IRIS quick reference and FAQ

The first thing is to ask you to read what is presented on at www.iris.ac.uk and in particular "What is IRIS". This is a developing web site. Hopefully you will glean from it that:

IRIS does:
- act as a coordination body for eInfrastructure for its partners;
- act as a community expertise body to make cases and lobby up the chain;
- as a result of the 2018 capital award from BEIS (also known as the *IRIS 4x4*), IRIS commissions the provision of hardware resources through its partners;
- commission digital assets through ALC for Facilities and to a small extent though the partners for other domains;
- share existing compute resources and expertise for the common good;
- carry out joint actions which its partners agree to, and can provide resource for these actions.
- It is essentially a Project Office that is overseen by a Collaboration of partners.

IRIS does not:
- behave as project like DiRAC, GridPP or a Department like SCD or Hartree;
- have any staff resource to provide operational computing services;
- provide computing services directly to end users.

So, IRIS can do some things, but it is not a panacea to be applied to all computing issues in all domains. It will continue to make the community case in both of the following areas:
- Hardware resources (CPU cycles, PetaBytes and Network equipment)
- Research Software Engineer staff and other computing staff

Cases have already been submitted to STFC for both of the above.

You may have some questions. Here is an attempt at an FAQ.

FAQ:

Who runs IRIS?

The IRIS Delivery Board, comprised of the partners (see https://www.iris.ac.uk/about/partners/), is the body that sets the strategy of the IRIS Collaboration, monitors progress and approves (hardware) Resource Allocations.

The principle officers of IRIS are:

- Pete Clarke (Project Director, Science)
- Andrew Sansum (Project Director, Technical)
- Jeremy Yates (Deputy Project Director and Chair of the Resource Allocation Panel)
- John Kewley (Project Manager)

Who provides activity-specific software-Infrastructure (sInfrastructure)?

This is in the remit of the user activity science sectors. Each activity needs to find the resource for its activity specific software stack as an integral part of that activity.

We all understand that such may be poorly resourced in some domains at present, and that is a chronic problem that is consistently pointed out up the chain.

Of course, IRIS can and will lobby that such software staff are as essential to a project as a physical instrument (e.g. the proposal for a set of RSEs) but it has no magic wand (resources) in this area.

Who provides common sInfrastructure?

IRIS does coordinate its partners to have a common approach to sInfrastructure where it makes sense to do so, but it is only the partners themselves which can actually do any work and provide software services. So, the answer to this question is domain specific. Some examples are given below:
- Facilities: SCD and ALC
- Particle Physics: GridPP
- AstroParticle: These have some project funding, and some are making use of the Grid and so are supported indirectly through GridPP.
- DLS: The Diamond Compute Group

We appreciate that some domains (particularly Astronomy projects) are not yet effectively resourced for common sInfrastructure, and IRIS will continue to lobby on their behalf.

Can IRIS provide computing services directly to users?

IRIS has no means to do this as it is not a computing project.

IRIS funds it partners and others to provide hardware to meet the needs of its user activities, but that hardware has to be made available to users by the user activities themselves.

Again, we appreciate this is more difficult in some domains due to no historical support. IRIS will continue to provide evidence needed to back any request you need to make.

What is IRIS4x4?

This is the 4 year award made to the STFC Scientific Computing Division (SCD) from the 2018 BEIS Capital Challenge Round.

It is for capital only and includes both the procurement hardware and the provision of Digital Assets.

Its main intention is to help the STFC communities provide a baseline common physical eInfrastructure for STFC Research and Innovation.

The grant is administered by SCD and allocations of IRIS4x4 resources are made by the IRIS Delivery Board.

How do I ask for an IRIS4x4 compute or storage allocation?

Details will be given on the IRIS web site (www.iris.ac.uk) as soon as possible. Briefly,
- If you are an explicit IRIS partner you will prepare an annual Resource Request Document and submit it to the RSA (Resource Scrutiny and Allocation) Panel.
- If have been peer reviewed and are a small activity, or an activity in exploitation phase, you contact your IRIS Delivery Board representative (see IRIS DB member list on the web site). This mostly applies to the many diverse Astronomy projects.
- If you have not been peer reviewed, then you apply through the DiRAC RAC for now.

If in doubt, please seek advice from your "scientifically closest" DB member of from the Project Directors.

Does IRIS4x4 support staff effort.

- Yes, for Facilities through ALC but only to create Digital Assets, not for operations.
- No, to first order for Programmes.

This is what BEIS gave the money for and we have to abide by that.

To second order IRIS has put a small amount of its funds into creating some Digital Assets for the non-Facilities communities