



[REDACTED]

8 November 2022

Dear [REDACTED],

Freedom of Information request: FOI2022/00340

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on the 20 October in which you requested the following:

Your request:

<https://twitter.com/UniofOxford/status/1578325007574237184>

1. When did you receive this funding application?
2. Please send a breakdown of what the grant is being spent on.

<https://www.ukri.org/news/seven-research-projects-to-improve-uk-working-lives/>

3. When did you receive these funding applications?
4. Please send me copies of the applications.
5. How much funding have you awarded the Oxford University Humanities Division since 2015?
6. How much funding have you awarded TORCH, Oxford University since 2015?
7. How much funding have you awarded St Antony's College since 2015?
8. How much funding have you awarded the Oriental Institute at Oxford University since 2015?
9. How much funding have you awarded the National Trust Partnership at Oxford University?
10. What has the money been spent on? Please provide breakdowns of amounts per year and what each amount was spent on.

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.

In relation to question 1 the funding application for the University of Oxford project ref: [ES/W009447/1](#)¹ was submitted on 29 September 2021. Further information on this project is available on Gateway to Research at the link provided.

Information in relation to question 2 for a breakdown of the grant spending has been withheld under section 41 - information provided in confidence, and section 43(2) - commercial prejudice. Further details on these exemptions are provided below.

Questions 3 and 4 relate to the '[Transforming Working Lives](#)'² call and the funding applications were submitted between 10 June 2021 - 30 September 2021. The call attracted 50 applications and seven were successful; information on the successful applications is provided in the table below.

¹ <https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FW009447%2F1#tabOverview>

² <https://www.ukri.org/news/seven-research-projects-to-improve-uk-working-lives/>

Reference	Principle Investigator	Organisation	First received date	Project Title
ES/W009951/1 ³	Dr Stewart Johnstone	University of Strathclyde	30/09/2021	Amplifying employee voice and hearing the unheard: a multidisciplinary study of contemporary working lives in deindustrialised communities
ES/W009420/1 ⁴	Dr Etlyn Kenny	University of Birmingham	29/09/2021	Exploring minority ethnic doctors' career transitions in medicine: a life course approach
ES/W009447/1 ⁵	Dr Debbie Hopkins	University of Oxford	29/09/2021	Making Space for People in Truck Driving Work
ES/W01002X/1 ⁶	Dr Bianca Stumbitz	Middlesex University	30/09/2021	Transition to Parenthood in UK SMEs
ES/W009870/1 ⁷	Dr Kimberly Allen	University of Leeds	30/09/2021	L-earning: rethinking young women's working lives
ES/W009684/1 ⁸	Dr Niall Cullinane	Queen's University of Belfast	30/09/2021	An exploration of voice and power in contemporary online retail UK warehouse work
ES/W009536/1 ⁹	Professor Jason Heyes	University of Sheffield	30/09/2021	The Transitions of Young Workers in the UK Labour Market: Consequences for Careers, Earnings, Health and Wellbeing.

Please find attached the seven successful application forms in relation to this project. Some information has been redacted under section 41 and 43 of the FOIA.

We have determined that some of the information you have requested at questions 2 and 4 falls under Section 41 of the FOIA, information provided in confidence. As organisations submit research applications in confidence, we consider the information in relation to their applications, which includes all information related to the breakdown of finances is exempt under Section 41 of the FOIA. To explain further, applicants submit their grant applications in confidence with the understanding that details of their application will remain confidential. If breakdowns of grant spending and full application forms were released, we believe it would result in an actionable breach of confidentiality. As this exemption is absolute there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test.

We also believe the information you have requested falls under the scope of 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.
- It would be in the public interest to view the full application forms as public monies are used to fund this activity. As this is the case it is important that the project has a positive impact and is beneficial to all parties involved. Seeing copies of application forms enables the public to independently assess the impact of the project.

³ <https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FW009951%2F1>

⁴ <https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FW009420%2F1#/tabOverview>

⁵ <https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FW009447%2F1>

⁶ <https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FW01002X%2F1>

⁷ <https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FW009870%2F1>

⁸ <https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FW009684%2F1>

⁹ <https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FW009536%2F1>

Public interest in favour of withholding the information

- The full application forms and breakdown of grant spending contain commercially sensitive information such as salary information and cost and schedule information, technical project plans, and an extensive description of the project which are disclosed to UKRI in confidence. The agreement we have with participants in our projects is that we will not release any confidential information without their permission. Releasing the application forms in their entirety could be taken advantage of by competitors in planning competing strategies for further grant opportunities. Applicants complete the application form knowing that if they are successful, only a brief overview of their successful bid will be publicly available; everything else will remain confidential.
- The ESRC competition process is highly competitive and composing a successful bid requires expertise and skill in providing quality information as well as understanding the most advantageous content to present in order to succeed. The applicants must also have the ability to support and justify the strength of their application. The applicants must do this whilst adhering within the strictly enforced scope and eligibility requirements of a particular competition. This knowledge is proprietary to the applicant. In addition, there are companies and consultancy groups that specialise in selling a grant writing service based on their grant writing expertise and knowledge. This exemplifies the commercial advantage and value that such expertise and skills deliver. As such disclosing the information requested is likely to reduce the applicants' commercial advantage and thereby harm its commercial interests in a highly competitive field. We believe disclosing this information confers an advantage to competitors which would likely materially disadvantage and harm the interests of the applicants, particularly in their ability to compete for grants.
- We follow the government guidance on [managing public money](#)¹⁰. Standards expected of all public services include integrity, reliability, spending money in the public interest and achieving value for money. Our current thorough process ensures that only the best projects receive public monies. Releasing this information could jeopardize the fair and transparent competition process and undermine our function to fund the best projects. In turn, undermining this process would go against our responsibilities to manage our use of public funds.
- We also considered the impact on UKRI if commercially sensitive information of those that we fund and work closely with were disclosed. We believe it would damage the trust in UKRI and likely impact our ability to carry out our role and manage our current and future investments.

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.

Some information has been withheld under the exemption at section 40(2) of the FOI Act. Section 40(2) exempts personal information such as names of individuals 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. Disclosing this information would contravene the first Data Protection Principle as defined under Section 86 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and Article 5 of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). Section 40(2) is an absolute exemption and does not require a public interest test.

In relation to questions 5 to 10 UKRI does not hold any relevant information. UKRI awards funding to the University of Oxford, not those bodies directly named in your request (as they do not have independent legal status as applicants). We can however confirm that UKRI publishes its funded awards on [Gateway to Research](#)¹¹ where you can search for University of Oxford and filter by year to find relevant projects for the University of Oxford.

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.


¹⁰ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1075006/MPM_Spring_21_without_annexes_040322_1_.pdf

¹¹ <https://gtr.ukri.org/>

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