

Overview

Challenges &
Opportunities

Balance of
Programmes (BOP)

Challenges

- **Erosion from years of flat-cash**
 - Squeeze on core funding
- **Brexit**
 - About one-third of funding for astronomy comes from H2020 (includes ERC, MSCA)
 - New data collection exercise just closed
- **Smaller community relative to other big areas of astronomy**

Opportunities

- Expansion of science spend to 2.4% of GDP
 - Public sector contribution to double (to close to 1%)
 - Most from private sector
 - But new money will come with strings attached...
- Opportunities through UKRI schemes
 - e.g., Strategic Priorities fund, Fund for International Collaboration (FIC)...
- STFC want to access this funding *to support research aligned to its priorities*

Opportunities

- Calls/opportunities often have short time-fuse and strings attached
 - STFC want list of community proposed/approved projects that they have ready to propose
- **STFC Priority Projects call: “Developing a World Class Research Programme”**

“... build portfolio of projects that relate to our scientific and research infrastructure objectives, covering STFC’s full remit and driven by its communities...”

Developing a World class research programme

In June 2018, STFC Executive Chair Mark Thomson opened a formal series of discussions with our research communities designed to identify new world class science and technology proposals for potential future investment. The areas in scope were: particle physics, particle astrophysics, nuclear physics, astronomy, UK National Facilities (Diamond, Central Laser Facility and ISIS Neutron Source), e-infrastructure, accelerator R&D, enabling technologies, and STFC laboratory departments. [Further detail of the project](#) is available online.

In September and October 2018, STFC's Council, Science Board and Executive Board considered the inputs received from our communities, and agreed to [publish the full list \(PDF, 244 KB\)](#). The project has successfully refreshed our portfolio of potential future funding opportunities. STFC wishes to stress that the list has not been prioritised, so as to maintain maximum flexibility in preparing future budget proposals. We are developing a process to ensure the list is regularly refreshed so that we are aware of new ideas, or those that are no longer relevant.

The projects in astronomy, solar system science, particle physics, particle astrophysics and nuclear physics were selected and proposed to STFC by the relevant STFC Advisory Panel. In e-infrastructure and accelerator R&D the projects were selected through a workshop including members of the relevant advisory panels and their broader communities. Facilities projects were proposed by the Directors of the relevant facility and the enabling STFC infrastructure projects identified by a consensus of the STFC laboratory department directors.

Last updated: 26 October 2018

Latest News

December 29, 2018

New Year Honours for members of the STFC research community

December 20, 2018

UK team successfully complete latest step in bringing world's largest telescope to life

December 18, 2018

STFC mourns the death of leading physicist Dr Uschi Steigenberger OBE

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- List of 52 projects published, not prioritized
- STFC will put in place mechanism to refresh the list

Opportunities

- Organise at community level to:
 - Agree community priorities ready for refresh of STFC Priority Projects
 - Think about how to “package” elements of core programme to align with strategic funding opportunities
- STFC review of Consolidated Grants underway...

BOP2

- **Balance of Programmes (BOP)** conducted every three years
 - Assess portfolio and overall science strategy to optimize science productivity
 - Tension financial planning, need for a balanced programme
 - Subject-level evaluations underway
- Solar Physics part of **Astronomy evaluation**, which is now being performed
- Strong community representation (Ineke)