UK Research and Innovation

███████████████████████

15 September 2023

Dear ████████,

Freedom of Information request: FOI2023/00625

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 17 August in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I am writing to you under the provisions of The Freedom of Information Act 2000, which enables public access to information held by public authorities. I am kindly requesting information regarding funding applications made by the University of Strathclyde and NMIS (National Manufacturing Institute Scotland) in relation to roles aimed at supporting SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) within Scotland and the UK.

Specifically, I am seeking information about any funding or grants that have been applied for in the past three years, with a focus on roles such as SME Advisors or similar positions that are dedicated to the development, promotion, education, and assistance of SMEs in the region. It would be very helpful if you could provide details about whether these funding applications were accepted, rejected, or funded.

Any relevant funding applications that either of these organisations have been involved with (including as a project partner), funding applications where either of these organisations were the lead applicant, and applications that have involved both of these organisations.

Our response:

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) hold some information relevant to your request. Please see the information below and attached.

There is no tag in our systems to enable us to easily identify projects that have a focus on supporting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Therefore, in order to do this, it would be necessary to manually review each project application individually to assess whether there is a focus on roles such as SME Advisors, or similar positions, that are dedicated to the development, promotion, education and assistance of SMEs.

With regard to successful applications, we estimate that the cost of complying with your request would exceed the appropriate statutory limit as specified within Section 12 of the FOIA which for UKRI is set at £450. This represents the estimated cost of 18 hours of staff resource on locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

To explain further, we have identified a total of 246 funded projects in the last three years that involved the University of Strathclyde and/or the National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS). At an estimated average of 10 minutes per project application, it would take in excess of 40 hours to determine which of these are in scope of your request.

Consequently, UKRI is not obliged under Section 12 of the FOIA to process this section of your request further.

However, under Section 16 of the FOIA, our duty to advise and assist, we can direct you to the publicly available information for 217 of these projects, so that you may review the available information and determine for yourself whether they may be relevant to your area of interest.

Innovate UK have funded 110 projects involving these organisations in the past three years. Details of these projects can be found in the [Innovate UK Transparency Data](link)[1]. By filtering "Participant Name" (column K), and "Project Start Date" (column N) of the spreadsheet you will be able to identify relevant projects and review the "Public Description" (column H).

We have also identified 107 grants provided by UKRI and the various Research Councils, details of which are available on [UKRI's Gateway to Research](link)[2]. To aid in reviewing these projects, please find attached spreadsheet *"FOI2023_00625 Project Data"*, which contains the grant reference, research category, funding council and organisation name for each. The grant reference can be entered into the Gateway to Research search bar to review the available information on each.

Data on UKRI's Gateway to Research is refreshed quarterly, starting in October 2023 and can also be searched by project title, key terms and organisation name to identify information that may be of interest.

I can neither confirm nor deny whether UK Research and Innovate (UKRI) holds information related to unsuccessful applications.

Section 41(1) provides that information is exempt from disclosure if such disclosure would constitute an actionable breach of confidence. Section 41(2) provides an exclusion from the duty placed on a public authority such as UKRI to confirm or deny the existence of the information if the act of confirming or denying would itself result in an actionable breach of confidence. We believe that is the case in regard to your request.

To explain further, UKRI guidance states that if applications are successful that their information will be published. It is therefore implied that all organisations can confidently apply to UKRI and information relating to their application will be kept confidential unless they are successful.

To confirm that an application has been received, but not funded, would be an actionable breach of this confidence. To confirm that an application has not been received would make it possible to determine if an unsuccessful application is submitted in the future. As such, we can neither confirm nor deny whether the University of Strathclyde or NMIS have submitted funding applications that were unsuccessful.

The terms of the exemption in the FOIA mean that UKRI do not have to consider whether or not it would be in the public interest for us to reveal whether or not the information is held.

The fact section 41 of the FOIA has been cited should not be taken as an indication that the information you requested is or is not held by UKRI.

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek an internal review of the decision, please contact within the next 40 working days:

Head of Information Governance
Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: www.ico.org.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints policy: https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/

---

[1] https://www.ukri.org/publications/innovate-uk-funded-projects-since-2004/
[2] https://gtr.ukri.org/

Yours sincerely,

█████████
Information Governance
Information Rights Team
UK Research and Innovation
foi@ukri.org | dataprotection@ukri.org