

Building and sustaining capacity and capability in health and social care research in Wales: future model for infrastructure funding 2025-2030

Introduction

This paper sets out the approach that Health and Care Research Wales intends to take to providing infrastructure funding for health and care research in Wales over the period 2025-2030. These are multi-year awards to groups based in higher education institutions (HEIs) in Wales which provide some core or infrastructure funding for health and care research. In this paper we use the term groups though they are often called centres, units, schools or similar.

The paper has been produced for discussion and consultation with the Health and Care Research Wales Advisory Board, and with a wide range of stakeholders in higher education institutions, health boards and trusts, and social care organisations. It is consistent with, and should be read in the context of, the current [Health and Care Research Wales plan for 2022-25](#).

The paper first sets out the aims and purpose of our infrastructure funding programme, and how it fits with the mission and purpose of Health and Care Research Wales. It then outlines our current investments in infrastructure funding, how they have been managed since the last open call for bids in 2019, and the process we have used for two rounds of annual reviews with current award holders.

We then turn to articulating some principles based on our learning from the current investments and our reviews which we propose will underpin a new round of summative reviews in 2023 and form the basis for the process of deciding whether current groups will transition onto a new funding initiative to maintain infrastructure excellence. This sustainability funding will be one of two new initiatives that will form our infrastructure funding model from April 2025. The second initiative will provide catalytic funding to boost research capacity and capability, we provide the call process outline for this initiative at the end of the paper.

Background: the aims and purpose of infrastructure funding

Health and Care Research Wales' mission is to promote, support and provide collective oversight of health and social care research in Wales to ensure it is of the highest international scientific quality, is relevant to the needs and challenges of health and social care in Wales, and makes a difference to policy and practice in ways that improve the lives of people and communities in Wales.

We address that mission through four key aims: setting the agenda for health and care research; funding and organising research; building capacity and capability in health and social care research; and using research to improve health and social care. Our plan for 2022-25 is organised around these four aims, and our investment in infrastructure funding for groups sits within our 'funding and organising research' aim but with strong alignment across all aims, particularly – building capacity and capability in health and social care research. It is important to note that our infrastructure funding does **not** exist to directly fund research projects and programmes, but to build capacity and capability in groups which will then be successful in securing funding for health and social care research from a wide range of government, public and commercial funders in the UK and internationally.

In our last funding call in 2019, we defined the purpose of research infrastructure funding as follows:

“[It] provides groups of demonstrable excellence with the capacity and capability they need to grow and promote a research portfolio of clear research significance and public and patient benefit.

It is facilitative or platform building in nature – that is, it helps researchers to develop the capacity, capability, ideas and opportunities needed to win external grant funding and actively promote their work.”

We further indicated that we regarded infrastructure funding as funding that is:

- designed to fill an identified resource gap in an area of both research and public need;
- focused on the development of new research (or collections of data, biological samples or research methodologies that will lead to the development of new research);
- *not* available through standard project and programme funding routes;
- *not* easily or evidently available from other research funders through standard funding mechanisms.'

Before the call in 2019, we were funding 14 groups (5 centres, 3 units, 3 infrastructure support groups and 3 trials units) with awards made by a previous call in 2014 for which we held an open call for centres and units, but ran a separate and bespoke application and assessment process for three infrastructure support groups (SAIL, Wales Gene Park, and the Wales Health Economics Support Service) and a further separate and bespoke process for three clinical trials unit applications. In 2019 we ran an open call for centres and units again with a separate and bespoke process just for clinical trials units and the health economics group.

Infrastructure funding awards since 2020

We currently invest about £10.7m a year in infrastructure funding. Table 1 below sets out details of 21 groups receiving infrastructure awards as a result of the calls in 2019 and some subsequent separate investments.

Table 1. Overview of infrastructure funding awards since 2020

Name of group	First Health and Care Research Wales Infra award	Average annual award
Brain Repair and Intracranial Neurotherapeutics (BRAIN) Unit	2015*	£250k
Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre Partnership (CASCADE-Partnership)	2020	£490k
Centre for Ageing and Dementia Research (CADR)	2015*	£570k
Centre for the Development and Evaluation of Complex Interventions for Public Health Improvement (DECIPHer)	2020*	£497k
Centre for Trials Research (CTR)	2015*	£820k
Diabetes Research Unit (DRU)	2015*	£100k
Gambling Research, Evaluation and Treatment Wales Centre (GREAT)	2020	£54k
Health and Care Economics Cymru (HCEC)	2015*	£398k
National Cardiovascular Research Network (NCRN)	2021*	£132k
National Centre for Mental Health (NCMH)	2015*	£949k
National Centre for Population Health and Wellbeing Research (NCPHWR)	2015	£671k
North Wales Organisation for Randomised Trials in Health (NORTH)	2015*	£367k
Secure Anonymised Information Linkage Databank (SAIL)	2015*	£909k
Swansea Trials Unit (STU)	2015*	£351k
The Transport and Health Integrated Network (THINK)	2021	£133k
Wales Cancer Bank (WCB)	2015*	£482k
Wales Centre for Primary and Emergency Care Research (PRIME)	2015*	£926k
Wales Cancer Research Centre (WCRC)	2015*	£975k
Wales Gene Park (WGP)	2015*	£779k
Wales Kidney Research Unit (WKRU)	2015*	£203k
Wales School for Social Prescribing Research (WSSPR)	2020	£75k

Note. *Group/research area received prior Welsh Government infrastructure funding (e.g., NISCHR Registered Research Group, NISCHR Biomedical Research Centre/Unit).

Clinical Trials Unit funding

At the 2019 call, the external review panel strongly advised us to encourage the three separate clinical trials units to collaborate more closely and work towards forming a single Wales trials unit across the three higher education institutions. We made closer working between the units a condition of those awards and entered into protracted but ultimately unsuccessful discussions regarding the creation of a single trials unit for Wales. We subsequently issued a call for a single Wales trials unit in 2021 but the joint application we received was not regarded by the external review panel as fundable. We therefore issued a further call in 2022 and made an award to the Centre for Trials Research at Cardiff University in 2023. The awards for the Swansea Trials Unit and the North Wales Organisation for Randomised Trials in Health will cease in March 2024.

Additional strategic catalytic funding investments

Cancer Research. In 2022, we published the first coordinated cancer research strategy for Wales (CReSt). Developed in partnership with the Wales Cancer Network and the Wales Cancer Research Centre, with input from patients, members of the public and other cancer researchers, the strategy focuses on six priority research themes where there is already a track record of excellence in Wales that can be developed further to be internationally leading. The aim is to develop critical mass and a sustainable platform for cancer research for the priority themes from which other strengths can then emerge.

The Wales Cancer Research Centre (WCRC) is providing strategic oversight and coordination for the implementation of CReSt and recently began a restructuring to align to the strategy and support delivery against the six priority research themes. To support the WCRC in their implementation work we recently committed an additional £500k per year to the Centre until 2025. This additional catalytic funding is intended to support focused investments in a small number of strategic areas (e.g., cancer bioinformatics) in which challenges can be overcome and impact can be accelerated (e.g., development of a 'Once for Wales' approach to enable research collaboration and data linkage to occur in an efficient manner).

Adult Social Care Research: There has been growing recognition, not just in Wales but across the UK, of the importance of social care research in general, and adult social care research in particular, as issues related to an ageing population and an increase in demand for social care have gained a new prominence. This had led to an increased investment from a range of UK funders. However, while there are strengths related to children's social care research in Wales, notably through the CASCADE Centre at Cardiff University, adult social care research capacity remains limited and has arguably declined in recent years. This limited capacity has left Wales poorly placed to take advantage of these funding opportunities and to respond to the need for research on adult social care in Wales.

In 2022, we ran a bespoke funding call to work in partnership with a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in Wales to create and co-fund an Adult Social Care Research Centre able to create a critical mass of researchers capable of winning research funding at a national and international level and contributing to the development of adult social care policy and practice in Wales. Cardiff

University was successful in winning this new partnership award, which provides catalytic funding of £600k pa for five years from April 2023, it therefore sits outside the remit of this paper.

Reporting requirements and the development of a performance assessment framework

At the end of each financial year, groups are required to complete a series of annual reports that summarise their significant achievements, academic outputs and expenditure. They are required to provide a set of key metrics, including funding applications submitted, grant income won, jobs created and publications. Since the start of the current funding term we have held an annual review meeting with each group. The aim of these meetings is twofold, firstly it an opportunity to meet with directors and their senior colleagues to gain a greater understanding of the work undertaken within each award, and secondly to provide us with an opportunity to consider and reflect on the investments we make across the infrastructure and assess whether groups are delivering what we are expecting as a funder. We have provided individualised feedback to groups after each review.

After completing two annual review cycles, we developed a framework of performance expectations which can be found in Appendix A. This sets out in narrative form the following nine areas that we think are key to operating an effective research infrastructure, enabling research capacity and capabilities that in-turn deliver academic excellence at a UK and international level:

- Leadership and management
- Strategy
- Research grants/income
- Publications
- Partnerships
- Esteem, engagement and impact
- Staffing
- Sustainability
- Institutional context

The areas listed above are not in any order of importance, are not exhaustive, but provide a useful summary and checklist of our performance expectations. We fed back on these performance expectations to all directors of groups at a meeting in 2022, where we think they were regarded as a helpful and constructive contribution.

In these recent funding rounds, we have seen our infrastructure funding as part of our partnership with the Welsh universities, with our investment supporting their wider research ambitions and supporting them in building a successful track record of competitive research grant applications and resulting funding from a wide range of UK and international funders. On that basis, we have looked for universities to provide some match-funding, mainly by our awards not bearing FEC overheads.

While some universities triaged applications to the last funding call in 2019, we received feedback that the process was not discussed in advance with the universities, making it harder for them to align their applications with their wider research strategies and to manage the expectations of their

own researchers. This paper provides a much clearer and earlier indication of our approach which we hope will be found helpful and constructive.

Future model for infrastructure funding for 2025 – 2030

As a research funder with a constrained budget we need to demonstrate the value of investing in research infrastructure and we need to be strategic and selective about our investments.

We plan to base our approach in future on two key considerations. Firstly, whether there is a clear and compelling research and evidence need in the area for Welsh Government, the NHS in Wales and the social care system in Wales. Secondly, is there demonstrably strong or emerging research capacity and capability in the area, as shown by its past performance against our framework and real current and future competitive advantage in seeking and securing research funding at a UK and international level. Figure 1 below sets out these two criteria and we believe we should focus future funding mainly on the top right quadrant.

Figure 1. Strategy and selectivity in research infrastructure funding

Research capacity and capability and competitive advantage in Wales	High	Great science, but not particularly important to addressing health and social care evidence needs in Wales. <i>Good to have, support where we can.</i>	Great science, well-used and regarded in Wales and more widely. <i>How do we sustain/support/keep advantage?</i>
	Low	Evidence needs met from elsewhere. Niche/particular interests but not of strategic value. <i>No case for investment.</i>	Important problems not being addressed. <i>Can we see a trajectory to build a viable centre of excellence in Wales?</i>
		Low	High
Evidence need for Welsh Government and the NHS/care system in Wales			

However, if we simply continue to fund the same groups at the same level of funding as in previous calls – who of course have the considerable advantages of incumbency and prior funding awards – we will have no headroom to fund any new or emerging groups which meet – or are on trajectory to meet – these two criteria. In addition, we would not be able to make strategic investments in building capacity and capability in areas of high evidence and research need but low current capacity and capability in Wales – a good example of which would be our recent investment in a focused call to establish a new centre for adult social care research, as described above.

So therefore, we now plan to have two funding initiatives in future as set out in Figure 2. One initiative, *Catalytic Funding*, will provide funding to boost research capacity and capability to develop new or emerging areas or support a step-change in research activity in areas of existing research excellence. The other initiative, *Sustainability Funding*, will provide funding to underpin research infrastructure excellence, maintain strength and continue to build critical mass in key

areas able to demonstrate academic excellence. In both initiatives, these investments should be considered time-limited funding, in partnership with their institution(s) we would be working to support groups to eventually achieve independence from these funding streams. In some instances, we recognise the need to provide groups who receive catalytic funding an opportunity to transition to sustainability funding before they are able to achieve financial independence. Table 2 outlines the key differences between these two initiatives.

Figure 2. Infrastructure funding initiatives 2025 – 2030

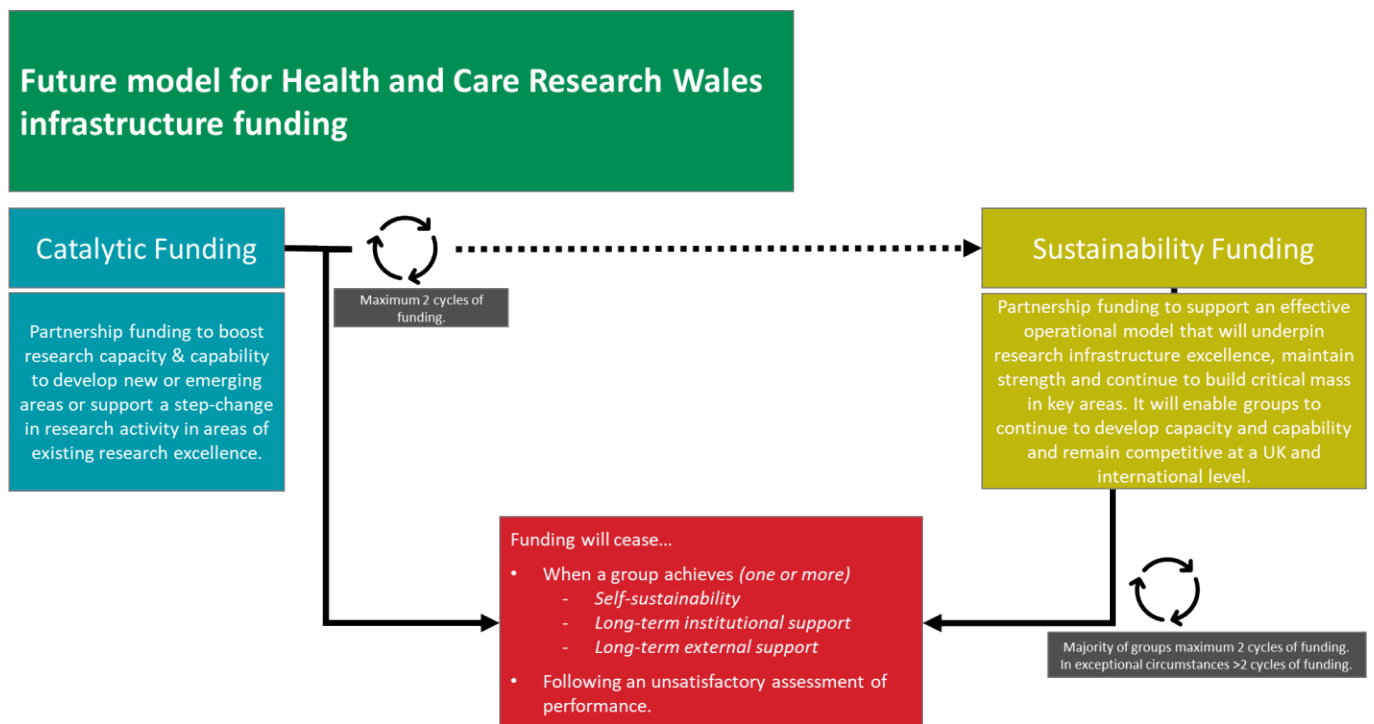


Table 2. Catalytic and sustainability funding initiatives

	Catalytic funding	Sustainability funding
Purpose of funding	Partnership funding to boost research capacity & capability to develop new or emerging areas or support a step-change in research activity in areas of existing research excellence.	Partnership funding to support an effective operational model that will underpin research infrastructure excellence, maintain strength and continue to build critical mass in key areas. It will enable groups to continue to develop capacity and capability and remain competitive at a UK and international level.
Who is eligible to apply?	Groups who have secured the support for a substantial joint investment with one or more HEI(s) to create a new research centre and build capacity and capability in the specified area.	Groups currently receiving infrastructure funding from Health and Care Research Wales who meet the assessment criteria as part of the YR1-3 review and external assessment process.

	Receiving prior infrastructure funding would not prohibit an application(s) for catalytic funding, providing the application meets the eligibility criteria for the call.	
What does it cover?	Growing or developing research capacity and capability in key areas including senior research leadership, researcher posts, stipend-based studentships and related costs with the proviso of a clear route to winning future project or programme grant awards and building critical mass and being academically competitive at a UK and international level.	<p>Essential costs that cannot generally be recovered through project or programme grant awards from funders. This may include support for technical or management/leadership posts, bridging funding for researchers, grant writing or general networking costs.</p> <p>Funding can be used to support stipend-based studentships.</p> <p>Funding can be used to support short- term start-up activity to boost research capacity and capability with the proviso of a clear route to winning future project or programme grant awards.</p>
What does it not cover?	Ongoing as opposed to start-up or development costs. A clear trajectory towards an effective and sustainable model of operation must be demonstrated for costs to be within remit.	Ongoing as opposed to short-term start-up and bridging costs for researcher or other appointments and non-staff costs which should be covered by research programme and project grants from funders.
Length of award	<p>A cycle of funding will run for 5 years, with the award usually structured into a 3+2 format allowing for a review point at the end of year 3 and making funding for years 4 and 5 subject to successful review.</p> <p>Groups will be provided with a maximum annual budget per year, we intend to allow groups to operate a flexible approach to managing these budgets responding to the needs of the group as they adapt over the five- year award period. Expenditure will be monitored regularly, and we will review budgetary plans at the beginning of each financial year.</p>	<p>A cycle of funding will run for 5 years, with the award usually structured into a 3+2 format allowing for a review point at the end of year 3 and making funding for years 4 and 5 subject to successful review.</p> <p>Groups will be provided with a maximum annual budget per year, we intend to allow groups to operate a flexible approach to managing these budgets responding to the needs of the group as they adapt over the five- year award period. Expenditure will be monitored regularly, and we will review budgetary plans at the beginning of each financial year.</p> <p>As groups work towards transitioning to one or more of the</p>

	<p>Groups may be at varying stages of development and therefore it may be appropriate for some groups to receive more than one cycle of funding but we do not anticipate providing more than 2 cycles of funding under this initiative.</p>	<p>following by the end of a funding cycle:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-sustainability • Long-term institutional support • Long-term external support <p>more than one cycle of funding might be required or appropriate but other than in exceptional circumstances we would not expect to provide more than 2 cycles of funding under this initiative.</p>
<p>Level of funding</p>	<p>There is no set maximum level of the award but we will take into account the case for substantial investment and the level of co-investment proposed by the HEI(s) involved.</p> <p>We anticipate allocating about 25% of the total infrastructure budget to catalytic funding, depending of course on the quality of submissions.</p>	<p>There is no set maximum level of the award but expectation through the course of the funding that a group will work to reduce their requirement for core funding.</p> <p>When setting the level of funding we will consider past performance by the group in external research grant income (note the section on research income in Appendix A) and whether proposed use of funds is in line with what funding does and does not cover as set out above.</p> <p>We anticipate allocating about 75% of the total infrastructure budget to sustainability funding, depending of course on the quality of submissions.</p>
<p>Funding expectations</p>	<p>Groups will need to demonstrate they have the full support of their institution(s) who will work in partnership with us to support the development needs of the research area.</p> <p>Catalytic partnership funding with institutions must include an agreement to waive overheads. In addition, partnership funding should look to address areas such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-funding posts - Commitment to transitioning core funded posts to permanent positions - Providing internal mechanisms that support an effective operational infrastructure model. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enabling cost recovery models by providing 	<p>Groups will need to demonstrate they have the full support of their institution(s) who will work in partnership with us to co-fund the group to maintain an effective operational infrastructure model and transition towards financial independence.</p> <p>Sustainability partnership funding cannot be used to support research posts which should be recovered through grant income. It can be used to support technical or operational/management/leadership posts, bridging funding for researchers. We would expect institutions to waive overheads.</p> <p>In addition, partnership funding should look to address areas such as:</p>

	<p>flexible financial systems which allow groups to retain and re- invest funds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Underwriting posts included in cost-recovery models to maintain staffing levels and support growth. ○ Making minimal use of fixed term contracts and providing open-ended contracts for staff. <p>Groups will be expected to operate a cost-recovery model for all research staff funded via the award.</p> <p>Partnership funding may also include co-funding with industry, charity and other organisations (e.g., NHS Health Boards).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Co-funding of operational and technical (non-research) posts - Commitment to transitioning operational and technical (non-research) posts to permanent positions - Providing internal mechanisms that support an effective operational infrastructure model. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enabling cost recovery models by providing flexible financial systems which allow groups to retain and re-invest funds. ○ Underwriting posts included in cost-recovery models to maintain staffing levels and support growth. ○ Making minimal use of fixed term contracts and providing open-ended contracts for all staff funded via the award. ○ Supporting a flexible approach to annual staffing budgets that will enable groups to act responsively to support staff in-between contracts (e.g., a bridging fund budget that has a broad remit and can be deployed across a variety of posts without the need for upfront costings to account for all possible scenarios). <p>Partnership funding may also include co-funding with industry, charity and other organisations (e.g., NHS Health Boards).</p>
--	--	---

Sustainability funding: purpose, process and timescale

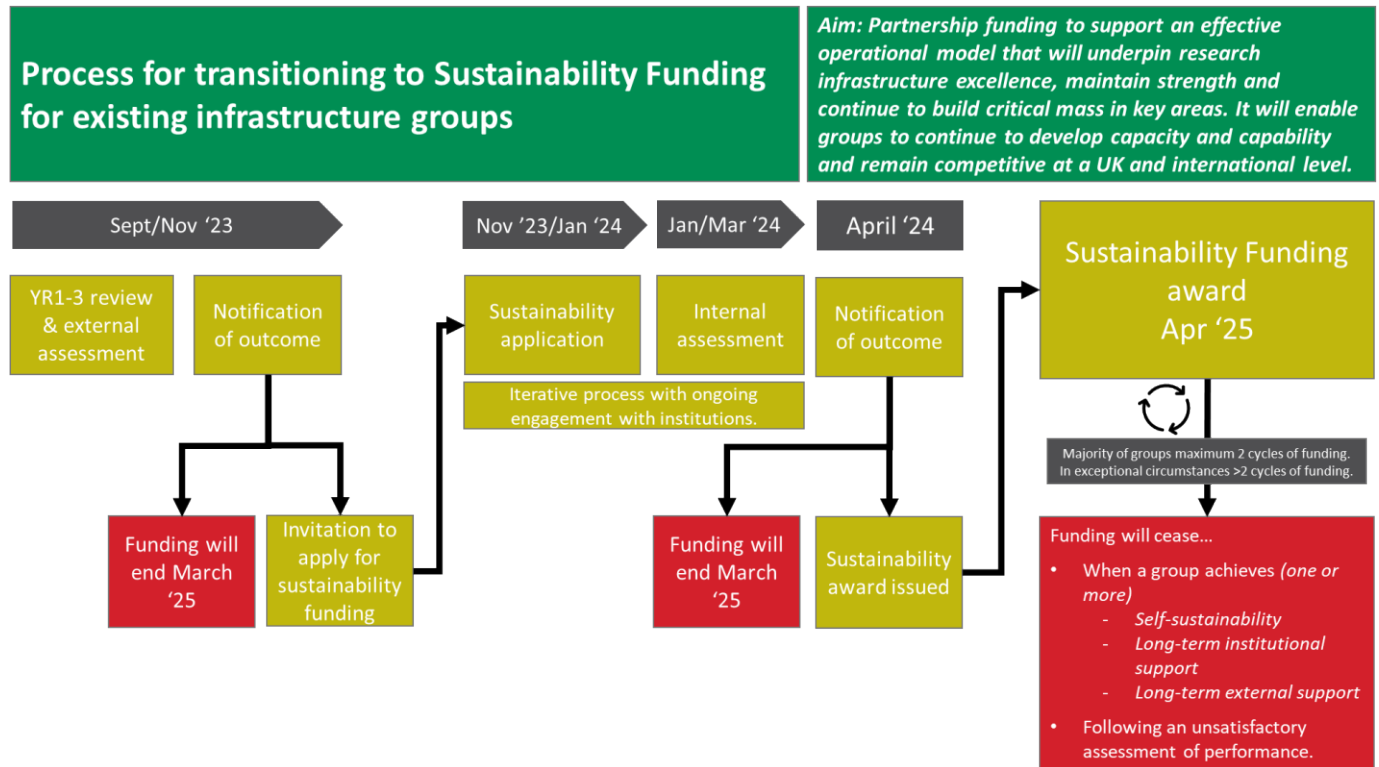
Sustainability funding is designed to be used flexibly and dynamically over the period of the award to support an effective operational model that will underpin research infrastructure excellence, maintain strength and continue to build critical mass in key areas. It will enable groups to continue to develop capacity and capability and remain competitive at a UK and international level.

Whilst we would expect the majority of this funding to cover essential costs that cannot generally be recovered through project or programme grant awards from funders (e.g., support for technical or management/leadership posts, grant writing or general networking costs), we recognise that operating an effective infrastructure model will involve, at times, supporting researchers within the group so funding can be deployed to bridge posts in-between grants and where appropriate provide short-term funding to start-up new activity/boost capacity. This funding should be seen as useful for underpinning and providing contractual stability and not as a medium or long-term primary funding mechanism for a researcher. By supporting a flexible approach to the management of annual staffing budgets, groups will be able to act responsively to support staff in-between contracts (e.g., a bridging fund budget that has a broad remit and can be deployed across a variety of posts without the need for upfront costings to account for all possible scenarios). We expect awardees to have the support of their institution(s) to be able to operate such a model by providing contractual stability to staff within the group and enabling cost recovery models by providing flexible financial systems which will allow the group to retain and re-invest funds.

Process and timescale

Building on our current annual review process, we plan to hold a full summative review of all groups in receipt of current infrastructure funding awards in autumn 2023, which will be three and a half years into the current 5-year grant term. This will be the third and final review of the grant period. The review will involve groups submitting information in advance of a review panel meeting, which will involve external academic and other advisors. See Figure 3 for an overview of the proposed process.

Figure 3. Proposed process for transitioning to Sustainability Funding for existing infrastructure groups.



The format and content of the report in advance of the panel meeting will build on previous reporting requirements and will be designed to allow the panel to make its assessment against the performance expectations framework in Appendix A. The panel will be asked to make recommendations on whether or not groups should be invited to submit an application for sustainability funding for 2025-30, and to provide feedback from the review.

An invitation to apply for sustainability funding does not guarantee receiving a sustainability award. Groups invited to submit an application will receive guidance from the YR1-3 external review panel process on the level of funding available and they will need to ensure their application aligns with the funding requirements of this initiative (as outlined in the previous section of this paper).

Applications will be required by January 2024 and we anticipate making funding recommendations by March 2024, giving those groups a full 12months notice of any changes in level and purpose of funding to take effect from April 2025.

Groups which are not invited to submit an application for sustainability funding or who submit an application that is not recommend for funding, will have at least a 12-month run-out period of funding from April 2024 to make other arrangements with their HEI with regard to their future operation.

Catalytic funding: purpose, process and timescale

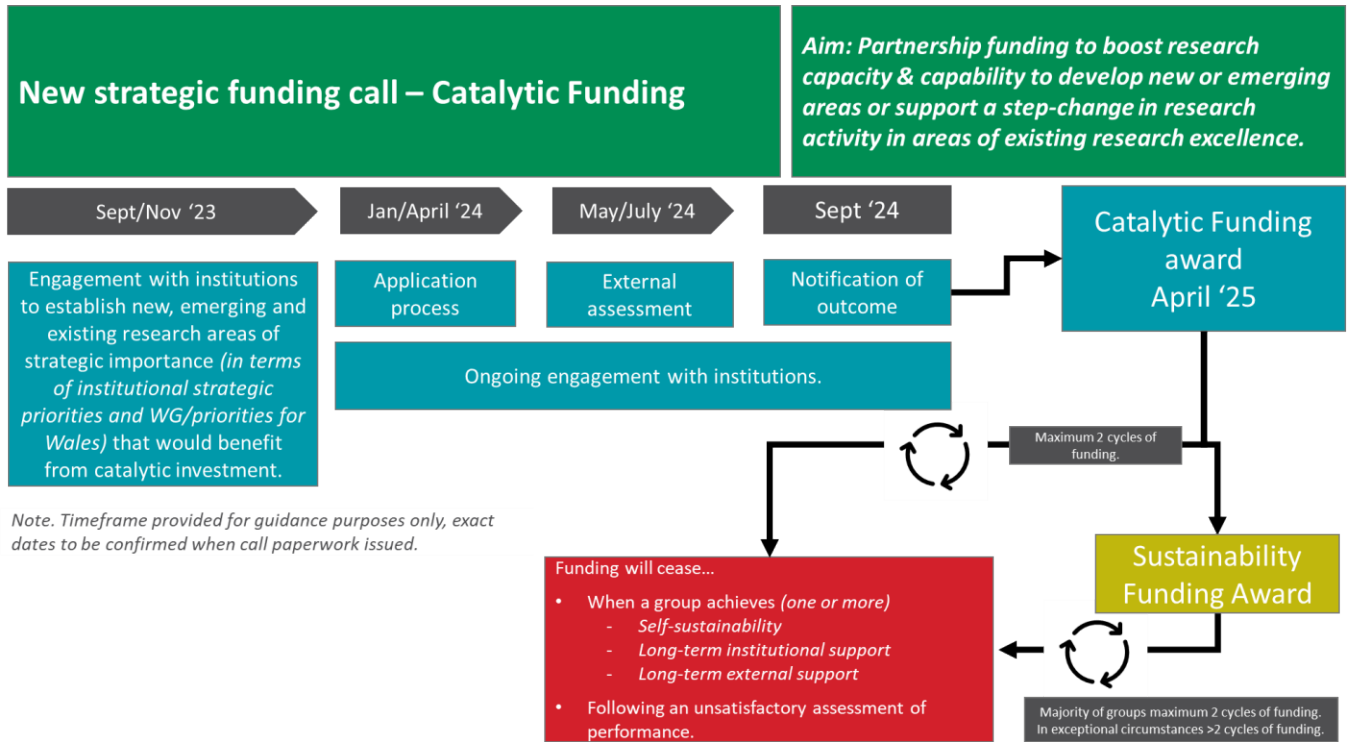
This new strategic funding initiative will work in partnership with institutions in Wales to provide co-funded awards to boost research capacity and capability to develop new or emerging areas or support a step-change in research activity in areas of existing research excellence. Our expectation will be that these new groups can demonstrate a credible trajectory towards excellence at a UK and international level and will make substantial progress in that regard within the award period of 5 years, with groups not normally receiving more than 2 cycles of funding.

For these awards, we do not plan to set a general funding limit or scope/remit, and we expect to engage in dialogue with groups and their HEIs on their proposals. We want to support the creation of a critical mass of senior researchers in areas where they are capable of winning research funding at a national and international level as well as contributing to the development of policy and practice in Wales. The level and purpose of funding may differ across groups depending on the developmental needs of the research area.

We plan to engage with HEIs in Wales over the autumn to establish research areas that might benefit from this funding initiative and will work with HEIs to open a targeted call in January 2024 with new awards commencing in April 2025. See Figure 4 for an overview of the proposed process.

It is unlikely that an existing infrastructure group, who have not been recommended for a sustainability award, would meet the eligibility criteria for this initiative in their current format. There may however be certain aspects of the infrastructure, research area and/or researchers involved who could benefit from catalytic support. Therefore, receiving prior infrastructure funding would not prohibit an application(s) for catalytic funding, providing the application meets the eligibility criteria for the call.

Figure 4. Proposed process for managing the new strategic funding call for Catalytic Funding.



Appendix A. Performance expectations of infrastructure funded groups

Area	<i>What does good or excellent look like?</i>	<i>What gives us cause for concern or means there is a need for improvement?</i>
Leadership and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centre director(s) and senior leaders with a strong individual academic/research profile at a UK and international level Leadership team with capacity and capability to manage the centre/group well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centre director(s)/senior leaders who are not themselves leading academics in their field Overreliance on a single individual as group/centre director/leader Lack of effective academic and non-academic management capabilities
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear and well thought out centre/group strategy Good understanding of where they fit in wider institution/Wales/UK context Strength in depth – focused on research areas where they excel Future focused – thinking about development of field and future opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No apparent centre/group strategy, or strategy not enacted No sense of their place in the wider context, poor awareness of others Unfocused approach to research areas and opportunities – bidding for anything Little sense of future development of field and future opportunities
Research grants/income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strong portfolio of significant research grants/awards from a range of funders.- both led within the group/centre and led elsewhere with significant group/centre involvement Major grants from UKRI and other UK level funders. High hit rate in grant applications Grant value to the centre/group of at least 5 x the infrastructure core grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few or no research grants/awards, or mostly of low value and short duration Few or no research grants/awards from UKRI and other UK level funders Low hit rate in grant applications Overstating position by including non-research income, including whole value of grants not centre/group share, including grants led by notional group/centre members
Publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent track record of high quality publications in appropriate academic journals that are well-cited by others Range of different publication outputs beyond academic journals e.g., including reports, books/chapters, briefings etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few publications in academic journals, publications little cited by others Few other non-journal outputs Overstating position by including lots of publications where the group/centre contribution is minimal or tangential
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong partnerships with other academic centres in the field/area in Wales and in the rest of the UK and internationally Track record of productive collaborations on research and of other centres wanting to work with them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few or weak partnerships with other academic centres in the field Few or weak partnerships outside Wales Little evidence of other centres wanting to work with them

Esteem, engagement and impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of esteem and engagement with policy/practice/other audiences • Evidence of impact – REF impact cases or other well-evidenced examples of impact from research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little evidence of esteem and engagement, little wider involvement • Little evidence of impact – no REF impact cases and a lack of good examples of impact from research
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A diverse skill mix of staff by grade and contract type (research, teaching and research) • Evidence of staff progression and career support • Track record of getting personal awards/fellowships and using them to support development • Minimum use of fixed term/short term contracts, and ways to move staff onto open contracts and provide security of employment • Staff turnover through progression and retirement – but departing staff posts retained and replaced, especially senior ones/PIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unbalanced skill mix with shortages of key skills, and most/all staff on research contracts only • Little evidence of staff progression and career development • Few or no personal awards/fellowships • Most or all staff on fixed term/short term contracts, no route to open-ended/permanent contracts • Staff leaving especially senior staff/PIs not being replaced
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurial approach to sustainability with diverse income streams, not reliant solely on research grant income, areas and good institutional support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavily reliant on the infrastructure core grant with no prospect of surviving without it • Little evidence of diversification of income areas or of institutional support
Institutional context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong support for the centre/group from the host institution evidenced by co-investment and good access to/engagement with institutional leaders • Host institution provides maximum financial flexibility to manage income across research grants and other sources and to carry funds from year to year to allow groups to plan for financial stability and sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institution seems disinterested and not supportive, evidenced by inflexible approach to finances, low or no risk appetite, little or no institutional investment, centre or group leaders not well engaged with institutional leaders