

Vacancy for IUK Director Defense

The IUK Director for Defense is an exciting opportunity to build a new programme and portfolio, addressing the innovation opportunities that this sector presents. This is a unique opportunity to build a holistic and impactful programme, step changing IUK's impact in this critical area.

*Please note this advert will close on 23.59 on the date prior to Workday close date.

Watch our video "Why Join Innovate UK?" [here](#).

Title: Director IUK Managed Programme
Band: UKRI Band X (UKRI Ts & Cs)
Salary: £94931-117800 gross per annum
Reports to: Managing Director IUK
Location: Field based
Contract: Permanent

Innovate UK recognises the importance of work-life balance and we will be happy to discuss any requests for flexible working arrangements.

Context:

Innovate UK is the UK's innovation agency and part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Our vision is a UK where breakthrough ideas become industry leaders. We back innovative companies for national benefit, investing over £1 billion annually to accelerate business innovation for the nation.

We are partners in growing and scaling innovation—working with companies from early-stage startups to scaling businesses and industry leaders. We prioritise sectors, technologies and companies that deliver maximum economic impact: creating high-value jobs, attracting investment, and generating global opportunities aligned to the Government's Modern Industrial Strategy.

Our focus on the industrial strategy and programme primacy is structural, and leadership roles are being created, aligned to the six industrial strategy sectors where innovation has a key role in driving growth.

Defense is a key sector with high growth potential. This leadership role will address this and focus on building a holistic and ambitious programme that harnesses breakthrough ideas, identifies the highest potential businesses and accelerates these with the ambition of creating industry leaders.

Defense innovation is an emerging area for IUK, making this an exciting opportunity for a leader to develop and build a programme. There are opportunities to harness existing capabilities, including dual use technology and co-create pipelines across UKRI.

As this is a new role, the role holder will get the opportunity to build a programme and team. In the first instance, the number of direct reports is anticipated to be modest. Investment of resources will be made based on programme strength and potential. Success in the role demands authority and leadership across the wider ecosystem.

We particularly welcome female applicants as women are under-represented within Innovate UK in this type of role.

Job Purpose:

To lead the design and delivery of a Defense innovation programme that addresses stakeholder needs and goes beyond expectations. The ideal candidate will bring clarity of vision and strategic thinking, with the ability to take multiple diverse inputs and create a seamless programme that creates future opportunities in areas in which the UK has a competitive advantage.

Key Responsibilities and Accountabilities:

- Shape and deliver innovation programmes aligned with national defense strategies, including the Integrated Review and Defense Command Paper, to build a pipeline of high-potential businesses.
- Provide thought leadership on emerging technologies (e.g. AI, quantum, autonomy, cyber) and sectoral trends to inform programme design, policy development, and strategic investment.
- Collaborate with government departments, devolved administrations, and industry bodies to ensure programmes are responsive to evolving policy, market needs, and national security priorities.
- Influence and contribute to the development of defense innovation, procurement, and export control policy frameworks.
- Lead the full lifecycle of innovation programme delivery — from scoping and stakeholder engagement to launch, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Actively manage a portfolio of programmes and businesses to accelerate innovation, prioritising investments based on strategic alignment, feasibility, and impact.
- Ensure programmes identify and support high-potential businesses, leveraging the Innovate UK ecosystem to provide tailored support and scale-up pathways.
- Oversee governance, budget management, and risk mitigation across multiple concurrent programmes, ensuring delivery of milestones on time and in full.
- Build and maintain strategic relationships with government departments, defense organisations, industry leaders, academia, investors, and regional innovation clusters.
- Convene cross-sector partnerships to co-create solutions and foster collaboration across supply chains, disciplines, and innovation communities.
- Represent Innovate UK and UKRI at high-level forums, conferences, and advisory boards, acting as a visible and credible ambassador for defense innovation.
- Lead and inspire cross-functional teams, fostering a high-performance, inclusive, and innovative culture.
- Role model organisational values, champion diversity and inclusion, and promote wellbeing across teams and partners.

This is not an exhaustive list and you might be encouraged to undertake any other duties across the wider directorate, commensurate with the Band and level of responsibility of this post, for which the post holder has the key experience and/or training.

Person Specification:

Qualifications:

Essential

- Educated to degree level or equivalent in a relevant field such as engineering, science, technology, innovation management, defense studies or public policy

Desirable

- Technical degree or postgraduate qualification

Experience:

Essential –

- Demonstrable interest in the UK Defense sector and successful experience delivering programmes with impact in a relevant area.
- Shaping and delivering complex, multi-stakeholder programmes with measurable impact.
- Demonstrated ability to lead high-performing, cross-functional teams in a matrixed or complex organisational environment.
- Experience managing large-scale programme portfolios, including budget oversight, risk management, and performance monitoring
- Proven track record of working at a senior level across government, industry, or research organisations

Desirable –

- Familiarity with innovation funding mechanisms
- Sectoral - Deep understanding of the UK defense and security landscape, including relevant strategies (e.g. Integrated Review, Defense Command Paper), procurement processes, and innovation policy frameworks.
- Strong grasp of emerging and enabling technologies (e.g. AI, quantum, autonomy, cyber) and their potential applications in defense and national security.
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Skills:

- Ability to translate national policy priorities into actionable innovation programmes.
- Stakeholder management across government departments, industry, and academia.
- Working knowledge of public sector financial management, budgeting and procurement.
- Inspirational leadership with a commitment to inclusive leadership, talent development and organisational culture

Competencies:

All team members demonstrate compatibility with and capability against our Core Competencies such as:

Thinking and Problem Solving – Stakeholder management – Communication skills – Influencing – Self-awareness/self-management – Strategic awareness – Working with others– Project management

Travel Requirements:

Field-based: There will be a requirement to travel, mostly national, and there is some flexibility in this. Innovate UK staff make extensive use of telepresence tools for meetings to minimise unnecessary travel. In general, you will need to work in the Swindon office once a week and may have four to six nights away from home per month on average to attend conferences and events.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

Innovate UK is a diverse workforce of people. We believe that encouraging these differences and drawing the best from them will build a productive environment in which everyone feels valued, where talents are fully utilised and in which organisational goals are met. Underpinning this is a belief that it is a fundamental right for everyone to be treated equally, with fairness, respect and dignity. We will act directly and use our

influence to ensure that this right is promoted and upheld; we encourage applications from all those who meet the criteria set-out in our role profiles.

Equal Opportunities:

We are an equal opportunities employer, committed to employing any person who meets the criteria for our roles. When undertaking recruitment we may require applicants to undertake certain tests or assessments, some of which will be online and others may be in-person. If you have a disability, health condition or specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia then you may be entitled to support with undertaking this type of assessment exercise. Where you feel that reasonable adjustments are required to support you, we ask that you advise your recruitment point of contact in a timely fashion, providing further information. In confidence, Innovate UK will then review your application for adjustments and provide support as required.

UK Research and Innovation:

Innovate UK is partner organisation within UK Research and Innovation. If successful in securing the position, your employer will be UK Research and Innovation. More information can be found online <http://www.ukri.org/>.

Employee Benefits:

We offer a benefits package crafted to provide an excellent work/life balance. This includes 30 days' annual leave, 10.5 public and privilege days, flexible working hours, an exceptional defined benefit pension scheme, and access to a variety of support networks and discount schemes.

Flexible Working:

We understand the importance of work-life balance, and are happy to discuss the possibility of flexible working with applicants.

Pre-employment Screening:

To enable us to hire the very best people we will conduct a comprehensive pre-employment check on successful applicants as part of the recruitment process.

The role holder will be required to have the appropriate level of security screening/vetting required for the role. UKRI reserves the right to run or re-run security clearance as required during the course of employment.

UKRI supports research in areas that include animal health, agriculture and food security, and bioscience for health which includes research on animals, genetic modification and stem cell research. Whilst you may not have direct involvement in this type of research, you should consider how this aligns with your personal values or beliefs. To enable us to hire the very best people we will conduct a full and comprehensive pre-employment check as a crucial part of the recruitment process on all individuals that are offered a position with UKRI. This will include a security check and an extreme organisations affiliation check.