

UKRI In-Year Awards Scheme Guidance

1. Introduction

The Instant Recognition Awards and In-Year Awards Scheme Guidance outlines a framework for employees, managers and HR in recognizing and rewarding the efforts of employees.

The scheme operates within public sector pay policy rules and affordability limits. Historically the operation of in year schemes and non-consolidated pots have varied across Councils. Total spend on non-consolidated pay cannot exceed the total UKRI non-consolidated performance pay pot of 1.83% of UKRI pay bill.

The Instant Recognition Scheme and In Year Awards policy sets out the principles governing the scheme. Detailed guidance on the process will be issued annually.

This guidance describes the UKRI In Year Award process for 2025-2026.

Employees should note that the In Year award scheme is different to the Annual Performance Review Process which leads to End of Year Performance Related Pay. If performance is deemed to have consistently been at an exceptionally high level throughout the appraisal year, then this may warrant end of year Performance Related Pay (End Year Award). Further advice can be sought from HR.

2. Scope

See *UKRI Instant Awards and In Year Award Scheme Guidance*.

If there is any doubt whether this guidance applies, please seek advice from your HR team.

3. Principles of In Year Awards

These are set out in the *UKRI Instant Awards and In Year Award Guidance*.

4. Status of Awards

In Year Awards are both non-consolidated and non-pensionable and are subject to tax and NI.

5. Eligibility

All UKRI employees in scope for the scheme as set out in the policy are eligible for consideration for an In Year Award, subject to the following:

Employees who are subject to a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) or Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP) will not be eligible for an In Year Award. Employees exiting a PIP or an AIP must have completed six months' satisfactory service in order to again be eligible for an award. This does not necessarily exclude work possibly done in part while still on a PIP or an AIP – each case will be considered on its merits.

Employees currently in receipt of an additional allowance would not normally be eligible for an in-year award if they are already being rewarded for their additional responsibilities.

Employees in receipt of an additional allowance or who have been temporarily promoted can be nominated for an In Year Award. However, in deciding to nominate the employee it is important to distinguish between the activity leading to the additional allowance/Temporary Promotion (i.e. the additional responsibility which is recognised through their existing additional payment) and the activity leading to a nomination for an In Year Award.

If an End Year Award is recommended for an employee who has achieved an In Year Award in the same reporting year clear justification for the nomination must be provided.

6. Types of In Year Awards and Timing

The aim of In Year Awards is to provide recognition for individual or team contributions that have gone above and beyond what is normally expected.

This provides timely recognition of achievements on a bi-annual basis. The timeframes for consideration of awards will be January to June; and July to December, with local flexibility where required.

In-Year Awards can be made in recognition of the following performance:

- Individual Performance
- Team Performance

When submitting a nomination, employees are required to put some context around the award, for example: background for the piece of work undertaken; why it was necessary; its importance and finally, the impact on the organisation. Submissions should be objective with neutral language being used and non-emotive.

An indication of the time spent should be captured in the nomination and employees should consider one of the following categories:

- Additional work of normal complexity, with standard benefits to UKRI taking less than 3 months.
- Additional work of above average complexity, with additional benefits to UKRI taking up to 6 months.
- Additional work of significant complexity, with significant benefits to UKRI taking 6-9 months.

Employees may benefit from **up to three** In Year Awards in each remit year. These may be either individual or team awards. Local areas have flexibility in electing to give either individual or team awards.

If nominated for more than one award, the reasons for nomination cannot be the same and the criteria must be met for every nomination with clearly differentiated reasons for nomination. Local areas should be aware that multiple team awards may exhaust the available allocation more rapidly than individual awards.

The In Year Award scheme will allow up to £1000 to be awarded, in £250 increments. These amounts have been set to ensure consistency and fairness and to ensure all staff have the opportunity to benefit from the scheme by broadening access and harmonising the value of

In Year Awards. This means values may differ to previous schemes in some parts of the business.

The In Year Awards incorporate the contractual MRC SAS scheme, without amending the award amounts therein.

Innovate UK staff on contractual PRP arrangements are excluded from these arrangements.

In Year awards recognise contributions that have gone above and beyond what is normally expected. Awards will be determined by panels against the criteria and budgets are set in advance. As a guideline only, it is anticipated that around a quarter of employees will be eligible for an In Year award across the year.

Annex A provides Guidance on Applying In Year Award Levels

7. In Year Award Nomination Process

Line managers are encouraged to ask their employees if there is anything the employee has achieved that they wish to be considered in the In Year awards nominations process. It is important that employees are given the opportunity and feel able to raise awareness of performance they think is worthy of a nomination.

UKRI and MRC CIU Line managers using Oracle Fusion must use the In Year Award or MRC SAS In Year Award Journey on Oracle Fusion.

For Innovate UK line managers who continue to use Workday, the downloadable nomination form which is available on The Source and must be completed and shared with IUK HR Ops colleagues for processing on Workday.

Line managers should complete the relevant nomination form giving a clear rationale and evidence to support the nomination and submit it to HR.

The nomination should justify the award by succinctly outlining the employee's specific contribution to an activity, and the resulting outcome and the impact. It should also address the personal achievements within the employee's main and personal objectives; the contributions to wider teams; or their contribution to other teams and the wider corporate objectives of UKRI.

Individual Nomination

For individual nominations the nominee needs to be achieving their annual objectives and to have achieved something of significance. This needs to be over and above normal duties and pre-set objectives which links to UKRI Values. The substantial part of this achievement must come to fruition during the performance period in question. This could include:

- Taking the lead on or making a significant contribution to a new initiative, project or programme (within own team, across UKRI, externally)
- Suggesting and championing new ways of working to bring about more effective and/or efficient working
- Temporarily taking on new responsibilities that are not rewarded elsewhere (through allowances, overtime etc.)
- Demonstrating creativity and initiative in responding to a particular challenge
- The successful design and launch of a specific initiative
- Organising a successful series of workshops/training events/awareness raising sessions/major conference etc
- Showing initiative or role model behaviour over a particular matter, including line management
- Demonstrating leadership behaviour by supporting the implementation of a new system/approach/process by volunteering to be a Super User or Champion

- Delivering excellent line management, consistently over the period or specifically in response to particular circumstances requiring intervention

Team Nomination

The point of a team nomination is to recognise and promote team working.

For team nominations (either functional or project) the line manager or Project Manager must be able to demonstrate that the team members included in the team award have all remained on track with their individual objectives as well as worked collectively to achieve something of significance and / or exceptional such as:

- Achieving multiple, simultaneous and significant deadlines under particularly challenging circumstances
- Arranging an exceptional/innovative initiative which was well-organised and received outstanding feedback
- Initiating a new cross Council or multi-partner programme/initiative and thereby raising UKRI's profile and reputation.
- A team award should normally include all team members.
- *It is recommended that team awards are capped at £250*

Cross Council Nominations (Individual/Team)

For those staff who are being nominated for Cross Council activities, which meet the criteria for In Year award nominations, these nominations should be shared with the line manager of the nominee.

The line manager of the employee being nominated for cross council activities should confirm that the nomination can proceed.

When the line manager confirms the nomination can proceed, the line manager should complete the In Year award nomination form through the relevant process, i.e. either via Fusion In Year Award-UKRI Journey, MRC SAS In Year Award Journey or completing the downloadable form (Innovate UK), for inclusion in the moderation process.

If the line manager confirms the nomination should not be processed the nominating manager should be informed alongside the employee with reasons why nomination can't proceed.

The nomination will be moderated by the **home council** of the relevant employee, and the cost of the In Year Award will be met from their allocation.

For Cross Council Team nominations, it is recommended that awards are capped at the £250 level in consideration of Council allocations.

8. In Year Award Approval Process

Team/Group Heads will be invited to make nominations for team or individual In-Year Awards twice a year (in readiness for the July and January Panels).

Team/Group heads are encouraged to consult with their staff during their mid-year and end of year reviews to ask whether there is anything the individual has achieved during the period that they wish to be considered in the in-year nomination process. It is important that employees are given the opportunity and feel able to raise awareness of performance they think is worthy of a nomination.

The Team / Group Head will need to complete the In-Year Award Nomination Journey on Fusion or via the downloadable nomination form for Innovate UK

(Annex C) by giving clear rationale and evidence to support the nomination and submit it to HR **(Annex A)** provides definition for levels of award).

If a nomination is being completed for cross council work and the nominator is not the immediate line manager of the nominee, the nominator must ensure the line manager is made aware of the nomination as soon as is reasonably possible.

Annex B provides examples of Individual & Team In Year Award nominations.

Dates for submission and moderation of nominations will be confirmed by HR during the year.

When making a nomination an award can be proposed up to a maximum of £1,000 in increments of £250, considering the complexity of the work and the time it has taken. It is important that careful consideration is given to the amount being proposed and to ensure that it is justified by the evidence covered within the nomination. The award level chosen should not be related to grade or basic pay but to the contribution made

In Year awards will be moderated to ensure consistency and the Awards Panel will comprise a group of relevant managers plus HR representative and will consider nominations at July and January moderation meetings. The Panel will use this policy to inform their decision making which will be on both a qualitative and comparative basis. (**Annex D** provides panel guidance).

Feedback will be provided to the nominator on both successful and unsuccessful nominations and the rationale behind the decision.

The Panel may decide that the nomination submitted warrants a different sum and have the authority to increase / decrease the amount which has been put forward. Similarly, the Panel may suggest the performance is more appropriate for End of Year PRP and will advise the Line Manager.

In Year Awards are assessed on their merits. Depending on the budget available and the quality and number of nominations, not all nominations may be successful.

All awards are non-consolidated and subject to tax and national insurance. Awards will not be pro-rated for part-time staff.

9. Outcomes

Individuals will be informed of the outcome of an award nomination by their Line Manager / Team Lead as soon as possible after the decision has been made.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

These help ensure UKRI operate the scheme in a way that is consistent and compliant.

a) Employees

1. Consider any achievements that you wish to discuss with your line manager for recognition under the In Year Scheme.
2. If you are nominated for an award, you will be notified by your line manager. You should ensure that you check your payslip.

b) Nominators:

1. If you are not the immediate line manager for the employee being nominated, you must ensure that the nomination is shared with the line manager. This is especially important in relation to cross-council nominations.
2. The line manager for the nominee should confirm that the nomination can be progressed.
3. Line managers using Fusion should complete the In Year award journey to progress nominations. Innovate UK line managers not accessing Fusion should use the nomination form.
4. Nominations should not exceed the maximum word count

5. If nominating a team, all team members should receive the same level of award.

c) Line managers

1. Ensure that you are using the guidance throughout the year to give recognition to staff in your area. Nominate staff using the In Year Award Journey on Fusion or the nomination form for Innovate UK only.
2. Be sure that the level of recognition is appropriate to performance, and that the appropriate approval and payment process is followed.
3. Make sure you follow the scheme rules and that you ensure fairness, consistency and principles of diversity and inclusion.
4. Ensure that you are aware of the aims of the UKRI Inclusion & Diversity Strategy and the challenges it is addressing, including fairness of performance management outcomes. Further information on the operational arrangements for equality, diversity and inclusion is available on [The Source](#) .
5. Make sure you understand the concept of unconscious bias and undertake the mandatory training once a year, along with other diversity and inclusion awareness raising training.
6. Understand the importance of ensuring team members with a disability have the necessary workplace adjustments they need to enable them to remove barriers to working effectively and ensure they are not disadvantaged in their ability to achieve recognition and reward as a consequence.
7. Keep a record of the number of awards an individual has received within a single performance year and ensure all team members are considered for the scheme: this will include the proportion of any team awards they receive.

C) Senior managers/Budget Holders

1. Take overall responsibility for the recognition and reward policy in your business area.
2. You are accountable for ensuring your business area always remains within its allocated budget both against the financial year and remit year.
3. Ensure fairness, consistency, principles of diversity and inclusion.

Annex A – Guidance on Applying In Year Award Levels

<i>In Year Award Levels and Criteria</i>	
£250 <i>Additional work of normal complexity with standard benefits to UKRI taking less than 3 months</i>	£500 <i>Additional work of above average complexity with additional benefits to UKRI taking up to 6 months</i>
£750 <i>Additional work of above average to significant complexity, with significant benefits to UKRI taking 6-9 months.</i>	£1000 (exceptionally) <i>Additional work of significant complexity, with significant benefits to UKRI taking 6-9 months.</i>

Annex B: Sample Nomination (extracts from nomination form)

Individual: £500: Additional *work of above average complexity with additional benefits to UKRI taking up to 6 months*

Award Criteria met and proposed award with rationale
Employee is being nominated for an in-year award for leading a multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) exercise within UKRI's Infrastructure Advisory Committee (IAC) process and supporting the IAC meeting with informative and engaging analysis. Employee's work meets the specific criteria of 'taking the lead on or making a significant contribution to a new initiative, project or programme'. The work received employee's attention from March to November 2020. As an analytical project, the work is of above average complexity and employee had to self-train on additional complex methods before securing buy-in from senior stakeholders. In introducing and running MCDA in the IAC process, employee has lived up to the UKRI values of: • Collaboration – working effectively with UKRI's infrastructure team and the IAC. • Innovation – bringing a robust MCDA decision making support tool into a high-profile UKRI process. • Integrity – eliciting the individual and group preferences of the IAC on infrastructure projects, testing the preferences for bias and any inconsistencies, and providing the end-results to support the IAC prioritisation meeting. • Excellence – providing exceptional service to the IAC in the run up to and during their meeting. Employee's work has contributed in helping UKRI/ BEIS deliver on the recommendation that UKRI "develop a more systematic and informed approach to investing in science projects" Employee has a very stretching set of objectives and expectation to shape and lead analysis for the infrastructure team. Previous attempts to employ MCDA in UKRI decision making for the various programmes were unsuccessful and employee had to convert sometimes sceptical stakeholders. Employee continuously took initiative in educating self on different MCDA methods and selected an approach that balanced analytical robustness with efficiency.

Supporting statement

150-200 words are generally enough for a supporting statement. This should include specific contributions and achievements which are evidenced by examples.

Employee received positive feedback on the MCDA, both from his colleagues and the IAC. Previous attempts to implement MCDA in UKRI decision making before Sofiane joined the team – in the ISCF and SPF processes – were unsuccessful, whilst HM Treasury are increasingly encouraging its use (see the new Green Book). Therefore, not only has employee made a significant contribution to the IAC process, employee has provided UKRI with a good test case of MCDA which can support the organisation going forward (Employee has already delivered presentations on MCDA to both internal and external colleagues).

TEAM: £250 each: *Additional work of normal complexity with standard benefits to UKRI taking less than 3 months*

Award Criteria met and proposed award with rationale

The nomination is put forward as a team award due to the commitment and collaborative way of working that was demonstrated by the UKRI team, and the programme team, to deliver a highly successful and well received programme of work culminating in the first completely virtual awards ceremony for the Celebrating UKRI Prize.

The team worked together over 3 months on this project, overcoming various challenges due to the pandemic, while still continuing with their many other priorities through this period.

Proposed award of £250 each

Supporting statement

150-200 words are generally enough for a supporting statement. This should include specific contributions and achievements which are evidenced by examples.

The Celebrating UKRI Prize is a significant moment in the UKRI calendar and is highly valued by the Exec Chair, the research community and its wider stakeholder. The challenge for 2020 was unprecedented with COVID-19 impacting the logistics around the event as well as pressures on resource across the UKRI team and programme team.

From September to November the team pulled together strongly and in many new ways, including virtual catchups to overcome many challenges and delivered excellent content in the form of 9 videos, most filmed on location working to various COVID-19 restrictions; 9 written case studies designed into a booklet; a social media campaign; a news item and press release; and the first virtual Celebrating UKRI Prize Awards Ceremony.

They demonstrated an ability to adapt and flex in order to overcome the many challenges along the way, including filming with social distanced restrictions and tight sign-off schedules, and ensured that through several dry runs of the event itself they could confidently deliver a virtual event without any major hitches and which attracted a record number of attendees, including the Science Minister.

Annex D-Guidance for moderation panel members

Introduction

This guidance describes the UKRI non-consolidated in-year award process and the role and responsibilities of the Panel.

The scheme enables awards to be made in recognition of the following performance:

- Individual performance.
- Team performance (functional team or a project team).

This scheme provides recognition for one-off major or exceptional achievement, outside of the annual performance objectives process, through the payment of a non-consolidated and discretionary in-year award.

Role and Responsibilities of the Panel

Principles

The panel will assess nominations against the criteria set out in this guidance.

Panel members bring their expertise and experience to the review of cases on an independent basis. They will not act as representative of their own directorate.

Panel members will challenge each other to ensure that the process is as free from bias as possible. In consideration of this, members' attention should be drawn particularly to the information provided on UKRI Equal Opportunities policies, copies of which will be available at the meeting.

Panels will review the overall distribution of award nominations by directorate, manager, band and gender.

The role of the Chair is to:

Ensure that all members' views are heard.

Ensure that the panel considers each nomination whether the appropriate criteria have been applied and whether the award level is at the correct level, and

Ensure that discussions are accurately recorded.

Panel Process

The panel will consider the overall distribution of In Year Awards agreed to assess whether there is consistency in decision making.

Members will discuss each nomination to assess the general standard of the nomination and whether the appropriate criteria have been assessed.

The panel will identify whether any feedback for specific managers about nominations.

Panel composition:

Proportionate to the size of the council and comprised of managers representative of the council / directorate community.

If more than 1 panel is required due to the size of the employee group, it is suggested a final moderation panel is convened.

Panel Meeting

Dates will be scheduled for the July and January panels. Once scheduled an announcement will be made by HR via email as to when nominations will need to be submitted by.

To ensure consistency across UKRI, reports will be provided to PFO (People, Finance and Operations Committee) on the efficacy of process. Recognised Trade Unions will additionally receive feedback relating to the use of the scheme. Business areas should be prepared to provide evidence of moderation and decision making to this end.

Nominations

Nominations will be submitted to HR who will collate the information and present to the panel in readiness for the meeting. Nominations should not be excessive in length.

Nominations for cross council work will need to be confirmed by the relevant line manager.

When reviewing and considering nominations the panel should ensure that the case being made covers the following:

Individual Nominations

The nominee needs to be achieving their annual objectives and to have achieved something of significance and/or exceptionally during the period in question. This needs to be over and above normal duties and pre-set objectives. This could include:

- Taking the lead on or making a significant contribution to a new initiative, project or programme.
- Suggesting and championing new ways of working to bring about more effective and/or efficient working.
- Demonstrating creativity and initiative in responding to a particular challenge.
- The successful design and launch of a specific initiative.
- Organising a successful series of workshops / training events / awareness raising sessions / major conference.

- Demonstrating leadership behaviours by supporting the implementation of a new system / approach / process.

Team Nomination

The line manager or Project Manager will need to have demonstrated that the team members included in the team award have all remained on track with their individual objectives as well as worked collectively to achieve something of significance and / or exceptional such as:

- Achieving multiple, simultaneous and significant deadlines under particularly challenging circumstances.
- Arranging an exceptional / innovative initiative which was well-organised and received outstanding feedback.
- Initiating a new cross Council or multi-partner programme / initiative and thereby raising UKRI's profile and reputation.
- Delivering an activity that is a core objective/outcome e.g. UKRI's Balancing Capability.

Assessment and Valuation of the In-Year Award

In addition to reviewing the nominations the Panel should consider the following criteria for assisting in the assessment and valuation of the awards:

- The In-Year Award substantially falls within the period (Jan-June or July-December).
- The time duration of the project or work undertaken.
- The complexity of the work undertaken (work undertaken would have to be more than a one-off event but would not have to be a project per se. It should be challenging for the individuals, deliverables being measurable and agreed up front and the criteria for the award must also be agreed up front).
- The benefits to UKRI.

Other reward for the same work (employees on temporary promotion or a responsibility allowance for the same piece of work would not normally be eligible for an in-year award).

An employee should not normally receive an End of Year award and a substantial in-year award in the same financial year. If it is deemed appropriate to nominate an employee for both awards, it is essential that a clear distinction is made between the two awards.

Employees who are in their probation period are still eligible for an award for 3 months' contribution.

Nominations will be considered for awards ranging from £250 - £1,000. Typically, values should be considered across 4 quadrants, but criteria weighting may vary. Time taken would normally carry the lowest weighting:

1. Additional work of normal complexity, with standard benefits to UKRI and taking less than 3 months should be rewarded within the range of £250 - £500.
2. Additional work of above average complexity, with additional benefits to UKRI and up to 6 months £500.

3. Additional work of significant complexity, with significant benefits to UKRI and taking 6-9 months £750.
4. Exceptional work of significant complexity and with significant benefits to UKRI, a maximum of £1,000 will be awarded.

However, awards exceeding £500 should be the exception rather than the norm.

The Panel may decide that the nomination submitted warrants a different sum and will therefore have the authority to increase / decrease the amount which has been put forward.

Similarly, the Panel may suggest an alternative award such as a Responsibility Allowance or an End Year Award, deeming it to be more appropriate as opposed to an In-Year Award and will make this recommendation to the Line Manager for consideration.

All awards are non-consolidated and subject to tax and national insurance. Awards will not be pro-rated for part-time staff.

Outcome of Panel Meeting

The Panel should prepare a summary detailing the awards which have been approved and provide a brief commentary on those which have not been agreed.

It is the responsibility of Panel Chair to feed back to the Team / Group Head the outcomes of the nominations who will in turn advise the individual / team.

Panel members will abstain from a discussion of those nominations they have submitted or endorsed or where they have declared a conflict of interest.

HR will take the necessary actions relating to payment of the award.