

BEST RESEARCH FOR BEST HEALTH

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 5.3 (established)

TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS

*Best Research for Best Health*¹ set out a 5-year Research and Development Strategy for the NHS in England. This Implementation Plan provides more details on one of the key components of that strategy: Technology Platforms.

The Technology Platforms plan has been fully implemented.

Gateway Reference: 6050

Version: 5 (final)

Issue date: August 2007

Access to technology platforms is increasingly essential for the conduct of leading-edge health research. However, current access to these platforms is inadequate across the NHS in England.

We therefore established a dedicated funding stream to support the NHS costs of selected key technology platforms to support health research in NHS providers. The initial focus was on diagnostic imaging, the area identified as most critical in scoping work conducted by the Academy of Medical Sciences and our recent survey of NHS providers.

Aims

- To ensure that the NHS plays its full part in supporting crucial patient-focused research that is reliant on technology platforms in the NHS.
- To ensure that the nation remains at the international forefront of leading-edge health research.

Purpose

- To establish a dedicated funding stream to support the NHS costs of selected key technology platforms for health research in NHS providers.

¹ *Best Research for Best Health: A New National Health Research Strategy*. The NHS contribution to health research in England. Department of Health. 2006.

- To ensure adequate access for researchers to the technology platforms in the NHS which are essential for the conduct of leading-edge health research.

Nature

- The initial focus was on support for diagnostic imaging, the area identified as most critical in scoping work conducted by the Academy of Medical Sciences and a DH recent survey of NHS providers.
- This funding stream provides support to NHS providers, which conduct large-scale programmes of research requiring intensive use of research platforms. Support has been provided for the cost of accessing high technology imaging platforms related to participation in multicentre trials.

Eligibility

- All NHS providers that have substantial imaging Technology Platforms were eligible to receive Technology Platform funding.

Selection process

- The funding round supported diagnostic imaging.
- Interested NHS Providers submitted an application setting out:
 - a description of their current diagnostic imaging facilities (type of imaging, current clinical and research throughput, and maximum possible research throughput)
 - a description of their current research portfolio using diagnostic imaging
 - the way in which increased access to imaging time on the existing imaging facilities would have a positive impact on the research conducted
 - the cost of buying that additional imaging time.
- A panel convened by the DH R&D Directorate that included experts in diagnostic imaging assessed the applications.

Funding

- The total amount of funding available for funding diagnostic imaging was £8m *per annum*.
- Funding was awarded only to NHS providers.
- Funding must only be used to support the recurrent costs of patient-focused research (*i.e.* capital investment was not funded).
- Eligible costs included:
 - research support staff (clinical and non-clinical);
 - access to equipment (*i.e.* “imaging time”).
- Treatment costs associated with research were not covered.
- This funding is separate from any other NHS R&D funding received by the NHS provider.

Monitoring and Performance Management

- The performance of each organisation is being monitored and reviewed via annual reports.

Duration

- Contracts were issued covering a period of two years. However, funding was awarded subject to satisfactory performance and annual adjustment based on actual activity rates.

Implementation Timetable

- The planned implementation timetable was:
 - 25 January 2006 - R&D strategy published confirming intention to establish Technology Platforms
 - 16 March 2006 - call released on DH website for all interested NHS providers to apply for Technology Platform funding
 - 19 May - deadline for receipt of applications
 - June 2006 - proposals reviewed
 - August/September 2006 - contracts agreed
 - October 2006 - Technology Platform (diagnostic imaging) funding commenced (Twenty-six Trusts were awarded contracts).

Post implementation review

- Early January 2007 – A post implementation evaluation of the Technology Platform (diagnostic imaging) funding stream has been completed and new areas for Technology Platform funding reviewed.
- April 2007 onwards – The review identified the challenging nature of the Technology Platform call for both Trusts responding to it and NIHR administering the process. Therefore, future funding for Technology Platforms will be included in other NIHR Infrastructure funding streams and will no longer form a separate funding stream. Funding for Technology Platform (diagnostic imaging) will continue until the end of the current contracts.

Department of Health Lead:

Catherine Johns
Head of NHS Research Infrastructure
Email: R&D@dh.gsi.gov.uk