



[REDACTED]

4 July 2022

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2022/00201

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

Your request:

I am interested in understanding how the success rate of standard grant proposals are related to the size of the application. In particular, I would like to know, for the years since 2010 (or whatever is available) for all applications to the standard (responsive) grant scheme where the application was allocated to the EPSRC ICT panel (even if it was not considered at the panel):

Application value, average total reviewer score, funded (yes/no), ranked at panel rank (yes/no), submission date

Please count multi-institution proposals as 1, i.e. if a proposal has investigators in University of A and University of B, then this should count as a single proposal, not as 2 proposals.

Please let me know if it is possible to derive this information from the published data on the EPSRC website. If not, I would be very grateful if you could let me have this information.

I would like to have the requested information in electronic form (either as a spreadsheet or csv file).

Our response

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

The requested information on application value, rank and submission date is available in the attached document 'FOI2022/00201 EPSRC Panel data' for funded awards only. The information covers all EPSRC panels and you will need to filter under 'Meeting Name' for the relevant ICT panels.

We consider information on reviewer scores is exempt under Section 41 of the FOIA. To explain further, this is part of the confidential peer review process, and if we were to release this information, it would be possible to link the review score to successful awards (and thus to the individual grant holder) using the information available on EPSRC's grants on the web. Anonymising the data would not be possible given the other data fields (rank and grant size) that have been requested. 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 also consider that information on unfunded awards is exempt from disclosure under Section 41 of the FOIA, as it was information that was provided in confidence. To explain further, applications are submitted in confidence, with the expectation that the requested information, including application value, reviewer scores, and whether or not they were funded, will be kept in confidence. When an application is successful, they are aware that only certain parts of the application, such as public description and grant funding requested will be put in the public domain.

As such, we are unable to provide the requested information on unfunded awards which if released, we believe would result in an actionable breach of confidentiality. As this exemption is absolute there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

Information on unfunded awards is also exempt under Section 43 (2) of the FOIA, commercial interests. 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.

Public interest in favour of withholding the information

- There is a public interest in protecting commercially sensitive information including the application value of individual unfunded awards in UKRI's competitions process.
- This is confidential information and release would prejudice UKRI's capacity to successfully attract applicants to participate in any future competition processes.
- Releasing information provided in confidence to UKRI is likely to damage the possibility of ongoing relationships with other organisations. Relationships may become untenable if third parties cannot be certain that their commercial information will remain confidential when held by UKRI.
- Breaching the commercial interest may also adversely affect future negotiation opportunities for UKRI. UKRI may be seen as a 'confidentiality' risk if it routinely releases information relating to unfunded awards 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.

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 or 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: 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 | dataprotection@ukri.org