# Guidelines for Preparing a Research Infrastructure Access Charge Plan

*Last Updated: June 2016*

Science Foundation Ireland recognises the importance of sustainability planning to enable research bodies to maintain research infrastructure. It is therefore critical that maximum usage of infrastructure is planned, and an appropriate access charge plan is put in place.

In order to support widespread infrastructural sustainability within the Irish STEM research community, Science Foundation Ireland allows grant applications under its various programmes to include requests for infrastructure access charges to support research programme aims. However, the Foundation will only fund Research Body-managed infrastructure charges once a pre-approved access charge plan is in place. These *Research Infrastructures could be SFI funded; however, the Foundation will also accept the submission of access charge plans for non-SFI funded Research Infrastructure.* Please note that once access charge plans are approved, the Foundation will not apply access charges retrospectively to its awarded grants.

*Investigators are also advised to consult the HEA National Guidelines on Access to Research Infrastructure[[1]](#footnote-1).*

**What is an access charge plan?**

An access charge plan should include realistic, specific and quantitative details on the anticipated usage, taking into account downtime of instruments and maintenance costs. Hourly rates for academic users (based on operational costs) and industry users (based on full economic costs) should be included. Research Body contribution to the operational costs should also be factored into the access model, where applicable, so as to reduce the academic access charge rate.

**How do I prepare an access charge plan for SFI approval?**

**The first step in the access charge approval process is to submit a multi-year access charge plan that covers the lifetime of the infrastructure (e.g., 5 years).**

**There are three sections that need to be completed:**

**Appendix A: Access Charge Plan Cover Sheet**

**Appendix B: Detailed description of Key Users of Infrastructure**

**Appendix C: Access Charge Plan**

**Appendix A: Access Charge Plan Cover Sheet**

**Please complete all fields.**

**Appendix B: Detailed description of Key Users of Infrastructure**

**Please complete the template provided including names of key users who will use the infrastructure. Using bullet point format, indicate how the infrastructure will enhance and enable activities for the named key responsible investigator’s group, and where appropriate any collaborating research body(s) and industry partners.**

**Appendix C: Appendix C: Access Charge Plan**

**Please refer to the sample access charge template in Appendix C of this document, and consider the following points (where applicable):**

* **The purpose of this plan is to provide details on how the access charge rates (academic, industry) are calculated, and to demonstrate that the resultant revenue stream covers the operational costs of running the infrastructure (minus any exchequer funded costs).**
* **The plan should list all costs contributing to the *Total Gross Operating Costs* of the infrastructure in the *Category* section of the table under the sample line items *staff, materials & consumables, maintenance/service costs, other costs*.**
* Please ensure that all listed costs are eligible. The following are examples of ineligible costs:
* Equipment Depreciation
* Institutional overhead related costs
* Indirect costs / overhead
* Buildings & construction
* Contingency or miscellaneous costs
* Costs for conducting programmes of research
* Access charges related to the use of the requested infrastructure
* Costs to industry partners
* Hospitality & entertainment costs
* Office equipment & supplies
* Technology transfer or patent costs
* Conference & workshop organisation costs
* Materials, software, maintenance charges if funded from another source (i.e. to avoid double counting).
* **The plan should also list all staff required to run/maintain the infrastructure under the category line item ‘Staff’ in the access charge template. All staff costs, including staff funded from institutional core funding, such as the HEA core grant, should be included in the ‘Total Gross Operating Cost’ calculation.**
* **Exchequer funded operational costs (e.g., core funded staff etc.) initially included as part of the ‘Total Gross Operating Costs’ should be deducted when arriving at the ‘Total Net Operating Costs’ of the infrastructure in the access charge table.**
* The plan should clearly state expected **‘Total Usage Hours’** taking into account breakdowns and maintenance. Equipment downtime should not be charged to the access charge plan, but rather downtime should be factored into the calculation for usable hours.
* **The ‘Cost per Hour’ (or per day if appropriate) for academic users must be a direct calculation based on the ‘Total Net Operating Costs’ divided by the ‘Total Usage Hours’. Note that industry access charge income cannot be used to subsidise the academic rate. However, it may be used to demonstrate the overall sustainability of the infrastructure.**
* **Access charges based on a membership fee must also provide a justification of this fee with respect to the academic user access charge rate.**
* **The academic charge should be the same for all academic users regardless of their host Research Body or whether they are SFI funded.**
* **The ‘Net Deficit/Surplus’ per annum is calculated by subtracting the ‘Total Annual Charges’ from the ‘Total Net Operating Costs’.**

Please note that, although details are not required as part of this plan, industry access charges should ensure full economic cost recovery e.g., depreciation costs.

If you require additional blank pages to explain certain aspects of the access charge plan please add these to the end of the template provided in Appendix C (or include in the Additional Notes section).

**How do I submit an access charge plan for SFI approval?**

Once you have completed all three sections (Appendix A, B & C) please submit this as single document in (MS Word format) to the following mailbox: [infrastructure@sfi.ie](mailto:infrastructure@sfi.ie).

**Additional Queries**

If you have any queries regarding the access charge plan process please send them to [infrastructure@sfi.ie](mailto:infrastructure@sfi.ie).

1. Access Charge Plan Cover Sheet

|  |
| --- |
| **HOST RESEARCH BODY:**  *(Include name of host Research Body of the Infrastructure)* |
| **COLLABORATING RESEARCH BODY(s):**  *(relevant for distributed infrastructures where part of the infrastructure is also hosted by another Research Body)* |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **INFRASTRUCTURE NAME** | ***Name of infrastructure in up to 10 words*** |  |
| **KEY RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR & EMAIL ADDRESS** | ***Name one key responsible investigator who is responsible for the item requested & include their email address*** |  |
| **NRP AREA** | ***Primary NRP area supported by infrastructure*** | *Select from list* |
| **KEYWORDS** | ***Up to 15 keywords*** |  |
| **TOTAL COST OF INFRASTRUCTURE** | ***€ (incl. VAT, delivery and associated costs)*** |  |
| **PURCHASED UNDER WHICH FUNDING SOURCE (RB Core funded, SFI, EI, EU etc.)** | ***Include grant/award code where applicable*** |  |
| **LOCATION FOR INFRASTRUCTURE** | ***e.g. Department, Centre and RB*** |  |
| **LAY SUMMARY**  ***(max. 150 words)*** | | |
|  | | |
| **TECHNICAL SUMMARY**  ***(max. 250 words)*** | | |
|  | | |

1. Detailed description of Key Users of Infrastructure

Please list in the table below the key academic and industrial users of the infrastructure (1-page max.). Key users of the infrastructure may be based at the host research body or another research body in Ireland (including Northern Ireland). Industry partners should also be listed if they are very likely to use the infrastructure.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Investigator** | Describe how this infrastructure will enhance activities for the key users of the infrastructure. Please use bullet points. |
| **Add name** |  |
| **Add name** |  |
| **Add name** |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

1. Access Charge Plan

*Complete template provided- add or remove line items, years, as required.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Access Charge Plan Template *(including examples)*** | | | | | | |
| *(add rows or columns, for more years, as required)* | | | | | | |
| **Infrastructure Name** |  | | | | | |
| **Cost of Infrastructure €** |  | | | | | |
| **Key Responsible Investigator** |  | | | | | |
| **Location (Dept., Centre)** |  | | | | | |
| **Category** | ***Examples of Line Items*** | **2016** | **2017** | **2018** | **2019** | **2020** |
|  |  | € | € | € | € | € |
| Staff | *Technical staff* | €0 | €0 |  |  |  |
| Materials & Consumables | *filters, liquid Nitrogen* | €0 | €0 |  |  |  |
| Maintenance / Service Costs | *following warranty* | €0 | €0 |  |  |  |
| Other Costs | *user training* | €0 | €0 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total Gross Operating Costs** |  | **€0** | **€0** | **€0** | **€0** | **€0** |
| Less Exchequer - Funded Costs | *research body Core staff, SFI awards, PRTLI awards, Other awards, consumables etc.* | €0 | €0 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total Net Operating Costs** |  | **€0** | **€0** | **€0** | **€0** | **€0** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total Usage Hours |  | 0 | 0 |  |  |  |
| Cost per hour (Academic) |  | €0 | €0 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Income from Access Charges | *Expected Income from Academic Users* | €0 | €0 |  |  |  |
|  | *Expected Income from Industry Users* | €0 | €0 |  |  |  |
|  | *Other* | €0 | €0 |  |  |  |
| **Total Annual Charges** |  | €0 | €0 |  |  |  |
| **Net Deficit/Surplus** |  | **€0** | **€0** | **€0** | **€0** | **€0** |
|  | | | | | | |
| **Additional Notes** | | | | | | |
|  | | | | | | |

1. [*http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/national\_guidelines\_for\_access\_by\_researchers\_to\_research\_infrastructure\_hosted\_by\_higher\_education\_institutions\_or\_other\_research\_bodies\_in\_ireland\_0.pdf*](http://www.hea.ie/sites/default/files/national_guidelines_for_access_by_researchers_to_research_infrastructure_hosted_by_higher_education_institutions_or_other_research_bodies_in_ireland_0.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)