



Answers to online questions following the STFC Townhall meeting 9 April 2026

PP Theory Consolidated Grants

1. If the boundaries of PPT are expected to be more fluid in future, will we get clarity on what is and isn't in scope?

STFC programmes evolve with the research interests of the community and details on the scope are described in the guidance for each funding opportunity. STFC encourages applicants to discuss their proposal with the relevant programme manager before submission if they think their area of research crosses that of another panel.

2026 PP Experiment Consolidated Grants

1. Will there be any guidance about how the panel will use the new CG submissions - given that the content is different from past rounds?

The details on the assessment will be available on the [Funding Finder](#) for the opportunity.

2. You say that there is an overall case for the core. Will there be individual cases for responsive posts?

The applicants will have the opportunity to describe any changes since the last grant award. Details for like for like replacements of personnel in the core will not be required. Applicants should submit the cases for the non-core awarded in the last round. A non-core case can be amended if a significant change has occurred.

3. When do you expect the PPE CG round for grants starting October 2029 to start?

The 2028 CG (grants beginning in October 2029) is expected to conform to the usual timeline with proposals expected to be submitted in February 2028.

Consolidated Grants

1. Can the scoring for the Particle Physics proposals be made public?

The scoring of consolidated grant proposals is not made public given the nature of the peer review process.

2. On CG guidance review: By using terms such as critical mass, STFC seems to promote the idea that every group should focus its research on a topic of strength within STFC's remit, rather than multiple areas. This could lead to redundancies and restructuring within research organisations. How would STFC expect the implementation of such a focus of activity to be achieved?

The PPE CG guidance review was undertaken by a panel with representatives from the PPAN community on behalf of STFC. The recommendations have been reached with the view of making the particle physics programme sustainable, which is the key goal for STFC over the next few years. Research organisations will continue to evolve to meet the research interests of the community. While the CG review provides guidance to the

grants panel, the panel recommendations continue to be made following thorough peer review as usual.

STFC priorities

1. The STFC portfolio is being subjected to a prioritisation. Will other parts of UKRI, e.g. Innovate UK, conduct a similar review in order to determine if government subsidies for industrial research are good value for money and lead to industrial impact?
UKRI and its councils regularly evaluate the outcomes of its investments. More information on the activities around evaluation can be found on the UKRI website [How we're doing – UKRI](#).

Innovate UK is re-shaping to be accessible, straightforward and responsive. From April 2026, IUK will begin its transition to a new operating model, supporting a seamless, integrated offer and investment pipeline.

Further details will be published within the UKRI Strategy. New 2026 to 2027 opportunities are now open, with a full calendar to be published by summer 2026. <https://www.ukri.org/publications/turning-breakthrough-ideas-into-the-uks-next-industry-giants/innovate-uk-turning-breakthrough-ideas-into-industry-giants/>

2. How will accelerator projects be considered in the STFC prioritisation exercise? Why were project such as AWAKE not included despite having received funding during FY2024-25?
Accelerator projects are included in the current STFC prioritisation exercise and those will be reviewed according to the same criteria as other projects. There are some projects that were in receipt of funding in 2024-25 for which a proposal for a future phase was not invited. These cases have also been considered, though have not been invited to submit a separate proforma.

3. Will the outcome of the prioritisation be made public and when?
Yes, the main outcomes of the prioritisation exercise will be made public. The prioritisation will continue into the early summer 2026 with the outcomes due to be announced in the autumn.

4. If STFC's priority is to engage with industry, drive growth and get a return from CERN, how does this align with decision on cutting for example posts for engineers?
The reductions necessary to build a sustainable programme are being considered by Science Board and their recommendations will be accompanied by an impact analysis with input from the Advisory Panels, which will include such factors.

The shift to a strategic, outcome-focused approach is the most significant change since UKRI's creation and is in line with what was envisaged when UKRI was first created.

As a founding member and the second-largest contributor to CERN, the UK remains deeply committed to our membership and supportive of its continued success and it is important to maximise the value of the CERN subscription to the UK. STFC and DSIT are working with relevant stakeholders to implement the UK Strategy for Engagement with CERN, published in 2023.

5. STFC is pushing for stronger connections with industry. How has this affected the curiosity-driven nature of curiosity driven science?

Curiosity-driven research is protected overall across the SR period, with bucket 1 representing around 50% of UKRI's overall investment, including a proportional contribution from underpinning foundational activity. This new bucket structure reaffirms the long-term benefits of curiosity-driven, foundational research, seeks better leverage by opening new opportunities for private sector investment, and prioritises outcomes over inputs. UKRI will design programmes and calls with the goal of improving efficiency for the research and innovation community. By adopting these principles, UKRI is better positioned to deliver on its mission and respond to emerging opportunities, ensuring that public investment in research and innovation (R&I) achieves maximum impact."

6. Who will be representing the PPAN community on the panels for Bucket 2? How can the PPAN community engage with and support them?

Representation on the panels for bucket 2 activities will be from across UKRI, including from STFC. STFC will make use of its existing governance and advisory bodies to ensure relevant input, engagement and support for the community.

STFC and PPAN funding reductions

1. What is the source of the cost pressures experienced by STFC and what is being done to make savings at source of the issues?

The financial situation at STFC is unique among UKRI councils because its cost base has increased significantly due to the type of research it funds and the facilities and services it manages. There continues to be significant pressures and calls on STFC's budget, such as significant inflation, increases in salaries, university overheads and student stipends, delays and technical challenges, and the cost of international infrastructure. Overall, it is estimated that the costs would exceed the available funding by £162 million by 2030. STFC will make the majority of the necessary savings internal to STFC.

2. To what extent have PPAN projects caused the cost increase?

There continues to be significant pressures and calls on all areas of STFC's budget. This includes significant inflation (over 10% p.a. at times) which has not been matched by increased funding for major projects/lab infrastructure, increases in salaries, university overheads and student stipends (including Covid), delays and technical challenges which have led to increased costs in several major PPAN projects, and the risen cost of international infrastructure due to a combination of exchange rate and subscriptions increases.

3. Why are the PPAN projects and Particle Physics Consolidated Grants being cut?

It is estimated that STFC's costs would exceed the available funding by £162 million by 2030. STFC will make the majority of the necessary savings internal to STFC. Additionally, we have an ongoing PPAN prioritisation process, which has been communicated to principal investigators. This engages STFC Science Board (PPAN) to advise STFC Council and Executive Board with a set of scenarios to be considered in advance of further consultation, which will include UKRI, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), international partners and the broader PPAN community. As part of this process, we commit to maintaining postdoctoral researchers across PPAN at least at the same level as last year (financial year 2025 to 2026).

4. Recent communications to and from the Select Committee on this matter have stated confusing or incorrect figures. Has this been corrected?

The communications with the Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee in Parliament are ongoing and some points have been clarified in published responses. Additionally, STFC publishes letters to the community on its website addressing the points raised in the various publications and meetings.

5. At the 2025 Townhall meeting, Michele Dougherty said that some projects would need to be ended, rather than subjected to salami slicing, to ensure long term viability. What is Science Board's view on this?

Science Board acknowledges that the PPAN programme faces a significant financial challenge which is part of the wider challenge facing STFC. Very difficult choices will have to be made and as part of the prioritisation, Science Board is producing scenarios to cover this SR period with the input from the community, using the prioritisation proformas. This will allow prioritisation of projects and balance of grant lines.

6. If the effect of recent cuts to early career researchers, especially within PPT, was unintended, does STFC recognise that it undermines its entire decision-making process? How does STFC address the lack of transparency?

The new spending review allocation to STFC meant that a significant review was necessary for all new grant awards. The timing of the allocation with respect to the individual grants rounds was an external factor, however we are mindful of the impact on all our community including early career researchers.

UKRI Infrastructure Fund

1. The presentation showed that new preliminary activities funded by the UKRI Infrastructure Fund will be starting. Considering the defunding of the full stages of EIC and LHCb Upgrade from the same fund, how were these decisions made and how were the new projects prioritised?

The decision not to fund the next phase of these projects relates to the 2025 prioritisation of UKRI Infrastructure Fund investment, was informed by independent committee assessment and supported by DSIT.