



29 April 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

**Freedom of Information request: FOI2024/00300**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 4 April in which you requested the following:

**Your request:**

*All publicly disclosable information regarding 1) the application to UKRI for and 2) internal approval of the Creative industries Policy and Evidence Center. I am particularly interested in securing the following:*

- *The actual funding application and accompanying budget which led to the creation of the Creative Industries Center centre via the UKRI strategic fund and other documentation relating to this application.*
- *Information regarding the selection and appointment of the inaugural director of the Centre,*
- *Information and documentation associated with the stakeholder consultation process which took place prior to the submission of an application for the creation of the Creative Industries Center.*
- *Information and documentation associated with the selection of universities which came to be affiliated with the new Creative Industries Center. I am particularly interested here in knowing how affiliates were selected and whether there was a competitive process.*

*I believe this information is in the public interest and will be used for research purposes.*

**Our response**

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

The Creative Industries Clusters Programme (CICP) led by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and funded through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) aimed to provide significant investment to support economic growth for the creative industries in the UK.

The programme delivered 9 Clusters and created a national Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (CI PEC).

The funded period for the CI PEC 1 was October 2018-July 2023.

- *The actual funding application and accompanying budget which led to the creation of the Creative Industries Center centre via the UKRI strategic fund and other documentation relating to this application.*

Information related to the PEC Assessment Panel Guidance is provided as 'FOI2024/00300 PEC Assessment Panel Guidance\_PEC 1' for CI PEC 1.

In relation to the panel outcome documentation or internal approval, we consider this information is exempt under section 41, information provided in confidence, of the FOIA. To explain further, UKRI undertakes to keep confidential all information in relation to a grant proposal, including panel outcome or approval information. In

relation to the UKRI grants process, applications are submitted to UKRI in confidence with the understanding that the evaluation and assessment process will be carried out with the same degree of confidence. Under these circumstances review panels and applicants would expect the approval documentation and proposals to remain confidential. This information is more than trivial and not otherwise accessible, as it refers to the specific approval of a particular project and is information that is not publicly available and not easily accessible. We believe that, at present, the information has the necessary quality of confidence and was imparted under an obligation of confidence. As this exemption is absolute there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

Information related to the actual funding application and accompanying budget of C PEC 1 is being withheld under section 43(2), commercial prejudice, of the FOIA. This exemption is relevant 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. The exemption relates to any material where disclosure would give a commercial or competitive disadvantage. This is a qualified exemption, meaning that a public interest 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**

- There is a public interest in protecting commercially sensitive information such as funding applications and accompanying budget or financial breakdowns. This is confidential information and release would prejudice UKRI's capacity to successfully attract organisations to participate in any future ISCF-type processes.
- The information requested contains commercially sensitive information such as funding profiles and breakdown of costs, governance and delivery structure, technical and extensive descriptions of the project and the approach proposed, all of which were disclosed to UKRI in confidence.
- Releasing information provided in confidence to UKRI is likely to damage the possibility of ongoing relationships with other organisations. Relationships may become untenable if third parties cannot be certain that their commercial information will remain confidential when held by UKRI.
- We also considered the impact on UKRI if commercially sensitive information of organisations we engage and work closely with were disclosed. We believe it would damage the trust in UKRI and likely impact our ability to carry out our role and manage our current and future investments.

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.

Information on [CI PEC 1](#)<sup>1</sup> is publicly available on Gateway to Research and includes a summary of the project with its planned impact. This project was awarded £6,334,328 at 80% fEC for a duration of 57 months. Information on [CI PEC 2](#)<sup>2</sup> is also publicly available with the project starting in June 2023 to May 2028 with a funded value of £9,654,330.

- *Information regarding the selection and appointment of the inaugural director of the Centre,*

The panel met in February 2018 to assess the applications for CI PEC 1, where only one application was received. At the statement of intent stage it was clear that there would only be a single credible bid able to convincingly answer criteria of the call. The bid was made up of a strong consortium of HEIs, independent research organisations and sector bodies. Following peer review and an interview, the panel agreed that the proposal was academically robust and had very persuasively set out how they would fully answer all of the criteria for the Policy and Evidence Centre. The panel therefore recommended the bid for investment.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FS001298%2F1>

<sup>2</sup> <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FY000544%2F1>

The inaugural Director of CI PEC 1 was the Principal Investigator and was part of the host organisation (Nesta).

The Panel agreed that this was a strong application which met the objectives of the PEC, as set out within the call documentation provided to you as '*FOI2024/00300 PEC 1.0 Call Specification – Final (published)*'. The Panel particularly noted that the application set out a convincing case for the impact that the Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) would have for industry, policymakers and researchers. The Panel also noted strengths of the application in terms of the diverse expertise in the academic team assembled through the consortia; the commitment of the partner organisations involved in the application; and the scope and ambition of the research programme set out in the Workstreams.

The Panel recommended that the application should be funded, subject to some conditions being put in place. Final approval was given in July 2018.

- *Information and documentation associated with the stakeholder consultation process which took place prior to the submission of an application for the creation of the Creative Industries Center.*

A series of workshops took place for the wider clusters programme to inform applicants of the expectations of this Programme, broker new connections to enhance existing partnerships and offered information on best practice with regard to project design and management to support an initiative of this kind. A total of 1,838 tickets were booked for the events and 1,109 delegates attended. Just under half of the delegates registered with a non ac.uk email address.

A series of three webinars were held:

- 1st webinar: Strategic overview, aims and objectives  
Registered: 163 & Viewers: 129.
- 2nd webinar: Match Funding, Budget & Governance, Partnership Agreements  
Registered: 119 & Viewers: 84.
- 3rd webinar: Collaboration Agreements, unanswered questions and application form  
Registered: 92 & Viewers: 63.

As part of our duty to provide advice and assistance you may find the following weblinks of recordings of the above webinars of interest:

[London 2nd Briefing - AHRC Creative Industries Clusters Programme \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3k-1SOflxU&t=3090s)<sup>3</sup>

[Creative Clusters Bidders' Surgery Webinar 10 Nov No Q&A \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2oeLY6HopU)<sup>4</sup>

[Bristol Briefing - AHRC Creative Industries Clusters Programme \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztostNUH25M&t=113s)<sup>5</sup>

[Newcastle Briefing - AHRC Creative Industries Clusters Programme \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAYTOuoGkiQ&t=1660s)<sup>6</sup>

- *Information and documentation associated with the selection of universities which came to be affiliated with the new Creative Industries Center. I am particularly interested here in knowing how affiliates were selected and whether there was a competitive process.*

In relation to the new CI PEC 2, an [open call process](#)<sup>7</sup> was run to appoint a new host organisation for the existing PEC Director and core team. A peer review panel met on 19th October 2022 and a peer review panel assessed 9 applications. Newcastle University received the highest overall grade and was appointed host for PEC phase 2, the programme is due to run for a further 5 years.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3k-1SOflxU&t=3090s>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2oeLY6HopU>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztostNUH25M&t=113s>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QAYTOuoGkiQ&t=1660s>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/host-the-creative-industries-policy-and-evidence-centre-stage-one/>

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](mailto: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](http://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/>

Yours sincerely,

  
Information Governance  
Information Rights Team  
UK Research and Innovation  
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