15 January 2024

Dear ██████████,

Freedom of Information request: FOI2023/00978

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 11 December in which you requested the following:

Your request:

Please provide information relating to direct award grants made by Innovate UK. By direct award grants, I mean grants of any size awarded to a recipient or consortium of recipients without a peer review process (e.g. funders panel).

1) the number of direct award grants offered in the last full five financial years
2) the value of direct award grants offered in the last full five financial years
3) split of 1) and 2) by the title and grade of the officials proposing the awards
4) split of 1) and 2) by technology area

Our response

I can confirm that UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) holds some information relevant to your request.

Information in relation to parts 1, 2 and 4 of your request is publicly available on Innovate UK's transparency data[1] webpage. Innovate UK publishes information on all funded projects and one of the primary filters allows searching by Direct award and competition types. The data can also be filtered by competition year in column I, technology area in column D, and by total cost in column P.

In the period requested Innovate UK has used various competition references (Column A) for direct awards in our data. We have attached an annex of the references we have determined were used to assist your keyword search. The majority of our direct awards go to our partner organisations such as Innovate UK Edge[2], Innovate UK KTN[3], and the Catapult Network, [4] so you may also find links to their websites useful. Our partner organisations work with us to support innovation, for example, the Catapult Network is partially funded by public funding, and has a unique role in providing access to world-leading facilities, skills, and equipment across the UK. Further, the Autumn Statement 2022 confirms that the government funding will increase by 35% for the UK Catapult Network over the next 5 years. Further information is available at this link.[5]

As this information is in the public domain, we consider that Section 21 of the FOIA - Information already reasonably accessible, would apply and have provided the relevant links above. Section 21 is an absolute exemption which means that there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

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[1] https://www.ukri.org/publications/innovate-uk-funded-projects-since-2004/

[2] https://www.innovateukedge.ukri.org/

[3] https://iuk.ktn-uk.org/

[4] https://catapult.org.uk/

[5] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63761099d3bf7f720cfc0040/CCS1022065440-001_SECURE_HMT_Autumn_Statement_November_2022_Web_accessible__1_.pdf

In relation to part 3 of your request we estimate that the cost of complying with your request and providing information on the title and grade of officials proposing the awards in the last full five financial years would exceed the appropriate statutory limit as specified within Section 12 of the FOIA which for UKRI is set at £450. This represents the estimated cost of 18 hours of staff resource on locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

To explain, all Direct Awards are processed in our Authorisation Gateway (AG) tool where they are reviewed and approved by multiple support teams. These are:

- Subsidy Compliance
- Impact Management
- Governance
- Funding Assurance

These support teams ensure the award is within the Cabinet Standards Guidance for General Grants[6].

Additionally, the domain team responsible for the direct award, will have an Innovation Lead, a Finance Business Partner, and the Budget Owner. These individuals will work collaboratively with the support teams via the AG tool and in meetings to ensure the direct award meets the requirements. The sector and support teams will have approximate grades of Grade C to Grade X.

To answer your question specifically, for each direct award we would need to manually identify all those involved in the award; taking one direct award as an example, we identified thirteen individuals and estimated over six minutes to identify their role title with an estimated further five minutes to look up the grade of each individual. Extrapolated over approximately 189 direct awards we have determined that it would take significantly longer than 18 hours to identify the relevant information.

We have tried to identify a way in which you could refine your request to bring it under the appropriate cost limit which would enable us to comply with this request, however due to the volume of work required this has not been possible. Consequently, UKRI is not obliged under Section 12 of the FOIA to process your request further.

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

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

Annex 1:

Competition Reference (Column A)
CATAPULT(S)
DIRECT
KTN
GFA
"_DA_"