



[REDACTED]

20 June 2023

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2023/00303

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 22 May in which you requested the following:

Your request:

I would like to submit a freedom of information request to obtain access to documents pertaining to:

** the call for proposals
* winning proposal submission, and
* eventual allocation of the 10MGBP investment,
which has been awarded to GW4 for the development of the Isambard3 supercomputer, as per the leading institution's recent announcement available here <<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2023/may/isambard-3-investment.html>>.*

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.

Information on the Isambard3 project is available on Gateway to Research, project reference [EP/X039137/1](#)¹. The [Gateway to Research](#)² was developed by the UKRI's councils to enable users to search and analyse information about publicly funded research and innovation. It includes information about projects supported by all seven Research Councils, Innovate UK and NC3Rs and can be filtered by key terms, funder and start year, where you may be able to access information from what is publicly available. Information on this project is also available at [Grants on the Web](#)³.

In relation to part 1 of your request, organisations were invited to submit proposals for funding under Isambard3 as funding was available from the UKRI Digital Research Infrastructure Programme in support of Tier 2 computer services. There is therefore no 'call for proposals' documentation, however there is a guidance document for applicants which we are providing to you as '*FOI2023/00303 DRI phase 1b Isambard Guidance*'. Please note that personal information within this document has been redacted under Section (40)2 of the FOI Act.

In relation to part 2 of your request we are providing a copy of the winning grant proposal as '*FOI2023/00303 EP/X039137/1*'. Please find this document attached with this response. Some information in this document as well as the information in relation to part 3 of your request for documents in relation to the '*eventual allocation of the 10MGBP investment*' have been withheld under the following exemptions which are explained below.

- Section 40(2) personal data
- Section 41 Information provided in confidence
- Section 43(2) Commercial Prejudice

¹ <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=EP%2FX039137%2F1>

² <https://gtr.ukri.org/>

³ <https://gow.epsrc.ukri.org/NGBOViewGrant.aspx?GrantRef=EP/X039137/1>

Section 40(2) personal data

Names and contact details that are not already in the public domain have been withheld under section 40(2) personal data of the FOIA. Section 40(2) exempts personal information from disclosure if that information relates to someone other than the applicant, and if disclosure of that information would, amongst other things, contravene one of the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and section 34(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018. In this case, we believe disclosure would contravene the first data protection principle, which provides that processing of personal data is lawful and fair.

Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and UKRI is not obliged to consider whether the public interest favours disclosing the information.

Section 41 information provided in confidence

Information in relation to the allocation of the grant, which includes, information related to the due diligence process (postal peer review and interview panel) such as peer review and panel notes and feedback as well as applicant responses have been withheld, under section 41 of the FOI Act, information provided in confidence. In relation to section 41, the [guidance](#)⁴ provided to applicants and peer reviewers clearly states that applications are submitted to UKRI in confidence and that the peer review process will be carried out with the same degree of confidence. Under these circumstances peer reviewers and applicants would expect the information related to the allocation of the grant to remain confidential.

Some information in the grant application has also been redacted as it falls under the exemption at section 41(1) of the FOIA. To explain further, applicants submit their grant applications in confidence with the understanding that details of their application will remain confidential and only a brief overview will be published. This is necessary to protect research and development plans, confidential intellectual property, and other commercially sensitive or market information provided in the proposal. Detailed information is necessary in proposals to enable assessments.

This information is more than trivial and not otherwise accessible, as it refers to technology that is not publicly available and not easily accessible. We believe that the information has the necessary quality of confidence and was imparted under an obligation of confidence. As this exemption is absolute there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

Section 43(2) commercial prejudice

We also consider that the redacted information in the grant application falls under the exemption at 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.

Public interest in favour of withholding the information

- Applicants apply for funding knowing that if they achieve success only a brief overview of their successful application will be publicly available, everything else will remain confidential, including their original application.

⁴ <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/UKRI-310321-Use-of-grant-proposal-and-training-grant-information-addendum-V2.pdf>

- The grant applicants must also have the ability to support and justify the strength of their application. This knowledge is unique and proprietary to the applicant and would generally constitute their intellectual property, exemplifying the commercial advantage and value that such expertise and skills deliver. As such disclosing the information requested is likely to damage the applicant's commercial advantage and thereby harm their commercial interests and affect the value of the award.
- Releasing this information is likely to damage the possibility of ongoing relationships between UKRI and other organisations. Relationships may become untenable if third parties cannot be certain that their grant applications 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 grant applications into the public domain, particularly where this is third party information.

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.

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,


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