



[REDACTED]

29 April 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

**Freedom of Information request: FOI2021/00193**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 7 April in which you requested the following:

**Your request:**

*Relating to the [Fast Start Competition](#)<sup>1</sup> and the UK Innovate to increase the grant available to [£40million](#)<sup>2</sup>.*

*Thank you for your response to the information request numbered FOI2020/00378. In your response you noted that provision of project data had been extended until March 2021. Recognising the extension to the Fast Start Competition and the recently reported transparency data, please can Innovate UK provide details of the extent to which each of the potential 800 plus successful recipients have met the programme requirements.*

*All projects remain Live for an innovation programme with a completion date of end 2020. Is this correct?*

*Please can Innovate UK also provide the base data on projects, grant size allocated and successful delivery of outcomes to be available for the public.*

**Our response:**

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

***Please can Innovate UK provide details of the extent to which each of the potential 800 plus successful recipients have met the programme requirements.***

We have determined that the information you have requested falls under Section 41 of the FOIA, information provided in confidence. To explain further, for Innovate UK (IUK) to determine if projects have met the programme requirements and achieved the successful delivery of outcomes of their applications, an analysis of a mixture of exploitation plans, monitoring reports and projection completion forms is undertaken. Companies apply to IUK in confidence and with the expectation that their project information, including the plans and reports mentioned above, will be kept in confidence. If the information was released, we believe it would result in an actionable breach of confidentiality.

As this exemption is absolute there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

We also believe the information you have requested falls under the scope of Section 43(2) of the FOIA. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/20-million-for-ambitious-technologies-to-build-uk-resilience-following-coronavirus-outbreak>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/40m-boost-for-cutting-edge-start-ups>

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.
- It would be in the public interest to view information on which projects have met the programme requirements as public monies are used to fund these activities. As this is the case it is important that the programme has a positive impact and is beneficial to all parties involved. Seeing which companies have met the programme requirements enables the public to independently assess the impact of the competition and its funding.

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

- The plans and reports used to determine the information requested contain commercially sensitive information such as business and project plans, cost and schedule information and extensive descriptions of the project and its processes which are disclosed to UKRI in confidence. The agreement we have with participants in our programmes is that we will not release any confidential information without their permission. Releasing details of the extent to which each of the project participants have met their programme requirements could be taken advantage of by competitors in planning competing strategies for further business opportunities. Applicants complete the application form knowing that if they are successful only a brief overview of their successful bid will be publicly available, everything else will remain confidential.
- IUK's competition process is highly competitive and composing a successful bid requires expertise and skill in providing quality information as well as understanding the most advantageous content to present in order to succeed. The applicant must also have the ability to support and justify the strength of their application. The applicant must do this whilst adhering within the strictly enforced scope and eligibility requirements of a particular competition. This knowledge is proprietary to the applicant. In addition, there are companies and consultancy groups that specialise in selling a grant writing service based on their grant writing expertise and knowledge. This exemplifies the commercial advantage and value that such expertise and skills deliver. As such disclosing the information requested is likely to reduce applicants' commercial advantage and thereby harm its commercial interests in a highly competitive field. We believe disclosing this information confers an advantage to competitors which would likely materially disadvantage and harm the interests of the applicants, particularly in their ability to compete for grants.
- We follow the government guidance on managing public [money](#)<sup>3</sup>. Standards expected of all public services include integrity, reliability, spending money in the public interest and achieving value for money. Our current thorough process ensures that only the best projects receive public monies. Releasing this information could jeopardize the fair and transparent competition process and undermine our function to fund the best projects. In turn, undermining this process would go against our responsibilities to manage our use of public funds.
- We also considered the impact on UKRI if commercially sensitive information of companies we and 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.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/742188/Managing\\_Public\\_Money\\_MPM\\_2018.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/742188/Managing_Public_Money_MPM_2018.pdf)

***All projects remain Live for an innovation programme with a completion date of end 2020. Is this correct?***

This is not correct. As we advised in our response to request FOI2020/00378, the majority of the projects funded in the competition "Business-led innovation in response to global disruption (de minimis)", which is the competition being referenced in your first link, had a 3 month time extension and extra grant to a maximum of £25K to further the impact of the innovation being developed, however not all projects applied for an extension. Those that did were able to finish by 31 March 2021.

***Please can Innovate UK also provide the base data on projects, grant size allocated and successful delivery of outcomes to be available for the public.***

Under Section 21 (Information already reasonably accessible) of the FOIA, information on the base data on each project and grant size allocated is already available in the public domain:

- [Innovate Transparency Data](#)<sup>4</sup>
- [UKRI Gateway to Research](#)<sup>5</sup>

Section 21 is an absolute exemption which means that there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

As previously explained, we have determined that details of each project's successful delivery of outcomes falls under Section 41 and Section 43(2) of the FOIA.

Innovate UK do produce an impact and evaluation report that gives an overview of how many projects have successfully delivered against their intended outcomes once all projects have completed and final project completion reports have been submitted. When considering the deadlines for submission of final reports and the need for the information to be assessed and analysed, it is anticipated that this impact and evaluation report will not be completed until the end of the year.

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>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/innovate-uk-funded-projects>

<sup>5</sup> <https://gtr.ukri.org/>