



[REDACTED]

1 July 2024

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2024/00506

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 6 June in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I understand that recent awards have been for the excellent 'Innovation and Knowledge Centres' - IKC's.- for these most recent IKC awards or renewals, please could I have in electronic form, copies of the following :-

- 1 The submissions from academic institutions that applied to run an IKC (whether successful or unsuccessful) and;
2. The contractual terms of the awards under which successful IKC's have been granted public funding.

Our response

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

We can confirm that there were two successful applications, [CORNERSTONE](#)¹ and [REWIRE](#)², for the recent [Innovation and Knowledge Centre awards](#)³,

In relation to part 1 of your request for submissions from academic institutions that applied to run an IKC, we are providing a copy of the grant application for both these successful projects. Please find these documents attached with this response. Some information in the documents provided has been withheld under the following exemptions which are explained below.

- Section 40(2) personal data
- Section 41 Information provided in confidence
- Section 43(2) Commercial Prejudice

The submissions from unsuccessful applications requested in part 1 and the contractual terms of the awards in part 2 have been withheld in full under the following exemptions. [Standard terms and conditions of grants](#)⁴ are available publicly.

Section 40(2) personal data

Names and contact details that are not already in the public domain have been withheld under section 40(2) personal data of the FOIA. Section 40(2) exempts personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant, and if disclosure of that information would, amongst other things, contravene one of the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and

¹ <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=EP%2FZ531066%2F1>

² <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=EP%2FZ531091%2F1#/tabOverview>

³ <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/semiconductor-technology-for-ict-innovation-and-knowledge-centre/>

⁴ <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/UKRI-020424-FECGrantTermsConditionsApril2024.pdf>

section 34(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018. In this case, we believe disclosure would contravene the first data protection principle, which provides that processing of personal data is lawful and fair.

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and UKRI is not obliged to consider whether the public interest favours disclosing the information.

Section 41 information provided in confidence

As organisations submit grant applications in confidence we consider that submissions from unsuccessful applicants fall under the exemption at section 41 information provided in confidence. This exemption also applies to some information in the grant applications of successful applicants.

As organisations submit grant applications in confidence, we consider the redacted information in the successful applications is exempt under Section 41 of the FOIA. To explain further, applicants submit their grant applications in confidence with the understanding that details of their application will remain confidential and only a brief overview will be published. Applicants have an expectation that details of the application will remain confidential to protect research and development plans, intellectual property, and other commercially sensitive or market information provided in the proposal. This detailed information is necessary in proposals to enable assessments to be conducted thoroughly. This information is more than trivial and not otherwise accessible, as it refers to a method and technology that are not publicly available and not easily accessible. Confidential information from submitted applications relates to the financial forecasts of project partners and the exploitation plan. If released, we believe it would result in an actionable breach of confidence. As this exemption is absolute there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

Section 43(2) commercial prejudice

We also consider that the redacted information within the grant applications provided falls under the exemption at Section 43(2) of the FOIA. Section 43(2) also applies to the unsuccessful applications from part 1 and the information requested at part 2 of your request for contractual terms of the awards, which are contained in the grant offer letters, and are being withheld in full. This exemption is used where disclosure would likely result in a person's (an individual, a company, the public authority itself, or any other legal entities) commercial interests being prejudiced. This is a qualified exemption, meaning that a test was carried out to determine whether the public interest outweighs the requirement for commercial confidentiality.

Public interest in favour of disclosure

- There is a general public interest in the disclosure of this information to ensure transparency and openness of a public organisation.
- There is also a public interest in transparency in order to ensure the accountability of public organisations and how they spend public funding.

Public interest in favour of withholding the information

- Applicants apply for funding knowing that if they achieve success only a brief overview of their successful application will be publicly available, everything else will remain confidential, including their original application.
- As such disclosing the information requested is likely to reduce the applicant's commercial advantage and thereby harm its commercial interests in a highly competitive field. We believe disclosing this information via FOI confers a disadvantage to applicants which would likely materially disadvantage and harm their interests, particularly in their ability to compete for grants.
- IKCs are commercialisation centres and the grant applications contain business models on the operation of the IKC, as well as costings and planned investments which constitute commercially sensitive information and disclosure would disadvantage how the project operates.
- Disclosure of the grant applications in conjunction with what is already in the public domain would allow inference of internal processes and ways of working that could be replicated to the commercial detriment of these projects and impede their position in the commercial sector as an attractive partner or supplier.

- A core part of the activity in relation to this grant is working with partners, offering collaborative services and use of facilities. This activity is based on reaching terms and contractual positions that rely upon the security of detailed information in respect of the project's work, therefore any disclosure is likely to impede the project's negotiating position in this area.
- Releasing this information is likely to damage the possibility of ongoing relationships between UKRI and other organisations. Relationships may become untenable if third parties cannot be certain that their grant applications will remain confidential when held by UKRI.
- Breaching the commercial interest may also adversely affect future negotiation opportunities for UKRI. UKRI may be seen as a 'confidentiality' risk if it routinely releases information relating to grant applications into the public domain, particularly where this is third party information.

Taking the above arguments into consideration, we reached the decision that the need for commercial confidentiality outweighs the public interest in disclosure; therefore, the information is exempt from disclosure.

As part of our duty to provide advice and assistance more information on the projects is available on the following websites:

[CORNERSTONE](#)⁵ and [GoW](#)⁶
[REWIRE](#)⁷ and [GoW](#)⁸

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](#)⁹.

Yours sincerely,


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

⁵ <https://www.cornerstone.sotonfab.co.uk/>

⁶ <https://gow.epsrc.ukri.org/NGBOViewGrant.aspx?GrantRef=EP/Z531066/1>

⁷ <https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/en/projects/innovation-and-knowledge-centre-transforming-net-zero-with-ultraw>

⁸ <https://gow.epsrc.ukri.org/NGBOViewGrant.aspx?GrantRef=EP/Z531091/1>

⁹ <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/contact-us/make-a-complaint/#skipnav-target>