

Innovate UK

Meeting of the Innovate UK Council

Thursday September 26th, 2019

Summary of meeting

Council members were welcomed to the Connected Places Catapult. The Council was deemed quorate. The minutes and actions of the previous Council meeting which took place on the 19th June were agreed and deemed accurate.

Executive Chair Overview

The highlights of the Executive Chair's report were reviewed. Council agreed that attraction and retention of skilled people is important, they acknowledged that this is challenging, understood the complexities and agreed to help where possible.

Council were keen to know how Innovate UK measure business awareness of programmes. It was explained that a recent report shows strong awareness of Innovate UK programmes, including ISCF, within business.

Council discussed success rates for competitions. It was emphasised that Innovate UK attempt to apply a balanced portfolio across sectors. Whilst providing the opportunity through SMART to find novel innovative ideas from new and emerging sectors.

Council engagement with Catapult Centres

The basis for Council member engagement was to provide an informal network across the Catapults to encourage learning and to foster the sharing of ideas. After careful consideration Council members decided that engagement with Catapults should move to a more informal relationship, whereby members can build a relationship in a personal capacity.

Council feedback on information papers

Council commented on the papers distributed prior to the meeting. Noting increased levels of governance and recognising work underway to leverage data and technology to improve and simplify operational performance.

Council observed economic reports specifically the evaluation of the Biomedical Catalyst and the Innovation Loans interim report. Both evaluations showed the strong success of the programmes in supporting innovative businesses. It was noted that Innovate UK Loans received the 'innovative product of the year' award in the Growth Finance Awards.

Minutes of Risk Committee on 09.09.2019

The Chair of the Risk Committee, gave a report on the last meeting. The Committee were comfortable with the approach to risk.

Verbal update on UKRI discussions

An update on UKRI activities was given. Proposals for a one year roll-over budget continue, whilst plans for future long-term funding remain positive. Council were apprised of the UKRI focus on reforming the business, to ensure that UKRI is operating as efficiently and as effectively across the whole organisation and reducing bureaucracy to achieve objectives.

Presentation from Nicola Yates on the new Catapult and its emerging strategy

Nicola Yates, CEO of the Connected Places Catapult, explained the merger of the Transport Systems and Future Cities Catapults, the restructuring that has taken place and future plans.

ARPA Potential Government Funding Project

Council were informed of the political debate regarding the creation of a distinct ARPA-like body with the autonomy and agility to provide longer-term funding to address high-risk, large societal challenges which allows for failure¹. Council were confident that Innovate UK, with appropriate resources, could partner effectively with an ARPA-like organisation, deliver elements of ARPA and should discuss how it evolves.

Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) Priorities

The budget planning assumptions which Innovate UK are working to given delays in the 2019 Spending Review were discussed. Innovate UK continue to build the case for a strong CSR. Council was pleased that messaging remains positive, but recognised some uncertainty and potential risk to programmes.

Council were keen to know where the repository of data on innovation in every sector of the economy sits and whether Innovate UK should be building expertise and resource in this area. It was agreed that Innovate UK should not replicate the National Statistics Office, although data could be centralised within UKRI.

AOB

It was explained that interviews for new Council members across the Councils and for the UKRI board were progressing well.

The formal minutes of this meeting will be approved at the next Innovate UK Council meeting on November 28th, 2019 at the Compound Semiconductors Catapult in Newport.

¹ The Government committed to establish a new funding agency based on ARPA in the Queen's Speech 14.10.19.