



[REDACTED]

15 April 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

**Freedom of Information request: FOI2021/00068**

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

**Your request:**

*Could I start by making a FOI request for all the information that is available for project 971524 please?*

**Clarification:**

On 17 February 2021 we asked for the following clarification:

*“Could you please confirm that you are referring to the project 971524 published on gateway to research. Please could you also explain what you mean by ‘all the information’. Please define what information in particular you are interested in.”*

You clarified on 17 February 2021 as follows:

*The project reference is included on your “20210101\_Innovate\_UK\_Funded\_Projects.xlsx” spreadsheet. The company is Activirosomes Ltd. It is the 2017/18 project I am interested in.*

*There is no information available in terms of results and conclusions on your <https://gtr.ukri.org/> gateway and, having looked at the company’s financial reporting there appears to be no indication that the grant went through the company’s books. So I am principally interested in how and where the grant money was spent and what was achieved by the project.*

**Our response**

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

We wrote to you on 19 March 2021 confirming that we held information in scope of your request but believed that some of the information may be exempt under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and were considering the application of section 38, health and safety. We have now completed our assessment and can confirm that the information we hold does not fall under the exemption specified.

The total grant amount was £448,950. In relation to *‘how and where the grant money was spent’*, UKRI holds a breakdown of the costs of the project which we consider falls under under the exemption at section 41(1) of the FOIA information provided in confidence. As organisations submit research applications in confidence, we consider their applications including the breakdown of costs are exempt under Section 41 of the FOIA.

To explain further, applicants submit their proposals in confidence with the understanding that details of their application, including their costs will remain confidential. Information on costs is provided in confidence and the project

agreements state that confidential information about the project will not be released by UKRI. 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.

We are also withholding the information on the breakdown of costs under section 43(2) commercial prejudice. Section 43(2) is a qualified exemption, and we are required to carry out the public interest test in favour of or against releasing the information.

### **Public interest in favour of disclosure**

- There is a public interest in transparency and accountability of public sector institutions and the way in which they spend public money.
- It would be in the public interest to review the breakdown of costs thus enabling the public to independently assess the impact of the funding provided.

### **Public interest in favour of withholding the information**

- There is a public interest in protecting commercially sensitive information including business plans such as cost information, and technical project plans.
- As a large number of the specific technologies being developed in projects funded by UKRI are highly commercially sensitive, the cost and schedule information could be taken advantage of by competitors in planning competing strategies for future business opportunities.
- The cost and schedule information would also contain information on 3rd parties that the companies have engaged to support the project, therefore releasing this information would be a breach of confidential information between all parties involved.
- We have concluded that given the grant breakdown and cost schedule are subject to non-disclosure, releasing the information would be likely to weaken the position of the participants of the project in the competitive research environment as participants would usually continue working on projects or on the research even after the grant has come to an end, thus prejudicing the ongoing operations of the company.
- Release would therefore undermine the competitiveness of the company and hinder their commercial advantage.
- UKRI may also be seen as a 'confidentiality' risk if it routinely releases information provided in confidence into the public domain, particularly where this is third party information.

Having considered the balance of the public interest in releasing and withholding the information we have concluded that the public interest in favour of maintaining the exemption at section 43(2) commercial prejudice outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

With regard to the part of your question on '*what was achieved by the project*', achievements of the project include:

1. The Zika vaccine candidate has the potential to protect against from Zika virus infections.
2. Both Chikungunya vaccine candidates showed the potential to protect against infection. More experiments are planned to confirm these findings.
3. We demonstrated that the Active Virosome technology could be modified quickly in response to a need arising, such as a new outbreak of an infection needing urgent response.
4. We demonstrated that the technology can be used to produce multivalent Active Virosomes; optimisation is needed to ensure all antigens cause a strong immune response.

As part of our duty to advise and assist under the FOIA, you may find the following publicly available information of interest:

The project objectives on [Gateway to Research](#)<sup>1</sup>.

Details of the competition on [gov.uk](#)<sup>2</sup>.

Information on [Activirosomes](#)<sup>3</sup> award.

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:

Head of Information Governance

Email: [foi@ukri.org](mailto:foi@ukri.org) or [infogovernance@ukri.org](mailto:infogovernance@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: <http://www.ico.gov.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  
[foi@ukri.org](mailto:foi@ukri.org) | [dataprotection@ukri.org](mailto:dataprotection@ukri.org)

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=971524>

<sup>2</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/598303/Vaccines\\_for\\_Global\\_Development\\_Preclinical\\_Compensation\\_Results.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/598303/Vaccines_for_Global_Development_Preclinical_Compensation_Results.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.norwichresearchpark.com/news/activirosomes-limited-awarded-ps044m-grant-innovate-uk-and-department-health>