



The Infrastructure Fund is a pan-UKRI budget to support step-changes in research and innovation infrastructure capability and/or capacity across the disciplinary spectrum. This can include new infrastructure, major upgrades, repurposing, transformative developments and/or decommissioning costs.

Research and innovation infrastructure is fundamental to delivering the UK's wider ambitions of increasing UK investment in R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027 and cementing its status as a science superpower.

UKRI has published an Opportunities Report, a strategic guide to help inform future infrastructure investment decisions. Whilst the Infrastructure Fund is new, historically UKRI has invested around £300m per year in such projects.

To ensure the development of a long-term infrastructure pipeline, UKRI's Infrastructure Fund supports both full projects and smaller activities, such as design or scoping studies. These help to better understand the costs or de-risk and refine the approach before a full project can be supported. Maintenance and operational costs beyond the life of this initial investment are supported through alternative funding mechanisms.

In 2021-22, the UKRI Infrastructure Fund is investing:

£50 million

to initiate a portfolio of over a dozen infrastructure projects and scoping studies to underpin the UK's position as a research superpower. The projects cross all disciplines and span the research and innovation spectrum.

They include:

£14.75 million

boost to the Square Kilometre Array Observatory, the world's largest and most sensitive radio telescope network

£5.5 million

to upgrade the UKRI Airborne Laboratory, a state-of-the-art aircraft for performing atmospheric research

£17 million

investment in digital research infrastructure to enable UK researchers to harness the full power of modern digital platforms, tools and techniques, including net zero computing



Image ©SKAO



UKRI Airborne Laboratory

The UKRI Infrastructure Fund

How does UKRI prioritise its infrastructure investments?

The Infrastructure Fund takes a portfolio approach to investments. It has a regular decision cycle (subject to available funding). It does not run an open call instead, opportunities for investment are developed, prioritised and submitted to the Fund by each of UKRI's Councils and the Facilities Strategic Advisory Group (for UKRI's large multidisciplinary facilities such as the Diamond Light Source) following their existing community engagements.

In making prioritisation choices UKRI draws on the advice of the Infrastructure Advisory Committee (IAC), who assess proposals against the fund's criteria and recommend one or more portfolios for investment.

The IAC develop the overall portfolio by considering a number of factors which can include balance across different of dimensions, and opportunities for collaboration and partnership. Their recommended portfolio takes account of the existing strengths and gaps in the landscape.

About the IAC

The IAC is comprised of a nominee from each Council, the chair of the Facilities Strategic Advisory Group, up to five externally recruited members, the Infrastructure Programme Director and the Digital Research Infrastructure Director, with observers from government and UKRI Finance.

It is chaired by the UKRI champion for infrastructure. In addition to recommending a portfolio of investments, the IAC also support UKRI in maintaining and developing its understanding of the research and innovation infrastructure landscape's needs and provide advice on the wider research and innovation infrastructure landscape.

Infrastructure Fund Project Criteria and Portfolio Factors

Project Criteria

Excellent research and/or innovation

–

A clear strategic driver(s)

–

Benefits and impacts

–

Step change in capability

–

A clear strategic driver

–

Feasibility and risk

–

Accessibility to the wider research and innovation community

–

Impact on environmental sustainability

Portfolio Factors

Overall balance across a number of dimensions: disciplines/economic sectors, research-innovation spectrum, geographical location

–

Fostering inter- or multi-disciplinary or cross-business working

–

Enabling the strategic deployment and connectivity of infrastructure within the UK

–

Opportunities for international leadership and collaboration

–

Opportunities for private/third sector partnership

–

Increased efficiencies or effectiveness across the portfolio

If you would like to find out more about UKRI's infrastructure work please visit our [website](#).