



An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,  
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta  
Department of Further and Higher Education,  
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Infreastruchtúr don Nuálaíocht, Staidéir, Páirtíocht,  
Imscrúdú, Rath Eacnamaíochta agus Eolaíocht

**INSPIRE**

# **Research Infrastructure Programme Phase One: Establishing the Strategic Foundation**

## **Response to Queries Updated 12/06/2026**

**HEA**

An tÚdarás um Ard-Oideachas  
The Higher Education Authority



**Taighde Éireann  
Research Ireland**

## Response to queries received via the INSPIRE mailbox ([inspire@hea.ie](mailto:inspire@hea.ie))

**1. If the institution does not have a separate standalone research strategy but it is instead clearly embedded within the institutional strategy and monitored through established governance processes, should the institution indicate that both an institutional strategic plan and a research strategy are being provided, where the institutional strategy incorporates research priorities?**

Where an institution does not have a standalone research strategy but instead integrates research priorities within its approved institutional strategic plan, it is acceptable to submit the institutional strategic plan as the primary supporting document.

However, applicants should ensure that the submitted documentation clearly demonstrates the elements of the research strategy embedded in the institution's strategic plan, including strategic priorities, objectives, and governance arrangements.

The Phase One Submission Checklist (1.2 of the Application Form) is intended as a support to HEIs. It is not mandatory to complete the checklist and does not need to be included with submissions.

**2. If an institution's strategic and/or research plans do not extend beyond 2027, what level of detail or formal assurance is required in respect of research strategy beyond the current plan period? For example, is a statement within the application sufficient, or is formal institutional confirmation required?**

Where an institution's strategic plan does not encompass the 24-month implementation period for Local Institutional Infrastructure (i.e. up to the end of 2028), applicants may provide information within Section 3.1 (Strategic Statement) of the application outlining future anticipated research priorities and strategic direction.

Under Section 4 (Declaration and Endorsement), the signature of the HEI's President/Provost or equivalent will be considered as the formal institutional confirmation required.

**3. Section 5.3 of the Call Document states that time-bound maintenance for INSPIRE-funded equipment is an eligible cost for the duration of Local Institutional Infrastructure projects. Can the HEA confirm whether the maximum duration of these projects is 24 months?**

INSPIRE-funded Local Institutional Infrastructure projects are expected to be delivered within a 24-month period, within which funded infrastructure must be procured, installed, and operationalised.

Time-bound maintenance costs are eligible within this 24-month timeframe only.

**4. Section 5.3 indicates that software costs essential to the initial operation of INSPIRE-funded equipment are eligible. Can the HEA clarify whether licences to software package/programmes not linked to specific equipment (annual or perpetual), where demonstrably critical research infrastructure, are eligible under this provision?**

Specialist software packages/programmes that align with the objectives and criteria of the INSPIRE Programme which are considered critical research infrastructure, and which will support the advancement of the HEIs research priorities as set out in institutional strategies and research strategies are considered eligible. This would not encompass general software beyond the research mission of the institution.

HEIs are reminded that INSPIRE-funded Local Institutional Infrastructure projects are expected to be delivered within a 24-month period, within which funded infrastructure must be procured, installed, and operationalised. Expenditure of the funding awarded beyond this timeframe will not be permitted. Institutions must consider the sustainability of their proposals, and set out in their applications how ongoing costs, as applicable, will be met beyond the implementation timeframe.

**5. Section 5.2 specifies a maximum INSPIRE contribution of €500,000 per individual item or infrastructure package under the Local Infrastructure component. Can the HEA confirm whether institutions may include infrastructure items exceeding this threshold (e.g. €750,000 total cost), where the additional funding (e.g. €250,000) is secured through confirmed internal or external co-investment?**

The maximum INSPIRE contribution for Local Institutional Infrastructure is €500,000 per item or infrastructure package. All requested INSPIRE funding must not exceed the upper limit of the specified funding range in the letter of invitation. However, confirmed co-funding may be included beyond the institutional INSPIRE funding bracket.

Where co-funding is required, and obtained or already existent, this should be specified in the HEI's application and budget breakdown. However, where co-funding is required, but has not yet been secured or committed as co-funding, to complete infrastructure procurement, this will be deemed ineligible.

**6. As outlined in the INSPIRE Governing Framework, funding of system-level or national infrastructures could be supported through a third pillar of funding. Our institution would like to indicate interest in hosting such infrastructure. Should we apply for this through the Phase 2 Expression of Interest?**

Institutions wishing to host system-level or national infrastructures should request this infrastructure support as part of their Shared Advanced Infrastructure Expression of Interest. The deadline for submission is Wednesday 29th July.

**7. The maximum value of individual items or 'packages' of infrastructure under Category 1 is €500,000, and the minimum under Category 2 is €500,000 – is this value exclusive or inclusive of VAT?**

The values are inclusive of VAT.

**8. Should an application be successful, any duplicate requests for the same infrastructure that are already under review in national, international, or institutional funding schemes, or already placed on a reserve list in these schemes, must be withdrawn from these other schemes to prevent double funding." – Is the Reserve list for RI Infrastructures 2025 Call still active?**

Yes, the reserve list for the Research Ireland Infrastructure 2025 Call remains active. Further information on the status and duration of the reserve list will be provided by Research Ireland in due course.

**9. Are "routine" items (for example, laptops, desktop computers, or general-purpose storage) eligible where they are clearly justified as integral components of a larger research infrastructure package, for example essential to the operation, access, management or use of the proposed infrastructure package?**

Yes, routine items may be considered eligible where they are clearly justified as integral components of a proposed research infrastructure package. Where general-purpose storage is required as part of a larger research infrastructure package, costs must be incurred within the 24-month timeframe as costs associated with Local Institutional Infrastructure beyond the 24-month timeframe will be the responsibility of the institution

**10. Is the information requested in Section 5 of the Application form required for each Infrastructure Package, or for the overall ranked ensemble/portfolio of requests?**

The information requested in Section 5 of the Application Form should be provided for the overall ranked ensemble/portfolio of Local Institutional Infrastructure requests.

Applicants should ensure that the response clearly reflects the strategic rationale, coherence, prioritisation, and expected outcomes of the portfolio as a whole. Additional details on individual packages should be provided in the Detailed Infrastructure Table (Appendix 1).

**11. Is the Assessment described in Section 5.4 of the Call Document applied to each Infrastructure Package, or to the overall ranked ensemble/portfolio of requests?**

Each infrastructure package will be reviewed, and an overall assessment will be made for the HEI application. The assessment panel reserves the right to exclude an individual package from any funding recommendations.

**12. In the Host Tab, column J, Prioritisation, from the description of what we are to include in that column, are we correct in understanding that we should list our SAI Expressions of Interest in order of priority?**

Prioritisation in this case is reflective of the prioritisation of the requested infrastructure within the institution's broader infrastructure ambitions, i.e. if only one infrastructure item or package is included, we still require detail on the prioritisation. However, if multiple items/packages are being requested, please include this detail for each and in order of priority in the table.

**13. In the instructions for the Appendix 2 SAI Expression of Interest Template, it states that the Partner\_User Tab should only be completed if the institution is not planning to lead on a Shared Advanced Infrastructures application in Phase Two. However, we are planning on both being a lead and a partner/user on differing infrastructures in Phase Two. Should we still complete the Partner\_User Tab? Is participation at both levels allowed?**

Yes, participation at both levels is allowed. Please complete both tabs if intending to be a Host and a partner/user. The information provided in the Partner\_User tab will help identify common areas of need/interest for planning purposes.

**14. Can we purchase multiple-year extended warranties or service contracts with the equipment during the capital investment procurement stage, whereby some of those extended warranties or service contracts will be executed outside the 24 month window (but all expenditure will be incurred within the 24 months).**

Yes, for Local Institutional Infrastructure, costs of multi-year warranties or maintenance contracts may be included where the cost is incurred within the 24-month timeframe, where they form part of the procurement process and support the effective operation of the infrastructure. HEIs should note that staff costs, such as salaries and training costs, are ineligible for funding under INSPIRE Phase One. Any costs associated with Local Institutional Infrastructure beyond the 24-month timeframe will be the responsibility of the institution.

**15. Section 5.3, under 'ineligible costs', bullet point 4, includes: “- Human resource costs (including salary and training costs related to operating the equipment)”**

**We will have to purchase training with new equipment, even if it is replacing old items, upskilling will be required for the tech support staff. Can we purchase training days/hours as part of the capital investment?**

No, as per Section 5.3 of the Phase One Call document, training costs related to the operation of Local Institutional Infrastructure are not eligible. The human resource costs (including salary and training costs related to operating the equipment) are the responsibility of the institution.

**16. On the 'Detailed Budget' tab of the Appendix-1-LII-Detailed-Infrastructure-Table-and-Budget-Template file: Columns G and I contain the text "Maintenance Costs Description (Refer to Section 5.2 of the call document) " and "Delivery & Installation Costs Description (Refer to Section 5.2 of the call document)"**

**Section 5.2 of the call document contains no information on maintenance, delivery or installation costs. Can we get clarity on what 'maintenance' costs (e.g. service contracts, extended warranties, consumable replacements), and what 'delivery & installation costs' can be included?**

Section 5.3 of the Call Document confirms that the following may be included as eligible costs, where appropriate:

- Time-bound maintenance for INSPIRE funded equipment (for the duration of INSPIRE Local Institutional Infrastructure projects only)
- Items of new or refurbished equipment that are rooted in institutional strategy and sufficiently justified, including VAT, transportation and installation (where necessary)
- Reasonable costs are acceptable for specific refurbishment or adaptation works required to install research infrastructure

All such costs must be directly related to the acquisition, installation, or initial operation of the funded infrastructure.

Applicants should ensure that any costs included under these headings are clearly justified and demonstrably linked to the infrastructure being proposed.

**17. From the table and budget sheet: Can we get confirmation that for the purposes of the application columns H-K can be interpreted as follows:**

- **Procurement Start: preparing quotations, tendering, supplier selection, procurement approval**
- **Procurement Complete: the purchase has been finalised and contracts/orders are confirmed**
- **Delivery / Installation: the equipment/software is delivered, installed, configured, calibrated, and tested**
- **Operational: the infrastructure is fully functional and available for research/training use**

Yes, the interpretation of the timeline columns H-K in the Detailed Infrastructure Table as outlined is appropriate.

Applicants should ensure that:

- Procurement Start reflects the date of initiation of the procurement process, including preparatory steps such as quotations, tendering, supplier selection, and procurement approval
- Procurement Complete reflects the point at which the purchase has been finalised and contracts or orders are confirmed

- Delivery / Installation reflects the date where delivery, installation, configuration, calibration, and testing of the infrastructure has been completed
- Operational reflects the point at which the infrastructure is fully functional and available for research and/or training use

These stages should clearly demonstrate the progression from procurement through to full operational use within the required 24-month implementation period.

**18. The INSPIRE Programme Governing Framework adopts a broad definition of research infrastructure, including creative practice studios, exhibition spaces, archives and other specialist research environments. For some Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines, the research infrastructure may comprise a specialised research environment, with the space itself constituting a core component of the infrastructure rather than serving solely as a location for equipment. As a result, the establishment or enhancement of such infrastructure may require substantial adaptation, fit-out or refurbishment works as an integral element of the infrastructure investment.**

**Could Research Ireland clarify whether Shared Advanced Infrastructure proposals of this nature are eligible under INSPIRE and, if so, the extent to which associated adaptation, fit-out and refurbishment costs may be included within a proposal.**

**Given the importance of this issue for the development of Shared Advanced Infrastructure EOIs, any clarification in advance of the submission deadline would be welcomed.**

A specialist research space that constitutes a core component of the infrastructure may be eligible for funding under Shared Advanced Infrastructures. Where necessary, reasonable costs are acceptable for specific refurbishment or adaptation works required to install research infrastructure being funded under the INSPIRE Programme. However, such refurbishment works must either create the infrastructure or be directly related to the deployment and functional use of the infrastructure. Funding is not intended to support major or large-scale capital construction projects, or wider refurbishment or retrofitting plans.

**19. The INSPIRE Programme Governing Framework adopts a broad definition of research infrastructure, including data infrastructure, digital platforms, archives and curated collections. Could the HEA and Research Ireland clarify whether licences, subscriptions or access arrangements for specialist research datasets, digital corpora, curated collections or comparable research data resources may be considered eligible infrastructure expenditure where they constitute a core research capability and align with institutional and national research priorities?**

**Where such resources are eligible, could the HEA and Research Ireland also clarify whether there are any restrictions relating to licence or subscription duration within the INSPIRE funding period?**

Costs associated with licences, subscriptions or access arrangements for critical research infrastructure may be considered eligible where they are clearly justified as supporting the objectives

and criteria of the INSPIRE programme and the advancement of the institutional strategies and research strategy.

In terms of duration, INSPIRE funding for Local Institutional Infrastructure is limited to the 24-month implementation period, within which all expenditure must be incurred.

Applicants should therefore ensure that:

- any licence or subscription costs covered by Local Institutional Infrastructure allocations are incurred within this timeframe, and
- the ongoing sustainability of access to such resources beyond the implementation period is clearly addressed in the application, with institutions responsible for resourcing it beyond the lifetime of INSPIRE support.