



[REDACTED]

6 August 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

**Freedom of Information request: FOI2021/00319**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 8 July in which you requested the following:

**Your request:**

*I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information in connection with Innovate UK's Smart Grants programme:*

- The Smart Grant "Reviewer's Guidance" document
- "Assessment Criteria" issued to reviewers for the review of Smart Grant applications
- Reviewer marking schedules and guidance

*Please provide all information connected with the above from both inside and outside the IFS platform.*

**Our response:**

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

The assessor marking scheme, or assessment criteria, has previously been provided in response to a Freedom of information request and therefore falls under section 21, information already reasonably accessible, of the FOIA. The information you have requested is already available in the public domain on [whatdotheyknow.com](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com)<sup>1</sup>.

Further guidance notes applicable to the Innovate UK Smart Grants competitions have been withheld under 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.

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 the guidance notes as public monies are used to fund this activity. As this is the case it is important that the guidance has a positive impact and is beneficial to all parties involved. Seeing copies of the guidance enables the public to independently assess that Innovate UK is consistent and compliant with their own assessor guidance and criteria.

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/innovateuk\\_assessor\\_mark\\_scheme#outgoing-854904](https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/innovateuk_assessor_mark_scheme#outgoing-854904)

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

- As noted above, the assessor marking scheme has previously been released. This is because it always relates directly to the guidance provided to applicants, therefore we would expect that if an applicant addresses the question as detailed in the guidance then they would be addressing the assessment marking scheme. Although the assessor marking scheme has previously been released, the further assessor guidance is not publicly available or routinely provided to all applicants. Releasing this information could therefore give an unfair advantage to any future applicants with access to these documents. To explain further, the document will be utilised for future competitions and we therefore believe that releasing the document would negatively affect the commercial interests of all applicants who do not have access to this information, and give those applicants with access an unfair advantage in future competitions. In our view, we do not consider the release of such information would enable fair competition between the organisations that apply.
- As the additional guidance is intended to be used in future competitions, the unfair advantage of disclosure in this way would in turn would affect the integrity of Innovate UK competitions. This would impact on the commercial interests of Innovate UK and our reliance on running a fair and transparent competition process.
- If the process is undermined it is likely to harm the trust in the Innovate UK application process. This would adversely affect the application processes for future calls and could damage the reputation and commercial interests of Innovate UK and future investments.
- We follow the government guidance on [managing public money](#)<sup>2</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.

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.

Innovate UK do not issue marking schedules to assessors, so this information is not held. To explain further, assessors are given a deadline by which to complete the assessments allocated to them. Since assessors typically have other roles and are not employed by IUK they often complete assessments outside of their normal working hours and are therefore left to manage their own time in completing their assigned assessments.

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/>

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<sup>2</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/994901/MPM\\_Spring\\_21\\_without\\_annexes\\_180621.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/994901/MPM_Spring_21_without_annexes_180621.pdf)

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)