Announcement of Opportunity: Environmental Omics facility

Natural Environment Research Council
NERC Scientific Support and Facilities commissioning: Environmental Omics facility
(October 2020 – September 2025)

Call Issued: 12 September 2019
Deadline to inform NERC of intention to submit proposal and initial discussion with NERC on additional leverage and transformational capital: 16:00 on 6 December 2019
Proposal Deadline: 16:00 on 6 February 2020

Summary

1. NERC is inviting eligible UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Research Council Institutes (RCIs) and Independent Research Organisations (IROs) to apply for funding over a five-year period to deliver an Environmental Omics Facility. This commissioning round forms part of a wider review and commissioning of NERC National Capability (NC). NERC’s strategic vision for Scientific Support and Facilities (S&F) commissioning is to transform its current portfolio to create a portfolio of fewer, larger, and more innovative facilities that aligns to a strong current and future demand from the environmental science community for these services from NERC. In line with this NERC has been working to reduce the number of its S&F (including nodes) by approximately one third by 2021.

2. NERC S&F provide specialist services, measurement facilities, sample repositories and data centres, whose "centralised" regional or national provision delivers a critical mass in operation, technical innovation and financial efficiency. NERC expects the provision of services to be accessible to the entire UK research community, and to support research from all NERC funding streams. NERC S&F may be used by industry partners, where appropriate, to generate additional external revenue, and provide a source of capability and expert advice to government and wider society.

Scope of commissioning

3. This third round of S&F commissioning will commission a single environmental omics facility for a five-year period from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2025.

4. NERC’s investment will be £2m per annum (see Funding). The new environmental omics facility must be ready to deliver NERC grant support by October 2020.

5. The facility should act as a national centre of excellence with state-of-the-art platforms for data generation, analytical pipelines (established and new) and an expert knowledge base. The facility is expected to support the environmental research community to access and further develop environmental omics tools and technologies to enable it to remain fully skilled and provide international leadership in environmental omics research.

6. Applicants are expected to justify how the proposed facility will support, at a minimum, the

---

1 Full details of eligible RCIs and IROs can be found on the UKRI website: https://www.ukri.org/funding/how-to-apply/eligibility/
Required Environmental Omics Capability (Tables 1 and 2). Applicants are expected to propose a single, large facility and must provide clear justification for the need for more than one ‘node’. Funding will not be available for more than two nodes. If a multi-node facility is proposed, there must be common management and standards, and each node must have clearly defined and complementary (not duplicating) area(s) of expertise.

7. In order to maximise the cost-effectiveness of NERC funding, it is important that the institution hosting any facility, has other additional sources of funding so that the service offered to NERC benefits from a greater range of equipment and expertise than would be the case if it were a stand-alone facility. This leverage can include, but is not limited to, added value items to strengthen the NERC investment, such as capital, equipment, laboratory space, technical and staff support etc. In addition intangible benefits may be offered, which include but are not limited to: enhanced equipment performance due to staff expertise, training, sharing best practice and links with suppliers.

8. Applicants must clearly state how this additional leverage will be achieved in the Case for Support and discuss additional leverage with the NERC S&F team at sfmt@nerc.ukri.org. For further information see Table 2.

9. Applicants should note that the outcome-based approach adopted by this commissioning process places an onus on the applicant to demonstrate clearly how outcomes will be delivered. The commissioning and subsequent evaluation of all S&F will be assessed against a standard set of service requirements (see Table 2).

10. The lead organisation for each application is required to inform NERC, by 6 December at 16:00, of their intention to bid and the names of any other institutions that they propose to include in their bids. Notification should be made by email to NERC’s S&F team at sfmt@nerc.ukri.org. By 6 December deadline, applicants are also required to have had initial discussions with NERC S&F team on additional leverage (see Table 2) and transformational capital (see Funding).

11. The investment will be delivered under the management of the British Geological Survey (BGS). A condition of award will be that the BGS will manage distribution and allocation of all funds for associated activities and management. For further information see Eligibility.

Required Environmental Omics Capability

12. Technological advances in environmental omics capability have progressed greatly since the NERC Environmental Omics Strategy (2010) and is re-envisioned in the 2019 Community Vision document. Environmental omics is now a broad and well-established tool that comprehensively characterises living systems across levels from the molecular to ecosystems, and across organisational layers from individuals to populations and communities through both time and space.

13. High-throughput environmental data generation is at the core of modern NERC science. Environmental omics as a tool can be used to address a wide range of environmental challenges, such as delivering Sustainable Development Goals, addressing the World Economic Forum’s assessment of Global Risks, and underpinning UK government strategies such as the Industrial Strategy and Clean Growth Strategy.

14. Applicants must ensure proposals meet the requirements in Tables 1 and 2, either through an individual or collaborative proposal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 – Science Requirements (specific to Environmental Omics Facility)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Development of Environmental Omics Tools and Technologies/ Community Support</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2
To enable the UK environmental science community to take full advantage of the technological advances in environmental omics, and facilitate the uptake and utilisation of omics approaches for the delivery of environmental solutions to societal challenges, NERC requires the facility to deliver the following core provision:

- **Specialist and state-of-the-art technologies** for the environmental science community, for example, ultra-long sequencing, high-throughput sequencing, RNA-sequencing, epigenetics and single cell genomics, that cannot be readily accessed at user establishments and will enable currently intractable research challenges to be undertaken.

- **Bioinformatic support** and development of user community skills in bioinformatics and data analysis through the provision of structured training courses, on-the-job training, advice on methods and user support.

- **Capacity building** in the user community to carry out their own experimental design, protocol optimisation, sample analyses, and interpretation of results, through the provision of structured training courses, on-the-job training, and user support/advice.

In addition the facility must seek to promote collaboration in order to share expertise and support interdisciplinarity.

**Support a wide range of areas within NERC remit**

In terms of the core provision the facility is required to ensure that the capability offered supports development and advances in the following priority science areas identified through community consultation:

- Genomics, (including modern and ancient DNA, microbial and pathogen DNA, eDNA metabarcoding, multicellular organism DNA and tools for quantifying global biodiversity)
- Meta’omics (combining data from multiples omes to inform understanding of system wide responses, for example, to environmental change)
- Transcriptomics (RNA)
- Phenomics (linking the biomolecular with phenotypic data on a whole organism scale)

Proposals for the facility whilst focused on these priority areas must also demonstrate how the facility will benefit the wider environmental science community by providing support for the eight research and innovation priorities identified in the NERC Delivery Plan.

Additionally the facility is expected to:

- Identify novel technical developments as they emerge, in the priority science areas as well as other areas such as metabolomics and proteomics, and advise the Facility Steering Committee and/ or NERC as appropriate.
- Advise NERC on immediate and future infrastructure requirements to support environmental omics research and potentially input on long-term priorities into the UKRI Infrastructure Roadmap.

**Training**

The facility must set out and deliver training (informatics and wet-lab) to expand the knowledge/skills base within the environmental science community.

The environmental omics facility is expected to provide highly experienced and customised training to NERC funded projects, PhD students and Fellows on individual project requirements and supervised laboratory experience.

Future capability needs focused on training may include:

---

2 Four priority areas ranked highest in terms of growth and importance following community consultation which included a community workshop, convening of a working group and an expert user survey.
1. Provision of training to support independent capability in third generation desktop environmental omics devices.

2. Upskilling: Due to the continued development of new environmental omics platforms, approaches and analytical tools, researchers, and Principal Investigators (PI) need to be continually upskilled as part of their professional development. This upskilling could cover information on practical delivery as to how environmental omics can be applied within a research area, and instruction in the techniques for execution and analysis (sample preparation and extraction).

Additionally the facility must provide evidence of how it would have sufficient flexibility to align with any future or established training initiatives, for example a Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) or a Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP), in this area to create a critical mass of highly skilled researchers.

Data

Where appropriate the facility must adhere to the NERC Data Policy.

The facility is expected to facilitate users in:

- Provision of omics data which adheres to FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reuseable) principles that has a complete set of accompanying metadata – explicitly the facility must ensure that data are provided in a compatible way to support the integration of environmental omics data with other data from across the UKRI remit, thus meeting ambitions for environmental data set out in the NERC Delivery Plan (see section 3.6 Digital Environment) and contributing to other science initiatives where possible. For example, the Constructing a Digital Environment and Digital Solutions programmes.
- Data which adheres to Open Access principles (see: UKRI Open Access Principles and High Level Policy) which state that outputs of publicly funded research in the UK should be widely and freely accessible (as soon as possible after their generation). This is supported by the Concordat on Open Data Research developed by a UK multi-stakeholder group, to ensure that research data (generated by the UK research community) is made openly available to others where possible.

The new facility should demonstrate linkages and alignment to existing and future NERC/UKRI activities as appropriate.

Table 2 – Service Requirements for all NERC S&F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs to be supported by National Capability &amp; Contribution to UKRI/NERC Charter Objectives (excellence, impact, skilled people, public engagement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What capability will be provided by the S&amp;F, how will it ensure unique capability and provision of NERC National Capability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F capture impacts arising from the research supported by the S&amp;F?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• State how the specific future requirements of the user communities will be taken into account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F grow both existing and new communities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F identify and support training needs of the user communities?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demand, usage &amp; access to and volume of service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How will access and usage be monitored?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F provide maximum facility access (maximum uptime)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F collect and address user feedback, and monitor demand?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What mechanisms will be in place to ensure NERC grants are supported in a timely and appropriate way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical capability (including Maintenance)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F meet the required scientific scope (Table 1)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F identify future opportunities and need (financial, training, technical, equipment and physical capability)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Describe how the S&amp;F will identify leverage opportunities to support future sustainability.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Staffing (Expertise and Service delivery)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How will the most appropriate level of staff be determined and how will they be equipped to support the users of the S&amp;F?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Governance arrangements and mechanisms to deliver science quality</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Describe how the proposed management and governance model best ensures effective delivery of the S&amp;F &amp; how it enables future development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What role will the S&amp;F play in insuring the quality of scientific outcomes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What is the proposed mechanism to determine access to the service?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Upgrade/innovation</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What areas will the S&amp;F prioritise for innovation (internally to facility &amp; support to scientific communities) such as technique, data management, equipment and community standards (nationally or internationally).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F be responsive to community needs and developments in order to optimise management and strength of the facility and provide world-leading research opportunities and internationally competitive science (e.g. making continual improvements in lab processes, data recording and process automation)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place for identifying future growth opportunities (e.g. identifying training, technological and research areas for innovation with the aim to increase the number of users and ideas, and to improve science quality and accuracy of results)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F ensure that the facility maintains a complete manual of Quality Assurance procedures covering all aspects of the process, from receipt of samples through to sequencing and reporting of results?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Value for money and funding</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F meet NERC’s strategic vision to create a portfolio of fewer, larger and more innovative facilities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F demonstrate Value for money? This may include (but not exclusive to) additional funding, joint agreements etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will outputs be delivered and monitored?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F prioritise activities to meet resource allocations?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Additional Leverage</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Applicants must provide additional leverage as part of their submission. This leverage can include, but is not limited to, added value items to support the investment, such as capital, improving data accessibility or standards, new equipment, new or improved building/lab space, technical and staff support etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Applicants may suggest leverage ideas that include using NERC capital (see Funding) but should be clear of the extra value they will provide in addition to this NERC-only capital investment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Applicants must clearly state how this additional leverage will be achieved in the Case for Support. It is mandatory for all applicants to contact and discuss additional leverage with the NERC S&amp;F team (<a href="mailto:sfmt@nerc.ukri.org">sfmt@nerc.ukri.org</a>) by 16:00 on 6 December 2019. All conversations will be formally logged and included as part of the assessment process as evidence that there has been sufficient dialogue between NERC and the PI about this leverage opportunity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>User engagement mechanisms</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• How will the S&amp;F identify, target and engage appropriate audiences and/or beneficiaries (e.g. core science community, industry, general public etc.)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. Applicants must demonstrate an awareness of UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) and wider activities funded in this area and where appropriate include plans to make linkages/align to these activities in order to add value to the NERC investment. Relevant activities may include but are not limited to:

   a) UKRI supported activities through the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Medical Research Council (MRC)
   b) European Bioinformatics Institute
   c) Defra Centre of Excellence for Genomics
   d) Elixir

Funding

16. Resource: NERC will provide up to £2m per annum to support the environmental omics facility. In accordance with standard NERC Terms and Conditions the NERC funding contribution for delivery of the facility will be at 80% FEC with the exception of NERC Research Centres which would be paid at 100% FCC (equivalent to FEC). All applicants must include the BGS management fee of £30k per annum in their applications. The successful proposal will be funded for a five-year period from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2025.

17. Capital: Further to the funding available for resource, up to £4m additional funding is available for transformational capital to the successful applicant(s). Applicants wishing to access this additional funding should therefore include details of any transformational capital investment needs (to be funded at 100%) in their proposals. The capital proposals should indicate how the investment will enable a step-change from the status-quo and provide improved technologies, techniques, data quality, resolution etc, and how any capital investment from NERC will lever additional investment. Capital should be utilised as a route to innovation to stimulate such improvements. Any capital awarded will need to be spent at the earliest available opportunity and applicants must provide evidence that the capability proposed can be delivered by the end of the first year to ensure continuity of service to the environmental omics community. Applicants must include a proposed financial profile for transformative capital investments, which will be discussed and finalised with NERC on approval of award. Capital bids with a score of two or below will not be considered transformational and therefore may not be funded.

18. To avoid duplication of equipment and to ensure future NERC supported assets enhance current capability, applicants should refer to the details of capital assets funded under NERC Capital Calls. Applicants should also refer to the national equipment database and other equipment sharing databases, to determine whether the capital asset(s) being requested is already available for potential equipment sharing. Applicants should confirm that the capital asset(s) is not already available for use within the host Research Organisation, or at any other accessible location by making reference to relevant asset registers.

19. Potential applicants must discuss capital proposals with NERC S&F team (sfmt@nerc.ukri.org) well in advance of the submission deadline and by 16:00 on 6 December 2019.

Eligibility

---

3 NERC considers capital to be the creation or purchase of an asset that has a useful life exceeding one year and that costs more than £10,000. An asset can be anything from equipment to buildings, from IT software to supercomputers.

4 Awards made through the 2019 Capital Call will be made available via the NERC website in autumn 2019.
20. This opportunity is open to individuals and organisations eligible for NERC research grant funding, i.e. applicants based in eligible UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Research Council Institutes (RCIs) and Independent Research Organisations (IROs) (for more detail see: [UKRI Eligibility for funding](#)).

21. Formal Project Partners may be named but are not a prerequisite for this call. Refer to the [Grants Handbook](#) for more detail.

22. Collaborative proposals for the combined delivery of the facility are welcome. However, in line with NERC’s strategic vision to create a portfolio of fewer, larger, and more innovative facilities, NERC requires that in response to this Call, a single institution will:
   (a) lead no more than one proposal; and
   (b) will appear (in a lead or support capacity) in no more than two proposals.

23. The investment will be delivered under the management of the BGS, which will ensure a single point of contact/access for the user communities. All applicants will be required to provide a mandatory letter of support from BGS detailing discussions and agreements as part of the submission (see [How to Apply](#)). For any queries regarding BGS management please contact Adele Gardner (BGS) ([adga@bgs.ac.uk](mailto:adga@bgs.ac.uk)).

24. Potential applicants are invited to contact the NERC S&F team ([sfmt@nerc.ukri.org](mailto:sfmt@nerc.ukri.org)) well in advance of the submission deadline of 6 February 2020 if they have any queries concerning their eligibility.

**Assessment criteria and process**

25. Applicants will be expected to deliver against the essential Science and Service requirements as outlined in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. These requirements will also be used as a framework for future evaluation and reporting.

26. Proposals will be assessed by an Assessment Panel in February/ March 2020. The following criteria will be used by the Assessment Panel to assess applications:
   - Science Requirements (Table 1)
   - Service Requirements (Table 2)

   Each of these criteria will be scored individually and equally between 0 and 5 (5 being the highest). An overall score out of 5 will then be calculated.

27. NERC reserves the right to return submissions for amendment if documents do not meet the required submission criteria and/or format requirements outlined in Tables 1-3. Applicants will be informed within two weeks of the submission deadline if this is the case.

28. NERC may wish to discuss with successful applicants ways in which proposals can better fit NERC’s strategic intention following the Assessment Panel and prior to award.

29. The final funding announcement will be communicated by April 2020, with the five year funding period commencing 1 October 2020.

**Reporting and review requirements**

30. It is expected that the environmental omics facility will have a Steering Committee to support and direct the facility. The membership of the committee is to be determined by the managing Research Centre (BGS), with suggestions from facility staff and the Steering Committee Chair and members
as appropriate. It is expected that the steering committee will comprise independent members who have expertise in the area. The Terms of Reference for steering committees should be agreed by BGS. Any review and amendment should be agreed by BGS.

31. All S&F will be required to report annually to their steering committee on the service provided; the process should be overseen by BGS. Annual reporting will directly align to S&F Objectives as included in S&F Benefits Realisation Plan.

32. NERC, BGS and the successful applicant will develop and agree a Benefits Realisation Plan after the award has been confirmed and before the grant is issued on 1 October 2020.

How to apply

33. Proposals must be submitted using the Research Councils Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S). Collaborative proposals must be submitted on a single Je-S form, no parent-child applications will be accepted.

34. To use this system, the applicant’s Higher Education Institution (HEIs), NERC Research Centre or Independent Research Organisation (IRO) must be registered as a Je-S user. Full details are available on the Je-S website. Further information can also be obtained by contacting the Je-S Helpdesk by email at JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org or by telephone on 01793 444164.

35. Please note the application process via Je-S will open on 12 September 2019.

36. When using Je-S applicants should select:
   - Council > NERC
   - Scheme > NC&C
   - Call > NC S&F Commissioning Omics FEB2020
   - Title of Research Project > All proposals should clearly indicate they are proposing an environmental omics facility by using the following format: ‘Environmental Omics Facility: <Insert project title here> (in collaboration with BGS)’

37. The successful award will be given a “funded off system” status and will show as successful on Gateway to Research (GTR) and Researchfish for reporting purposes, but both resource and capital awards will be made directly to the managing Research Centre (BGS) via contracts and Service Level Agreements (SLAs) where required. BGS will manage distribution and allocation of all funds for associated activities and management.

38. All costs associated with the S&F must be itemised and fully justified in the Justification of Resources document, with the following exceptions:
   - Estate costs
   - Indirect costs
   - Staff salary costs (not time, which must be justified)
   - Other Directly Allocated costs e.g. Infrastructure Technicians

39. Applicants should itemise the breakdown costs and resources associated with NERC funding provided to the S&F. Details of the funding headings can be found in the NERC Research Grants and Fellowships handbook.

40. Applicants must ensure that their proposal is received by NERC by 16:00 on 6 February 2020.

41. Applicants should leave enough time for their proposal to pass through their organisation’s Je-S submission route before this date. Please liaise with your registered Je-S user to confirm how long
this process will take. Any proposal that is received after the closing date, is incomplete, or does not meet the eligibility criteria, will not be considered. For more details on how to complete the Je-S form please refer to the Je-S Handbook.

42. The following documents conforming to the stated page limits should be submitted as detailed in Table 3. The Justification for Transformational Capital (optional) form can be downloaded from the NERC website.
### Table 3 – Proposal format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document/attachment type</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Case for Support (mandatory) | **Up to 16 sides A4** on the Science and S&F requirements detailed in Tables 1 and 2:  
Please refer to the following headings (as included in Table 1) which should be addressed when completing the Case for Support:  
- Development of Environmental Omics Tools and Technologies/ Community Support  
- Support a wide range of areas within NERC remit  
- Training  
- Data  

Please use the following headings (as included in Table 2) when completing the Case for Support:  
- Need to be supported by National Capability & Contribution to UKRI/ NERC Charter Objectives (excellence, impact, skilled people, public engagement)  
- Demand, usage & access to and volume of service  
- Physical capability (including Maintenance)  
- Staffing (Expertise and Service delivery)  
- Governance arrangements and mechanisms to deliver science quality  
- Upgrade/ innovation  
- Value for money and funding  
- Additional Leverage  

Text addressing these criteria should include any underpinning and science programme elements, outlining key deliverables and outcomes by end of Year 5, including all necessary tables, references and figures. |
| Justification of Resources (mandatory) | **Up to 4 sides A4** for each proposal.  
Provide a breakdown and justification of costs and resources associated with the funding provided by NERC. These figures should match those submitted in Je-S and should not exceed the total budget available listed under **Funding**.  

If actual costs for S&F differ to this budget allocated through NERC National Capability funding, S&F’s are invited to use this document to highlight the actual cost of operation. NERC does not guarantee any additional funding will be available during this commissioning process.  

Facilities should include a justification for all Directly Incurred Costs, Investigator effort, use of pool staff resources and any access to shared facilities and equipment being sought. It should include full justification of all facility costs (excluding HPC). Resources required for data management should be included if applicable. |
| Pathways to Impact *(mandatory)* | **Up to 2 sides of A4.**  
Focusing on engagement with users (industry, business, government, charities or the general public). Considering a wider strategy for;  
- Who could potentially benefit from the S&F over different timescales?  
- How might this value be realised? |
|---|---|
| C.V. *(mandatory)* | **Up to 2 sides A4 for each CV.**  
CVs are required for named research staff (including Researcher Co-Investigators), Visiting Researchers, all Principal and Co-Investigators named in the proposal). There is a Je-S validation requiring the same number of CVs as named investigators and researchers on the proposal.  
Other submitted CVs e.g. from Project Partners, should not be attached |
| **Letter of Support from the BGS (mandatory)** | A Letter of Support from the British Geological Survey (BGS) must be submitted with each application. This should include a summary of relevant discussions and views on science, service, leverage and capital proposals. |
| **Letter of Support (optional)** | Letters of support should generally be from Project Partners or organisations relevant to delivering a specific service. Letters of support are also required in support of any additional leverage proposed by the applicant, e.g. confirmation from the host institution that any additional funding contribution (e.g. staff resource, lab space, equipment) has been agreed; confirmation of any planning permissions sought or details of the planning process to date for any proposal building/lab extension activities. These letters must provide NERC with assurance that the leverage is agreed by all relevant parties and is deliverable on the timescales within this call. Applicants should ensure than any letter of support adds value to the scientific case e.g. where access to data, facilities, infrastructure, equipment or information is being granted and/or leveraged. NERC reserves the right to not make letters of support available to reviewers and panel members where they do not add value to the scientific case. |
| **Justification for Transformational Capital (optional)** | **Up to 8 sides A4** for each proposal. Justification for Transformational Capital forms should be submitted as an ‘Other Attachment’ on Je-S. Description and justification of need for the additional transformative capital investment proposed. Proposals should indicate how the investment will enable a step-change from the status-quo and how any capital investment from NERC will lever additional investment. Identify the project management processes, which should include a work programme, milestones and a Gantt chart for the proposed work; Details of any activities to be undertaken by project partners should be provided in this section; Risks and key challenges log, including a brief description of how these challenges will be addressed; Financial breakdown of the capital investment. This should not exceed the capital budget available listed under Funding; External/Internal communications plan (if applicable); Any additional supporting statements, e.g. confirmation agreement obtained from institution, planning permission etc. (if applicable). |
| **Data Management Plan (not required)** | N/A |
| **Technical Assessment (not required)** | N/A |
43. All documents (including embedded references) should be completed in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point Arial font or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size to Arial 11, with margins of at least 2 cm. Please note that Times New Roman, Arial narrow and Calibri are not allowable font types as they are smaller and any proposal which has used either of these font types within their submission will be sent back to re-submit. References and footnotes should also be at least 11 point font and should be in the same font type as the rest of the document. Headers and footers should not be used for references or information relating to the scientific case. Embedded diagrams or pictures or numerical formulae may contain text that is smaller than 11 point but applicants should ensure that the font is legible. Text in tables and figure labels not within embedded diagrams should be at least 11 point. Page limit restrictions apply (Table 3) and should be adhered to. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in submissions being sent back for amendment.

44. Please note that on submission to council ALL non-PDF documents are converted to PDF, and the use of non-standard fonts may result in errors or font conversion, which could affect the overall length of the document. Additionally, where non-standard fonts are present, and even if the converted PDF document may look unaffected in the Je-S System, when it is imported into the Research Councils Grants System some information may be removed. We therefore recommend that documents should be converted to PDF prior to attaching them to the proposal, especially where they contain any non-standard fonts (scientific notation, diagrams, etc.).

Timetable

- Call opening date: 12 Sept 2019
- Je-S submission period open: 12 Sept 2019
- Deadline for applicants to contact NERC about leverage opportunities: 6 Dec 2019
- Deadline to submit notification of organisations bidding: 6 Dec 2019
- Call closing date: 6 Feb 2020
- S&F Assessment Panel: Feb/ Mar 2020 (TBC)
- Decision announced: April 2020
- Start date for SS&F: 1 Oct 2020

Contact

45. For general (non-Je-S) queries about this guidance, please contact the NERC National Capability Scientific Support and Facilities (SS&F) team (sfmt@nerc.ukri.org).

46. Queries regarding the Je-S system will be handled via the Je-S help desk: JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org / 01793 444164).