

Role Title:

Managing Director, Innovate UK

Reporting Line & Salary:

Reports directly to the Executive Chair, Innovate UK
Band Y

Location:

London or Swindon (Polaris House) / hybrid working, with regular travel to London and stakeholder events

Job Purpose:

As the most senior executive role under the Executive Chair, the Managing Director plays a pivotal role in shaping and delivering the UK's national innovation agenda.

This role partners with the Executive Chair to lead Innovate UK's strategic direction and funding portfolio, with full accountability for execution and performance across innovation programmes, strategic investments, and organisational leadership.

The Managing Director is a high-profile representative of Innovate UK, engaging directly with government ministers, business leaders, and national stakeholders to drive UKRI's innovation mission and the UK's global competitiveness.

Key Responsibilities:**Strategic Leadership & Accountability**

- Lead the business and organisation transformation to a cross-team matrix structure that will deliver the new Innovate UK strategy, effective programme primacy and business-first prioritisation
- Partner with the Executive Chair to co-lead the development and execution of Innovate UK's strategic vision in alignment with UKRI and national industrial strategy.
- Take direct accountability for the successful delivery of Innovate UK's multi-billion-pound innovation portfolio across sectors including AI, clean energy, life sciences, advanced manufacturing, creative industries and defence.
- Lead Innovate UK's operational and programme performance frameworks, ensuring targets are met across investment outcomes, economic impact, and policy objectives.

People & Organisational Leadership

- Provide executive leadership to the entire Innovate UK organisation, with overarching responsibility for organisational effectiveness. This includes accountability for an organisational wide core budget of £1bn and oversight of an additional £800m in externally managed programmes, ensuring alignment of resources, people, and operations to strategic priorities.
- Directly manage a senior executive team, including Directors and programme leads, overseeing a large and multidisciplinary workforce of 1,700 people across the Innovate UK group of companies.

- Champion a high-performance culture, inclusive leadership practices, and cross-functional collaboration.
- Drive organisation-wide capability development, succession planning, and talent strategy in coordination with UKRI corporate services.

External Influence & Policy Engagement:

- Serve as Innovate UK's lead representative to ministers, special advisers, select committees, and cross-departmental groups—shaping the innovation policy landscape.
- Act as a public ambassador for UKRI's innovation mission, leading strategic engagement with FTSE CEOs, investors, academia, and mission-driven partners.
- Influence the positioning of Innovate UK in UK-wide and global innovation ecosystems.
- Advocate for UK national policy and regulatory changes as a consequence of programme results and findings to accelerate UK high potential businesses.

Decision-Making & Governance:

- Lead strategic decision-making in politically complex environments, balancing economic, social, and scientific priorities.
- Oversee governance, risk management, and assurance processes for innovation programmes and investment decisions.
- Maintain full accountability for regulatory compliance, financial stewardship, and public value delivery.

Person Specification

Essential Experience:

- Proven track record of senior executive leadership within government innovation agencies, major research funders, or high-profile industrial R&D functions.
- Demonstrable authority and credibility in briefing ministers, advising on innovation policy, and engaging Parliament.
- Deep experience leading complex, cross-sector innovation initiatives with national-level impact and significant public investment.
- Strategic leadership of multi-disciplinary senior teams and experience embedding a culture of delivery and excellence.

Desirable Experience:

- Sector expertise in one or more frontier technologies: AI, engineering biology, quantum, advanced connectivity, cybersecurity, or semiconductors.
- Experience navigating UKRI or similar governance frameworks and participating in cross-organisational initiatives.

Professional Competence:

- Recognised as a national leader in innovation funding, public-private R&D partnerships, and industrial strategy implementation.
- Postgraduate qualifications or equivalent senior executive leadership training desirable.

Behaviours & Capabilities:

Aligned with the UK Civil Service Success Profiles for Senior Civil Service (SCS) Directors, with emphasis on:

- **Strategic Leadership:** Driving strategic vision and execution with national economic impact.
- **Communicating & Influencing:** Representing Innovate UK at the highest levels of government and industry.
- **Seeing the Big Picture:** Connecting macroeconomic, scientific, and sectoral dynamics to long-term innovation outcomes.
- **Decision-Making:** Making bold, accountable decisions in complex policy, funding, and economic landscapes.
- **Working Together:** Driving alignment across central government, devolved administrations, business, and academia.
- **Delivering at Pace:** Ensuring exceptional delivery of funding, innovation programmes, and operational excellence.

Why This Role Matters:

As Managing Director, you will be at the forefront of delivering the UK's innovation strategy—translating policy into impact, aligning investment with national goals, and building an agile and high-performing Innovate UK. This role is instrumental in driving economic growth, positioning the UK as a global innovation leader, and enabling UKRI's mission to deliver social, technological, and industrial impact.