



Draft Summary BIF meeting minutes – 28.03.23

Introductions

1. The Chair of the Business Innovation Forum (BIF) welcomed attendees and reflected on the opportunities posed by the creation of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). She invited members to work with her on maximising the BIF's input within this new structure.

Group reflections on the new Department (DSIT) and associated R&D announcements.

2. The Director for Science, Research and Innovation updated on “DSIT at day 50” and related R&D announcements. This included:
 - Announcement of the new [Government Chief Scientific Adviser](#), Professor Dame Angela McLean.
 - Publication of the [Science and Technology Framework](#).
 - Sir Paul Nurse's [Independent Review of the Research Development and Innovation \(RDI\) Organisational Landscape](#).
 - The Spring Budget, which included [£2.5 billion investment](#) over the next 10 years to grow the UK's Quantum sector and further support for R&D intensive Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, via an enhanced rate of [tax relief](#).
 - The Chancellor's announcement of an additional [rate of tax relief](#) for the most R&D intensive businesses.
 - Progress on Horizon, where both the UK and the EU had been clear that they were open to taking forward discussions on UK association. Researchers and businesses would be supported via the [Horizon Guarantee extension](#), which was extended until end June 2023. The UK also had a bold and ambitious vision for UK alternative programmes that would be ready to launch rapidly if needed.
3. Members reflected positively on these changes. They commented specifically on:
 - The approach that [HM Government and the Bank of England](#) had taken in facilitating the transaction for HSBC to buy the Silicon Valley Bank (SVB UK) Ltd. was a very positive start for the Department.
 - The renewed imperative for joined-up working (e.g. between DSIT and DBT) on innovation goals, particularly with regards to commercialisation.
 - The importance of Government assurance for long-term funding of collaborative research.
 - They would welcome more information about DSIT's structure, to help businesses find and engage with policies and publications.



Innovate UK (IUK) Innovation Skills Framework

4. [IUK](#) introduced their [plan for action](#) and the critical importance of talent and skills within their three axes of activity: place, domains, and products & services. They presented on the Innovation Skills Framework: a standard for training and education providers.
5. The framework had been developed with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) and the [Innovation Caucus](#) (a cohort of innovation and enterprise focused social scientists).
6. IUK discussed plans to embed the framework across different education systems and to work with industry.
7. Members raised that:
 - [ICURe](#) – a pre-accelerator programme for early career researchers – was working well. As a result of programmes like this, researchers know ‘what’ they need to do but they needed more support on the ‘how’.
 - IUK should consider how core innovation skills/attitudes (e.g. growth mindset, ability to solve open-ended problems) identified in the framework could reach down to primary and secondary school education.
 - IUK should consider how to make training on innovation skills accessible and utilised by a wide range of people.
 - Recognition for degree apprenticeships should continue.
 - The Framework was a positive step, but skills delivery was a very crowded policy space. IUK would need to ensure alignment between multiple initiatives.

R&D Clusters

8. Officials gave an overview of early-stage work into Research & Development (R&D) Clusters. Clusters were defined as concentrations of interconnected firms producing research, development, and innovation (RD&I) in the same or different sectors that share local infrastructure and skills. This work would complement existing place-based innovation initiatives including Investment Zones, Freeports and Catapults.
9. Analysis was being conducted to map the UK’s R&D Clusters and their growth through a research project with external contractors. The project would improve the current mapping system using real time data. The final product would be ready in September.
10. Members were keen to understand:
 - Whether the mapping tool would be linked to other tools across Government including the [UK Investment Atlas](#) (GREAT), which showcased all sectors and opportunities across the UK.
 - The evidence that had been collated to ensure inward investors require this mapping tool.
 - How boundaries of Clusters would be defined.
 - Where the data would come from and whether the tool would have a technology vector.



- What level of data granularity the Clusters mapping tool would achieve and whether the tool would link pockets of excellence.
11. Officials clarified that the mapping tool would be open source and would showcase how clusters will be defined, how they can collaborate, grow, and be more visible to investment prospects. Officials would take BIF member feedback into consideration for the next phase of the project.

BIF member priorities for innovation in DSIT and the Science and Technology (S&T) Framework

12. The Minister for Science, Research and Innovation shared how DSIT's creation provided an opportunity for the UK to play an even more influential role in the global race for growing Science and Technology as committed to in the S&T Framework. The Minister urged members to think about how the forum could add the most value to DSIT's objectives and discussed three priority areas to progress in the next 12-18 months: R&D Clusters, making the UK a globally trusted test bed for innovation regulation, and investment in R&D.

Members were invited by the Minister to share their reflections. The following themes characterised the discussion:

- Regulation: innovation-friendly regulation was key, but not a 'quick-win'.
- Commercialisation: were keen to see the conversation expand beyond the previously narrow focus on 'equity stakes'.
- Navigability of innovation policy: asked for clearer communication on departmental changes.
- Innovation within Government: innovation within government, especially at leadership level, was essential for DSIT's success.
- The way in which different departments are navigating the pace of AI capabilities and technologies such as ChatGPI, was given as an example.

Closing remarks:

The Minister valued members reflections and asked for feedback on what DSIT could do to make a difference in the next 12 months to increase private investment in R&D and to see any case studies that have been a deliverable from Implementation of the Innovation Strategy. The fifth meeting of the BIF will be held in June.