

[REDACTED]

2 October 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

**Freedom of Information request: FOI2023/00583**

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 1 August in which you requested the following:

**Your request:**

*Accordingly, pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, and the common law right of access to information, I hereby request that Innovate UK immediately disclose, fully and without redaction, any and all relevant documents provided to assessors regarding standards expected in conducting fair, impartial, professional and socially responsible assessments.*

*Clarification received: 14 August 2023*

*To clarify, I am specifically interested in the following materials:*

*- Briefing documents, guidance, codes of conduct, and training materials provided to assessors of the "Feasibility Studies for Artificial Intelligence Solutions" competition under which I applied in 2022*

*- General guidance, policies, and training materials provided to all Innovate UK assessors regarding expected standards of conduct, impartiality, and professionalism when reviewing applications.*

*I believe these materials will provide useful context on the frameworks governing assessor conduct.*

*I hope to work together to increase transparency around assessor training and standards. Please advise if you require any other clarification.*

**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 are providing the following documents related to assessor briefings, assessor training and guidance:

- Bridge AI Round 1 Assessor Briefing v4
- Assessor training – your role as an assessor v2
- Assessor training – providing applicant feedback v2
- 3\_EDI Assessment
- EDI Details
- EDI Case 1

Some information has been redacted and some withheld in the attached documents. This has been applied where the information contains:

- Personal data, such as names and email addresses,

- Screenshots and extracts from individual applications, which contain confidential and commercially sensitive information, such as finance information, feedback and scoring data.
- Information that is not in scope of your request such as housekeeping details

#### Section 40(2) personal data

Information such as names of individuals, job titles and email addresses has been withheld under section 40(2) personal data of the FOI Act. Disclosing this information would contravene the first Data Protection Principle as defined under Section 86 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Article 5 of the UK General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR).

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

#### Section 41(1) information provided in confidence

The screenshots and extracts contain information from actual applications, which we consider as exempt under Section 41 of the FOIA, information provided in confidence. For example, the extracts contain financial information, feedback examples and scores. To explain further, applicants submit their grant applications in confidence, with the understanding that details of their application will remain confidential to protect research and development plans, intellectual property, and other commercially sensitive or market information provided in the proposal. If this information was released, we believe it would result in an actionable breach of confidentiality.

Section 41 is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

One document containing the scoring matrix has been withheld as we have determined that this information is exempt from disclosure under Section 22(1) of the FOIA as it is intended for future publication. Section 22 is a qualified exemption meaning that it is subject to the public interest test.

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

- There is a general public interest in favour of the disclosure of this information to ensure transparency and openness of Innovate UK's assessment process.
- 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**

- Innovate UK has scheduled a staggered release of scoring matrices in the next few months to monitor the impacts of publication on its programmes. Disrupting this staggered release would place undue burden on Innovate UK as they would not be able to measure impacts of publication and respond to any negative impacts appropriately.
- UKRI understand that being transparent in regard to grant funding is in the public interest. However, the information requested is being reviewed for future release and we are of the view that releasing the information as it currently stands would be inaccurate, and misleading and thus not in the public interest.
- We consider that premature release would give a misleading impression of the assessment process and would put undue pressure on Innovate UK to publish outside of its scheduled timeframes which would lead to a disproportionate burden on the Institution. This would not be in the public interest.
- Premature release would also give an unfair advantage to applicants of future and current open rounds. To ensure future and current applicants have equal access to information, it is reasonable to maintain the scheduled timeframes for publication, as scoring matrices will be made available to future applicants when rounds open on the Innovation Funding Service.

The balance of the public interest therefore lies in withholding this information, as the public interest does not justify release of this information outside of the scheduled timeframes.

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  
[foi@ukri.org](mailto:foi@ukri.org) | [dataprotection@ukri.org](mailto:dataprotection@ukri.org)