefly describe how these will be addressed. For further information on Responsible see, for example, the [EPSRC Framework for Responsible Innovation](#).

11.2 **UKRI terms and conditions for funding** - Successful applications will need to comply with the standard UKRI T&C for research grants as well as any specific T&C for this particular call. Please see the [UKRI website](#) for details of what to expect.

11.3 **Collaboration Agreements -** Successful applications which include more than one organisation (academic or non-academic) on the Je-S form, must have collaboration agreements signed between all organisations. A copy of this should be sent to the STFC office before the start of the project. Such an agreement should include how IP will be managed.
Example model research collaboration agreements that may be used as a basis for specific agreements between partners have been developed through the Lambert toolkit for collaborative research and can be found through the following link [Lambert Toolkit](#)**.**

11.4 **Unconscious bias -** Details can be found on the [STFC website](#)

11.5 **Equality and Diversity -** Information about STFC's commitment to promoting equality and diversity can be found on the [STFC website](#).

11.6 **Communications -** STFC should have an overview of all communications activity relating to STFC grants including for example: grants announcements, research publications, interviews and third party media, social media campaigns and case studies. Notification of impending activity by way of an email to the STFC communications team (pressoffice@stfc.ac.uk) is sufficient.

STFC encourages communications and does not wish to jeopardise any such activity – rather offer support – so please notify us of your plans in advance.

12 **Researchfish**

All award holders are required to submit outputs from their project on the UKRI [Researchfish platform](). Award holders are required to provide information about outputs arising from their work annually during the period of the award and normally for at least five years after the award has terminated. The STFC Horizons Programme team will monitor outputs on all STFC Horizons Programme grants and may contact you for further information on outputs and outcomes, in particular with a view to publishing a case study.

13 **Contacts**

13.1 The STFC office can provide help and support on Horizons Programme grant applications. We encourage potential applicants to contact the office to discuss their proposal.
email: STFCHorizons@stfc.ac.uk

13.2 For all queries relating to Je-S please contact the Je-S helpdesk
email: JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org
Phone: +44 (0) 1793 44 4164
They can be contacted Monday to Thursday 08.30-17.00 UK time and Fridays (excluding bank holidays and other holidays)

13.3 For non-JeS enquiries please contact
Dr Isabella Panovic
Senior Programme Manager for STFC Horizons Programme
email: STFCHorizons@stfc.ac.uk