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MANAGING RESEARCH FUNDING IN THE UK

The Role of the Research
Councils

Summary

- Funding of research in the UK
- Research Councils and Research Councils UK
- Where does the money go
- Governance
- The Role of Programme Officers and Project Managers
- Recruitment of staff

Public investment in research

- Aims to produce new knowledge, technology and highly skilled people, resulting in a wide range of economic & social benefits
- UK funders:
 - Research Councils
 - Funding Councils
 - National Health Service
 - Government Departments
- UK providers:
 - Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
 - Research Council Institutes
 - Other Public Sector Research Establishments



The UK research funding system

- Government funds for research in the higher education sector are allocated via two strands, the Research Councils and the Funding Councils – the dual support mechanism
- Funding Councils: general costs of the basic research infrastructure, including laboratories, equipment and staff salaries
- Research Councils: funds for specific research projects, plus a contribution towards the indirect costs of the research



What is Research Councils UK?

RCUK is a strategic partnership between the seven UK Research Councils and the AHRB. RCUK operates UK-wide and its interests run across all the sciences, engineering, technology, social sciences and the arts and humanities. Through RCUK, the Research Councils are working together to enhance the overall impact and effectiveness of their research, training and knowledge transfer activities.

The public accountability of individual Councils is unchanged by RCUK



RCUK Achievements

Comprehensive overview to be published shortly as part of 2004 Review of RCUK. Highlights include:

- Synthesis of Strategies & Vision for Research
- RCUK contribution to SR2002 and SR2004
- Collective dialogue with industry and RDAs
- RCUK evidence to Parliamentary inquiries and inputs to policy development e.g. FP7, ERC, dual support reform
- Research Administration Programme



UK Research Councils

- Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)
- Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (CCLRC)
- Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)
- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
- Medical Research Council (MRC)
- Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)
- Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council (PPARC)
- Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB)



Research Council status

- Non-Departmental Public Bodies established by Royal Charter
- Public funding via the Science Budget, Government Departments, the EU, business
- Accountable to Parliament, via the Office of Science and Technology.
- Independent Councils – members from academia, Government, industry and user communities

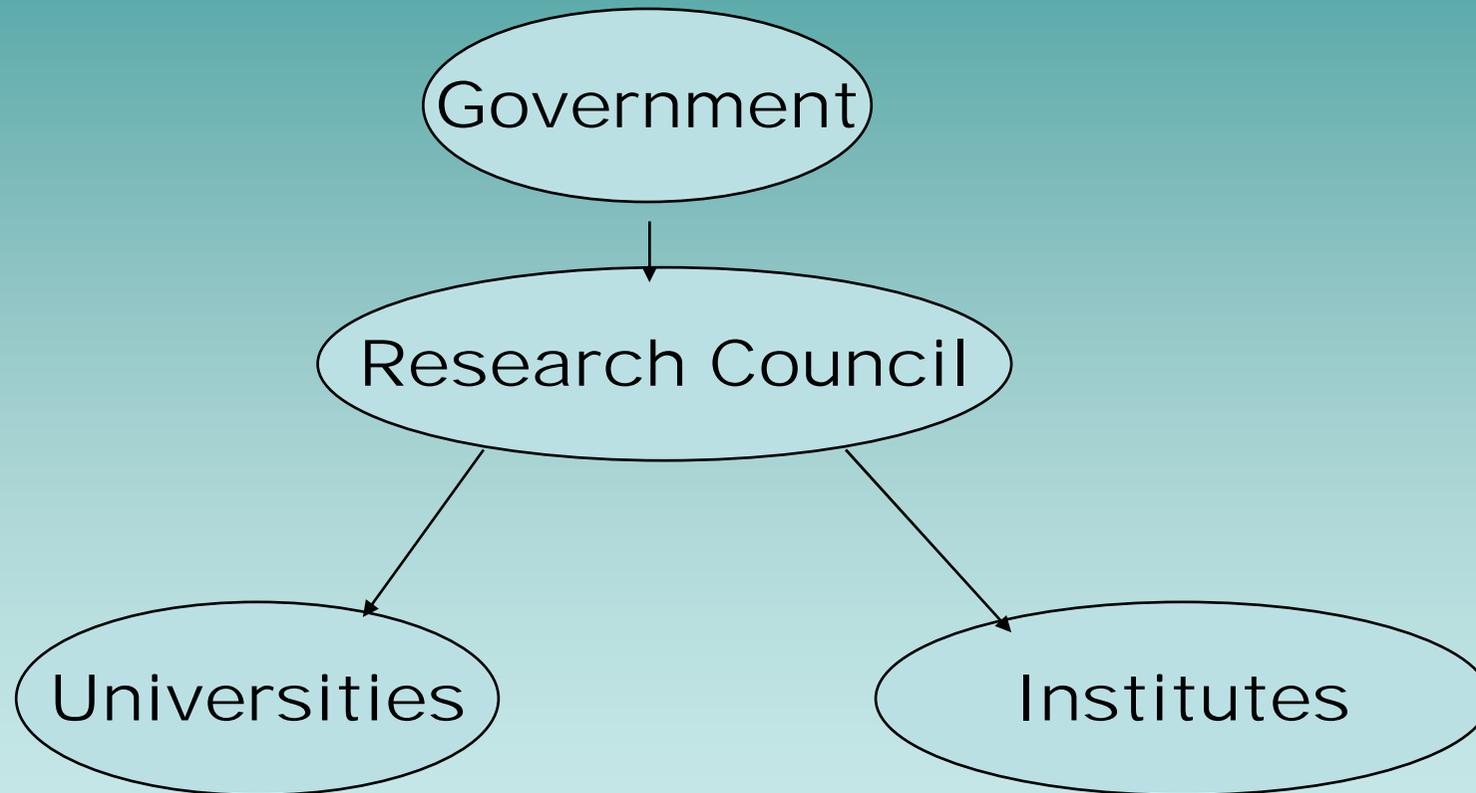


Research Council roles

- Specific Missions
- Common objectives of grant awarding Councils:
 - support basic, strategic and applied research
 - support postgraduate training
 - advance knowledge and technology and provide services and trained scientists and engineers to contribute to the economic competitiveness, the effectiveness of public services and policy, and the quality of life
 - science and society activities
- CCLRC - Management and development of large facilities



Where does the money go?



Institute Funding

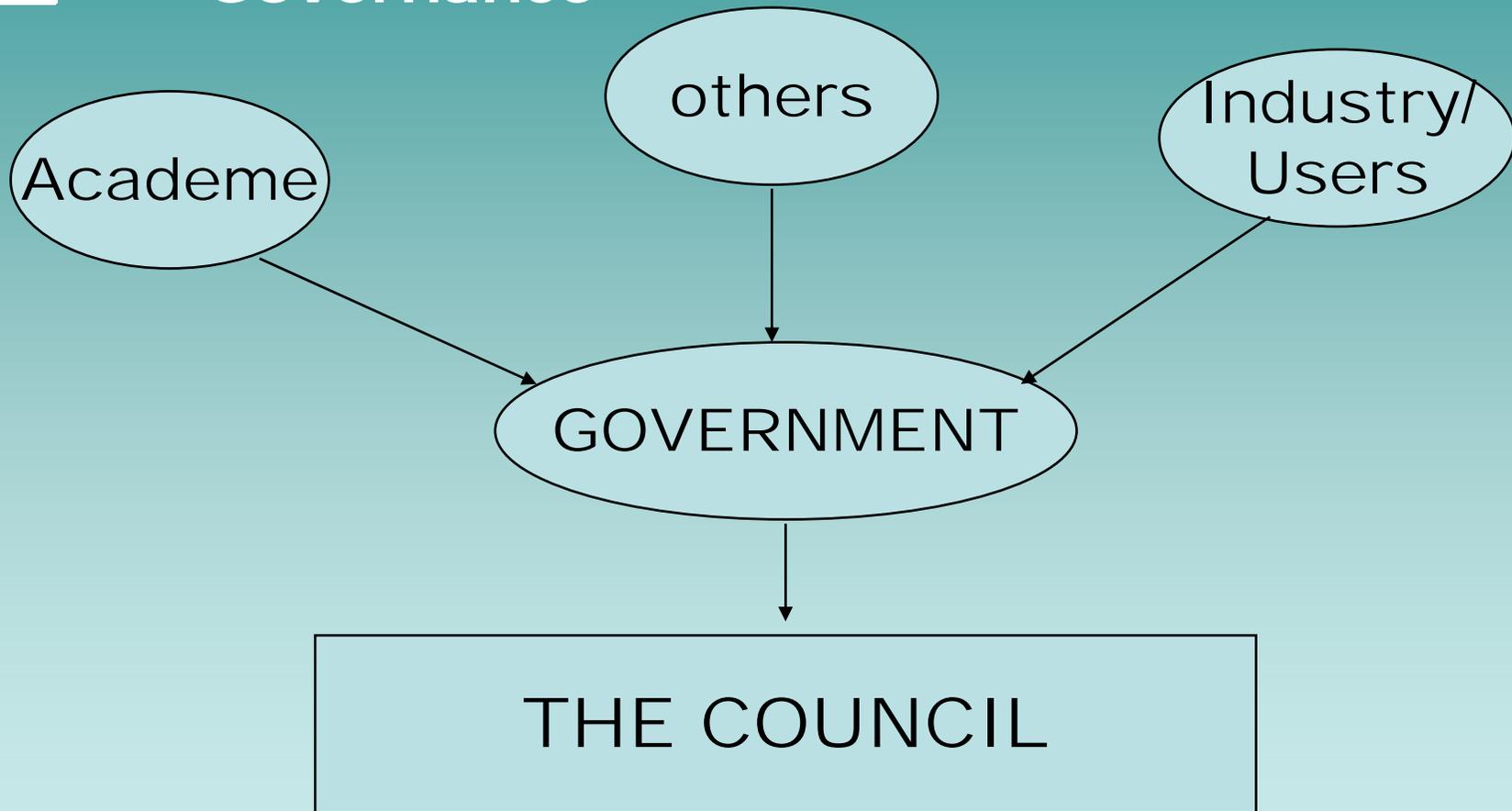
- Research Councils
- Charities
- Government departments
- European Union

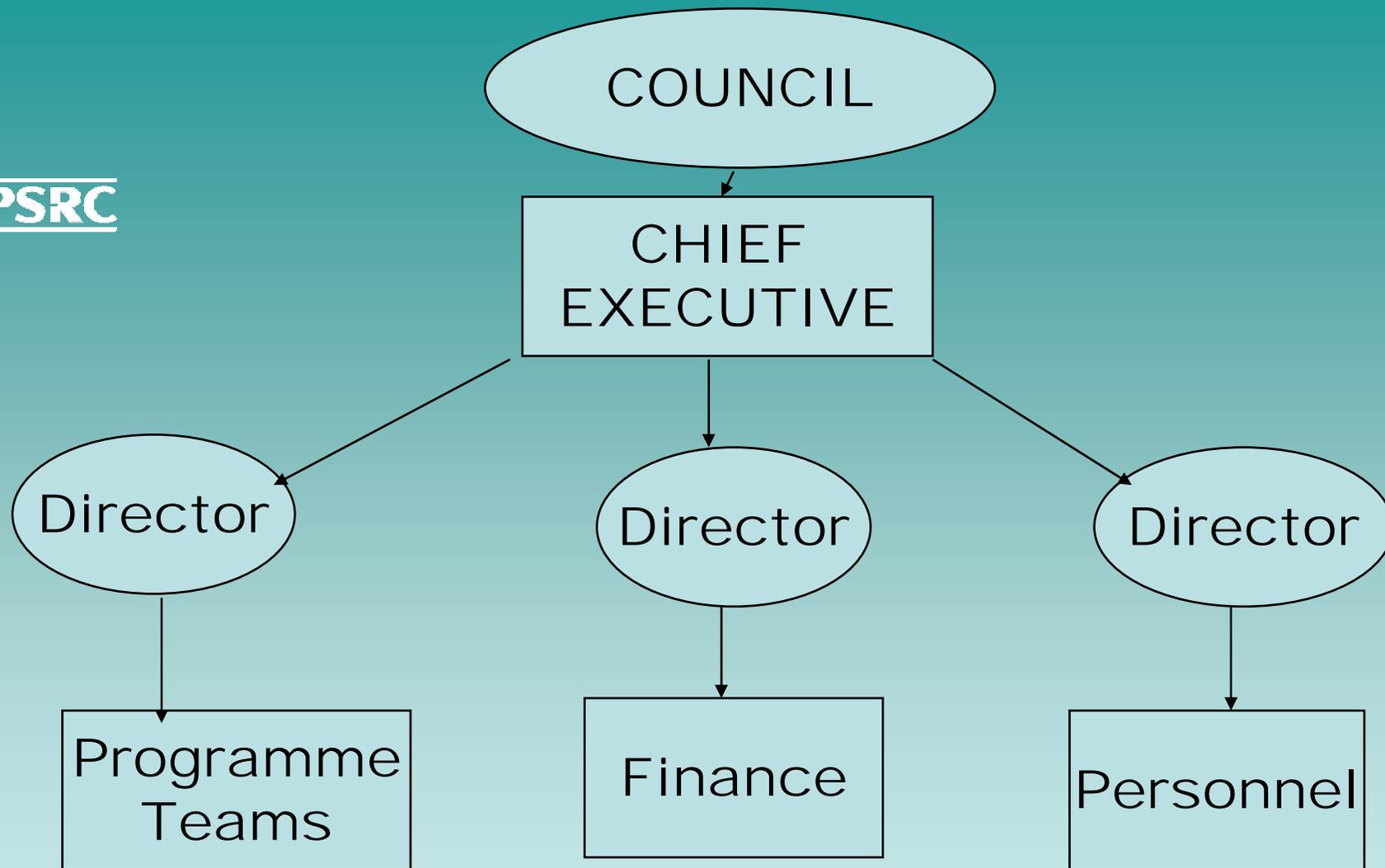
Role of institutes

- National facilities
- Long-term research
- Data storage/reference collections

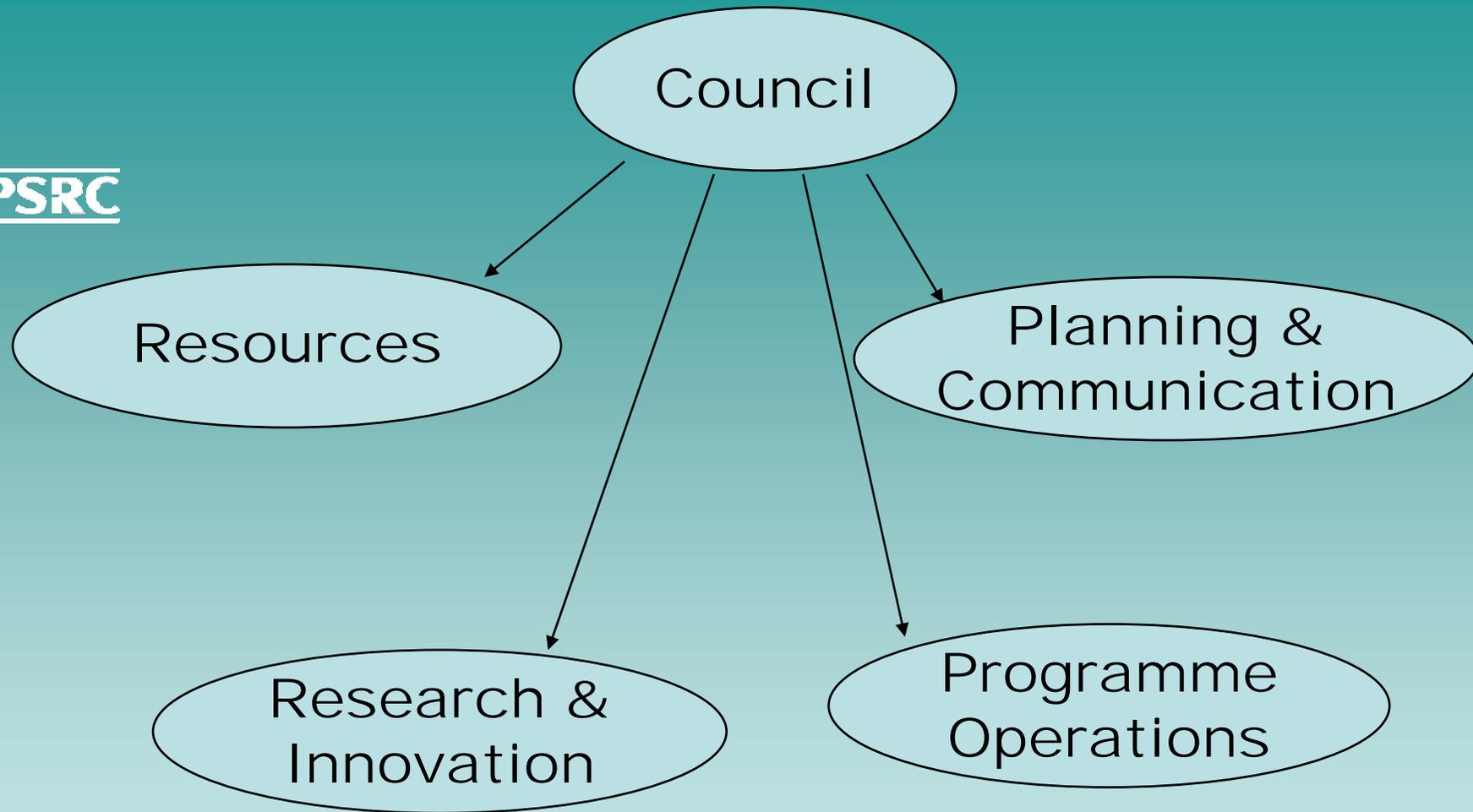
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Governance





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Role of Programme Officer and Project Manager: definitions

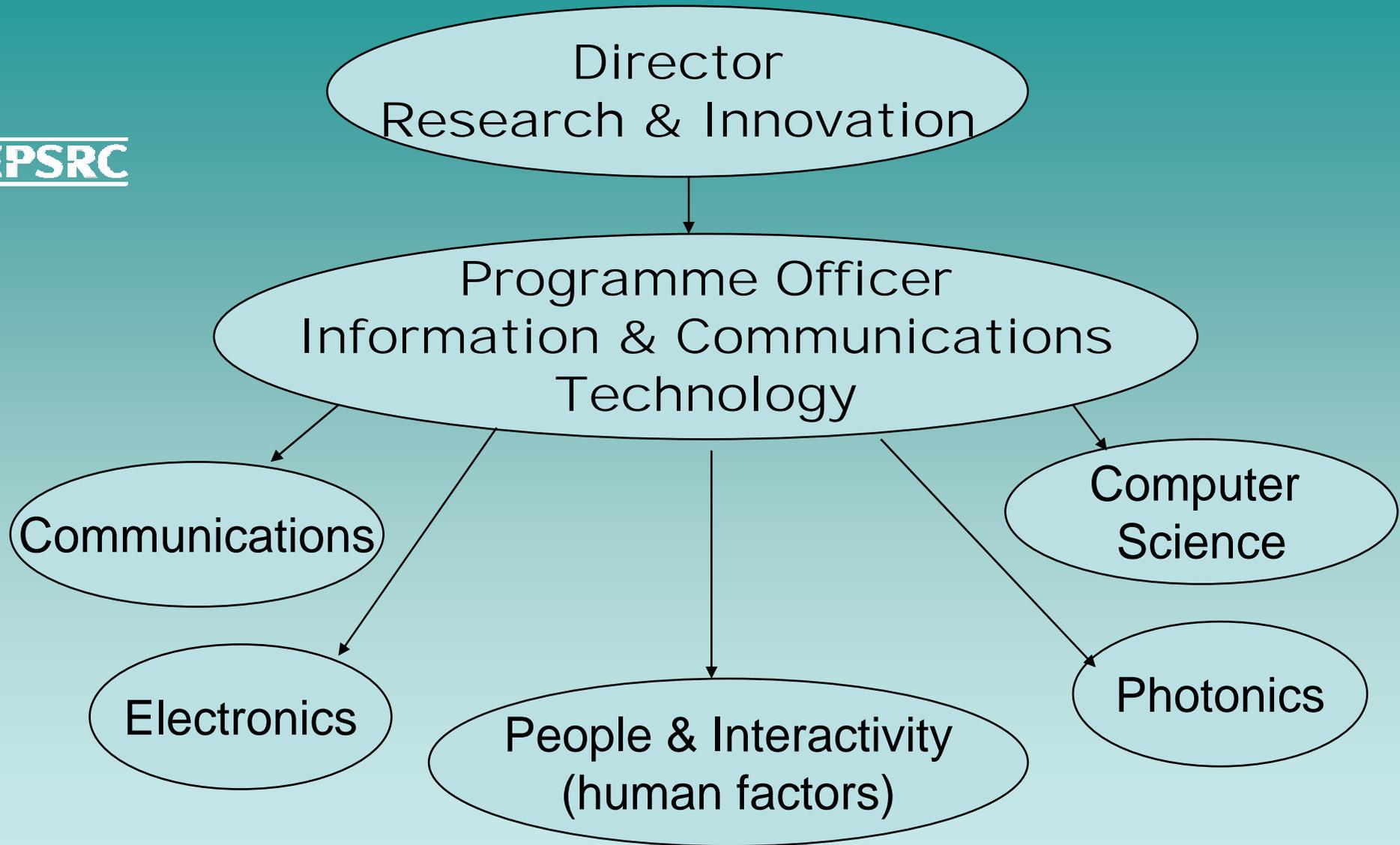
- **PROGRAMME OFFICER:**
Responsible for selecting research themes, evaluation of research, etc.
- **PROJECT MANAGER:**
Responsible for administering the progress of each research theme

Programme Officer Duties

- Contact point between research community and the Council
- Consulting with Research communities
- Knowledge of how research is conducted
- Defining programmes
- Developing new funding and training opportunities
- Deliver the programme within budget
- Produce business plans (including budget proposal)
- Disseminate business plans

Project Manager Duties

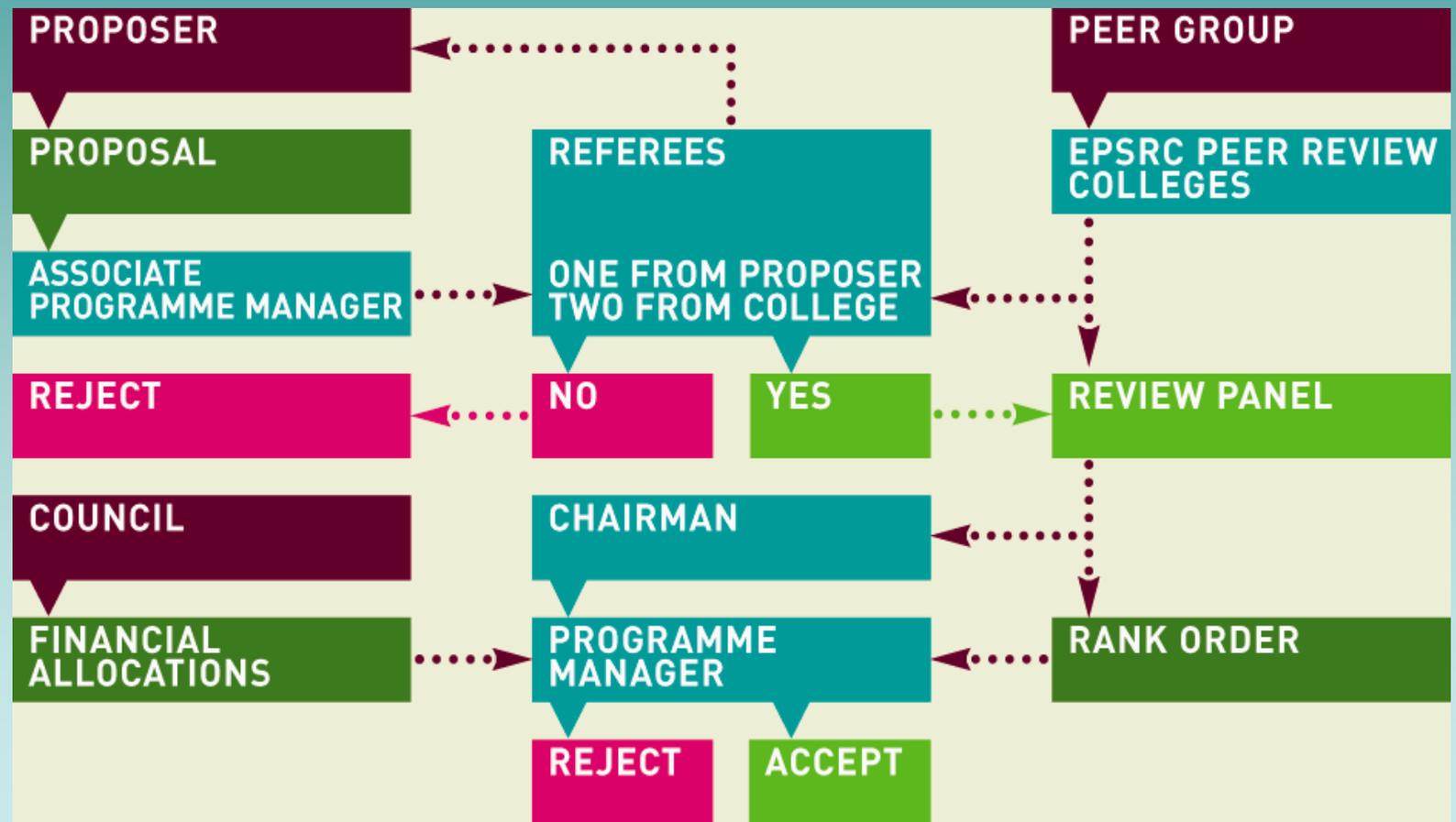
- Consulting with user and provider communities in their area of responsibility
- Contributing to the development of research opportunities, group policies and strategy
- Drafting policy papers and material for business plans
- Assisting dissemination
- Assisting in peer review



Roles in Grant Awarding

- PROGRAMME OFFICER:
 - Budget allocation
- PROJECT MANAGER
 - Application in the right Programme area?
 - Referee selection
 - Managing panel/committee assessment
 - Recording peer review decisions

Peer Review Process



Recruitment of staff

- > Chief Executive
 - Appointed by government
- > Directors
 - External appointment
 - Internal on promotion
- > Programme Officers
 - Internal on promotion
- > Project manager
 - external

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PO/PM experience

- Scientific background
- Generalists
- Flair for administration
- Communications skills

NOTE: -

- Not appointed to their own scientific areas

Rationale

- Scientific background as they need to understand the nature of the work done by the research community
- Their role is not to judge the science so specific knowledge not necessary

Scientific Decision-making

- Council officials do not make major funding decisions
- Judgments of scientific merit is by the peer review (ie the scientific) community

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Nigel Birch
University Interface Manager
Programme Operations Directorate
Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon SN2 1ET
United Kingdom

Tel: + 44 1793 444028; Fax: + 44 1793 444007

EPSRC Website: <http://www.epsrc.ac.uk>

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Thank you for your attention.

Any questions?