

---

---

# Innovation Centres

## Guidance for Infrastructure Investment Submissions

---

### Introduction

1. This guidance document details the information that Innovation Centres (ICs) are asked to provide in support of their request for Scottish Funding Council (SFC) infrastructure investment. This information, taken alongside findings from the pending IC Evaluation, will be assessed by an expert panel representing universities, colleges, SFC, Scottish Government and the enterprise agencies to enable them to make recommendations to SFC's Board in June 2023.
2. SFC will consider making available infrastructure investment to ICs to support activities that directly contribute to their capacity and capability to build connections across the knowledge exchange and innovation ecosystem to address and respond to industry\* needs, challenges and priorities by drawing on the academic base to support the development of creative collaborative solutions in partnership with colleges and universities. Plans should be developed on basis of an SFC contribution of between £1-2m p.a. SFC Board will consider a recommendation for the future funding of Innovation Centres alongside the outcomes of this assessment process.
3. Submissions should be received from each IC wishing to be considered for infrastructure investment by **13 March 2023** at the latest and emailed to Gary Bannon, Assistant Director, Research and Innovation, ([gbannon@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:gbannon@sfc.ac.uk)).

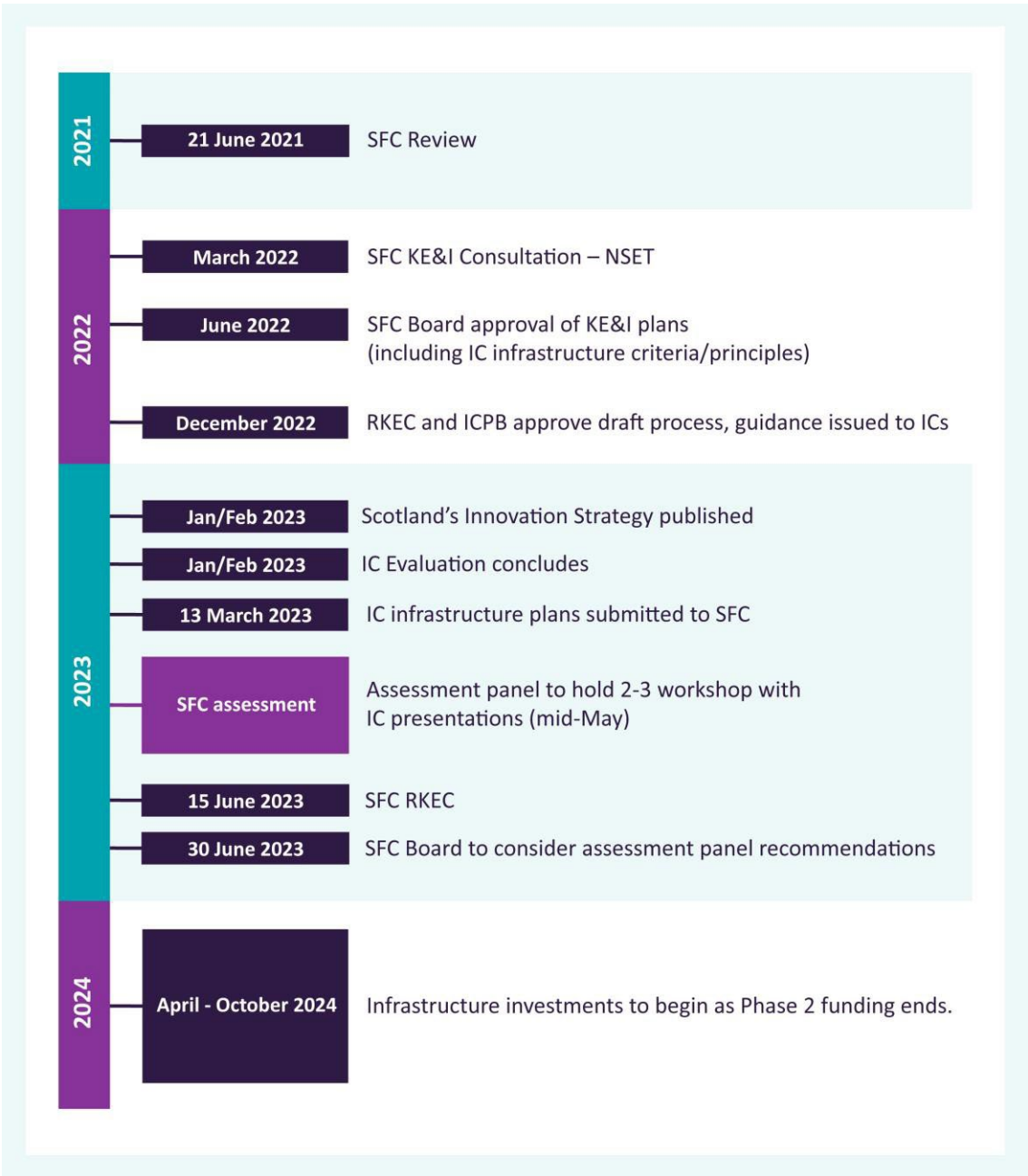
### Infrastructure Investment

4. SFC's latest [strategic plan](#) lays out the organisation's priorities for tertiary education between now and 2027. The plan actively supports the role of Scotland's colleges and universities in creating social, economic and environmental wellbeing and prosperity. It also recognises their importance in developing skills and their ability to accelerate innovation and discovery.
5. SFC aims to enable Scotland's colleges and universities (our institutions) to be effective agents of knowledge exchange, innovation, enterprise and entrepreneurship. SFC's Knowledge Exchange and Innovation (KE&I) investments should enable, incentivise and inspire our institutions to help drive Scotland's future economic and social prosperity, and our ultimate goal is to build a net-zero green economy and society. SFC will embed equality, diversity and inclusion in this KE&I system.
6. SFC's Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability made a number of recommendations relating to KE&I including focusing our support on the top priorities of a green recovery, a well-being economy and transition to a net-zero carbon society. It also emphasised the importance of positioning our investments strategically closer to both colleges and universities - representing more of a co-owned strategy.

- 
7. To deliver on these recommendations, SFC undertook to relaunch flagship investments, including ICs, as stable long-term infrastructure. This new approach to long term support is aimed to offer stability, aligned to strategic direction set by Scottish Government, which will enable ICs to be more impactful.

## Assessment process and timeline for decision-making

8. The information submitted by each IC will be reviewed by an assessment panel convened by SFC who will make recommendations to the SFC Board, via SFC's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) on which Innovation Centres to support as long term infrastructure investments.
9. The timeline below sets out steps in this assessment process. Once IC plans are submitted to SFC we will ensure information packs including the outcomes of the IC Evaluation and any further due diligence of plans required are shared with the assessment panel. The panel will convene and discuss plans ahead of hosting a 2-3 day workshop in mid-May where individual ICs will be invited to present their plans and answer questions from the panel.
10. There may also be scope for the panel, following initial reading and first meeting to request further information from ICs ahead of the workshop.



---

## Guidance for infrastructure investment submissions

11. Within the context of their broader strategic and business plans, each IC should explain and demonstrate how it will fulfil each of the infrastructure investment principles (as agreed by SFC Board in June 2022, see Annex A) by providing the evidence requested below.
12. This response can be structured as ICs wish but should address each of the points in turn and include case studies where requested. The response should not exceed **30 A4 pages** (11-point Calibri font) overall and should be provided in text entry format or as a PDF attachment. Short additional annexes can be provided where relevant.
13. This request for information is split into 6 sections:
  - IC Vision (1 page).
  - Details of the Innovation Centre and team (2 pages).
  - Alignment to the principles for infrastructure investment (20 pages max).
  - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
  - Financial case and added value.
  - Project management and governance.

### Details of the Innovation Centre and team

- Name of Innovation Centre, admin hub institution, current staffing levels (FTEs).
- Description of the structure, senior team and their roles, description of roles in relation to SFC Infrastructure investment (equivalent FTE) ask.
- Other relevant details.

### Alignment to the principles for infrastructure investment

#### Utilising and connecting existing strengths of universities and colleges with industry

14. With the support of SFC infrastructure investment, ICs must utilise and connect the strengths of our universities and colleges (our institutions) with industry\*.
15. Evidence to be provided:
  - Description of existing interactions with institutions and approach to strengthening relationships with institutions, collectively and individually, in response to industry demands and growing institutional capacity.
  - Approach to engaging with institutions to better understand R&I strengths, knowledge and expertise and ways to access and utilise these.
  - Clear demonstration of co-development of plans described above through consultation with institutions.
  - Plans for use of SFC funding to support activities described above, to include anticipated outcomes from this investment.
  - Case study to illustrate a successful approach to connecting the existing strengths of

---

our universities and colleges with businesses.

## Strategic Alignment

16. As infrastructure investments, ICs must have demonstratable strategic alignment with the current and future Research & Innovation (R&I) needs of Scotland
17. Evidence to be provided:
  - Clear demonstration of alignment with national strategies and priorities (including Scotland's Innovation Strategy and National Strategy for Economic Transformation).
  - Approach to maintaining agility in the areas of focus through a collaborative approach to ensure ongoing alignment with national strategies and priorities.
  - Consideration of current and (potential) future R&I knowledge/expertise gaps with respect to national strategies and priorities and approach to addressing them.
  - Plans for use of SFC funding (where relevant) to support activities described above, to include anticipated outcomes from this investment.
  - Case study to demonstrate integral role the IC is playing in contributing to the delivery of national strategies and priorities.

## Role in adding value to system

18. As infrastructure investments, ICs must play a demonstratable role in adding value to the system and helping Scotland leverage additional UK, EU and other sources of research and development (R&D) support.
19. Evidence to be provided
  - Clear demonstration of current and future role in connecting and building opportunities of scale for Scotland, and leveraging additional R&D support.
  - Approach to ensuring that planned activities and initiatives do not duplicate current or future activities in the broader landscape (nationally and regionally) as well as within academic base.
  - Plans for use of SFC funding (where relevant) to support activities described above, to include anticipated outcomes from this investment.
  - Case study to demonstrate value to the system the IC has had, beyond the impact an individual organisation or even a partnership of institutions or organisations could have themselves.

## Maximising value of universities and colleges through KE&I activities

20. As infrastructure investments, ICs must play a demonstratable role in integrating the wider KE&I system.
21. Evidence to be provided:
  - Approach to supporting universities and colleges to maximise their value to Scotland through their KE&I activities, with demonstratable evidence of institutional involvement in the co-design of these plans.

- 
- Approach to maintaining agility in the areas of focus through a collaborative approach to ensure ongoing alignment with and responsiveness to industry demand.
  - Approach to bringing industry demand to universities and colleges in creative ways to stimulate and challenge.
  - Approach to building on existing college links and developing greater college innovation as college capacity grows.
  - Plans for use of SFC funding to support activities described above, to include anticipated outcomes from this investment.
  - Case study to demonstrate successful approach to responding to industry demand.

## Skills Development

22. As infrastructure investments, ICs must make a demonstratable contribution to skills development to meet current and future Research & Innovation (R&I) needs of Scotland.
23. Evidence to be provided
  - Plans for skills development programmes, designed in collaboration with industry\* to meet future job demands and train the innovators of the future.
  - Plans for use of SFC funding (where relevant) to support activities described above, to include anticipated outcomes from this investment.
  - Case study to demonstrate contributions made to skills development to date.

*\*Where 'industry' here is to be read as including private sector, third sector and public sector organisations, notably the Scottish NHS and Social Care system.*

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

24. SFC considers equality and diversity in all its priorities. SFC have committed to embedding equality diversity and inclusion (EDI) within a more coherent KE&I system. At a minimum SFC asks institutions and funded organisations to be mindful of the Equality Act (2010), including the statutory requirement for Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRAs) of new and revised strategies and policies.
  - Submissions must include an EHRIA and should be used to inform all planned activities and initiatives. ICs can complete their own EHRIA form or use SFC's form which is available upon request. Further information and guidance is available from SFC's website: [Equality and diversity \(sfc.ac.uk\)](https://www.sfc.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity).
  - Plans should clearly indicate how the proposed activities, initiatives, recruitment and governance arrangements can support greater EDI in KE&I system and industry\*.

## Financial Case and added value

25. Working within an indicative SFC investment of £1m, £1.5m and £2m per annum, please explain how this public funding will be used to support and add value to the IC's activities as an infrastructure investment, to include:
  - A description of the specific activities, staff and initiatives to be supported with SFC

- 
- funding and how these will add value to the broader KE&I system in Scotland
- Any new roles you will need to recruit.
  - How the proposed activities, initiatives and recruitment represent value for money - how will the anticipated outcomes justify the investment.
  - How any SFC investment will be used to leverage other sources of core support over longer term plan.
  - Other relevant points

## Project management and governance

26. SFC have committed to an outcome-based approach for our investments with regular evaluation points built in.
- Describe how you will manage the IC's activities as an infrastructure investment effectively.
  - Explain the main risks and uncertainties for the IC's activities as an infrastructure investment and how these will be mitigated.
  - Include Data Management plans.
  - Other relevant points.

---

## Annex A

### Principles agreed by SFC Board that will determine suitability for infrastructure investment

- Be focused on using all SFC funding in utilising and connecting the existing strengths of our universities and colleges with industry<sup>[1]</sup>. We will move our emphasis from KPI measures to delivery on agreed outcomes and we will deliberately relaunch purpose with a broader KE remit in order to reflect the diversity of our institutions and the value they can bring. An infrastructure investment must recognise this and adapt accordingly.
- Be strategically aligned to the needs of Scotland today particularly in the context of recovery, Brexit and net-zero. We will agree outcomes in pursuit of green recovery, wellbeing, a just transition and an entrepreneurial economy. For an IC to be supported over the long term it must be clear that they are playing/can play an integral role in delivery of national strategies and priorities. It would be unnecessarily limiting if the role of an IC remained rigid and single focused so we will expect ICs as long-term investments to have a broader and highly collaborative remit.
- Strategic alignment is required to ensure we do not duplicate efforts or clutter support and the landscape. It is also vital in enabling an IC as an infrastructure investment to demonstrate that they are bringing real value to the system beyond the impact an individual organisation or even a partnership of institutions or organisations could have themselves. An infrastructure investment must demonstrate that they can play a significant role in helping Scotland leverage in UK, EU and other sources of R&D support. They are vital to the system in connecting and building opportunities of scale for Scotland.
- An IC as an infrastructure investment must be fully part of the university and college KE&I system whilst maintaining and demonstrating significant industry demand. ICs as infrastructure will exist to help universities and colleges maximise their value to Scotland (through their KE&I) so ICs' relationships with universities and colleges must be strengthened collectively and individually. We will look to universities and colleges to help us co-own and co-design that support.
- Infrastructure investments must ensure that they are bringing industry demand to universities and colleges that stimulates and challenges them. ICs will be more proactive in engaging with institutions to establish our strengths better and tap into them. They must work closely with SFC's support for research collaboration and system entities, including Research Pools, where that supports desired outcomes.
- Infrastructure investments should build on existing college links and make rapid inroads into developing greater college innovation as college capacity



---

grows.

- Infrastructure investments must play a leading role in skills development with significant skills programmes ensuring we are preparing for future jobs and training innovators of the future – this is a key element to their industry demand credentials.

<sup>[1]</sup>Where ‘industry’ here is to be read at including private sector, third sector and public sector organisations, notably the Scottish NHS and Social Care system.