18 December 2023

Dear ██████████ ,

Freedom of Information request: FOI2023/00941

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 19 November in which you requested the following:

Your request:

In an attempt to move beyond anecdotal evidence about severe pressure on the peer-review system, we would like to assess the resilience of the peer review system using time-series metrics. As such, we are writing to NERC with a data request.

Would it be possible for you to provide the following data for each submission NERC has received?

- *The submission date [i.e. call close date]*
- *Whether the submission was sent out to review or not? (Y/N)*
- *The date the submission was sent out to review*
- *How many reviewers were contacted about that submission*
- *How many reviewers returned a review for that submission*
- *The date the submission received the required number of reviews*

We seek this information for as long a time period as you are able to provide, depending on your records – covering as many funding calls as you have data available for. However, we wish to only consider the first round of reviews, and so data on subsequent rounds of reviews of an amended submission is not needed. We do not require any information about the authors, or the contents of the submission itself.

Our response

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

Please find attached document, *"FOI2023_00941 – Reviews Data"*. Each entry line refers to single review submission, so where one grant had four reviews, this will be represented by four separate rows, all with the same "Anonymised Grant Reference" number.

The attached document contains the following information that you have requested, dating back to 2012:

- *The submission date*
  Captured as "Closing Date".

- *The date the submission was sent out to review*
  Captured as "Invite Issue Date". We have included the dates that each review request was sent. Please note that these may have gone out at different times due to individuals declining and replacements being invited. Additionally, the Peer Review College may be added separately from External reviewers.

- *How many reviewers were contacted about that submission*
  We have provided this information, however please note that this is based only on those added to our grants system (further information on this point is provided below).

- *How many reviewers returned a review for that submission*
  Captured as "Date First Received".

The following information could not be provided as requested:

- *Whether the submission was sent out to review or not? (Y/N)*
  We have only included calls where there was a peer review stage - the remaining questions didn't apply if not.

- *The date the submission received the required number of reviews*
  This information is not held; there is not a fixed required number of reviews as this varies depending on the type of call. For example, more reviews are typically sought for very large grants, however we would anticipate three reviews on average.

- *Only consider the first round of reviews (data on subsequent rounds of reviews of an amended submission is not needed)*
  This point is not relevant as any resubmission would be counted as a new application therefore it is not possible to differentiate this.

Please note that the information in this response does not provide a comprehensive overview as the report only shows those potential reviewers that have been added to our grants system. We only put potential reviewers onto our system where they were a member of the NERC Peer review College, or if they had been asked via email and had confirmed back that they would review.

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,
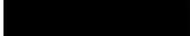
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