Open Innovation Team
Phase 3 Strategy

Brunel University London | University of Essex | Lancaster University | UNIVERSITY OF SURREY | UNIVERSITY of York | Open Innovation Team

Summary

Mission

We work with experts to improve government decisions. We do this by operating like an in-house consultancy, delivering projects that generate analysis and ideas for teams across government.

Context

Set-up in 2016, we've proven that we add value for our policy customers. In the process, we've created a successful business that saves millions for government and generates a surplus of more than £400,000 per year.

Objectives

Having established ourselves, we now want to concentrate on increasing our impact. We're prioritising policy impact, but we'll also work to improve government capability, knowledge and efficiency where possible.

Actions

To increase our policy impact, we're developing new services, testing new partnerships and positioning ourselves to work on higher impact projects. We'll review progress quarterly and treat this plan as a living document, updating it regularly.

Mission & background

We work with experts to improve policy decisions

Who we are

The Open Innovation Team was founded in 2016 to **bring more external expertise and evidence into policy decisions.**

We've done by this by **partnering with universities** to increase collaboration with academics and setting up a business-like team that delivers **demand-led projects** to government customers on a **cost-recovery basis**.

Since we were established, we've supported teams across government and beyond to **engage** with experts, understand the **evidence** about their policy problems and give them **ideas** about how to solve them.

As we've grown, we've developed **new tools**, building on and **complementing the work we do with external experts,** so we can keep increasing the impact of our work.

There have been distinct phases to our development. This strategy covers phase 3

Phase 1

2016 – 2019:

We were set-up in 2016 in a £500,000 partnership deal with universities. During our pilot, we experimented with different policy products, identified some useful ways to add value for colleagues and began charging for our work.

Phase 2

2019 – 2022

After agreeing a new £1m university partnership, we concentrated on establishing ourselves as a stable business. We hired more permanent staff, introduced new services and diversified our income.

Phase 3

2023 – 2028

We agreed a new five-year university deal in 2023. We continue to grow the team and, having established a successful business, we're now focusing on increasing our policy impact.

The services we offer our policy customers fall into three main categories

Analysis

We produce written reports explaining the latest evidence and what it means for policy.

Engagement

We use workshops and other events to link experts with policymakers, helping them share knowledge and generate ideas.
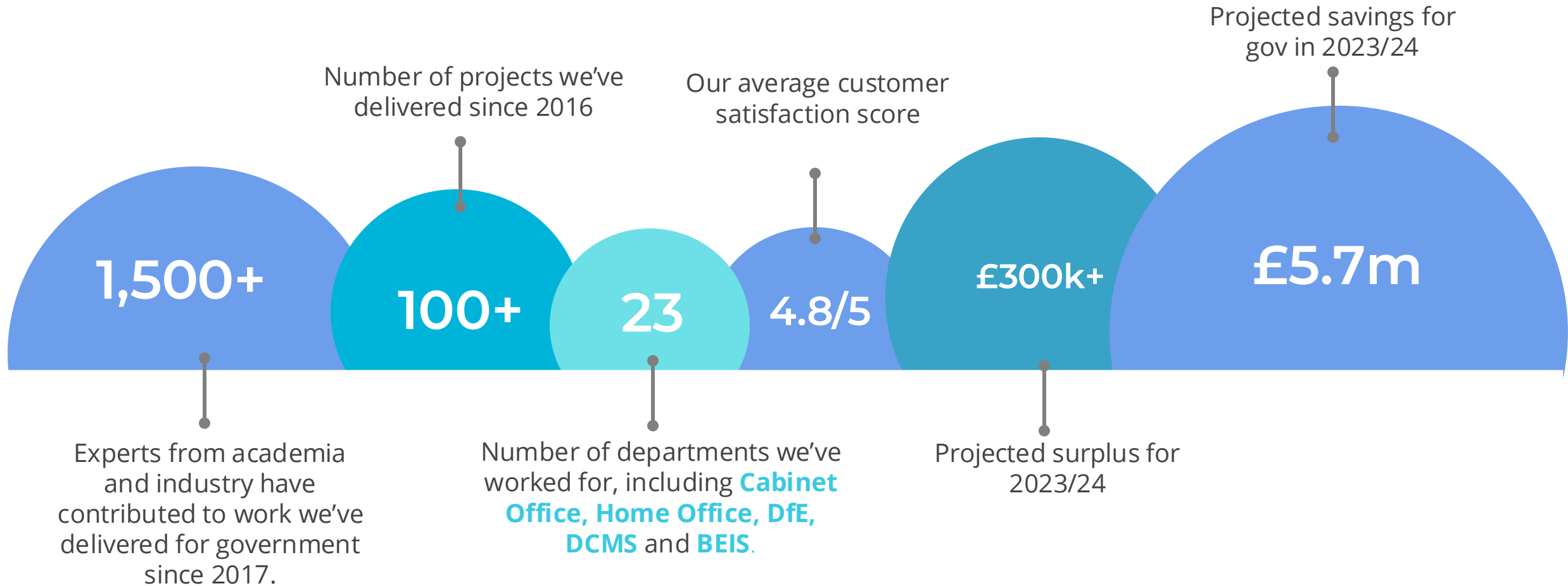
Ideas

We use a mix of analytical and engagement tools to help colleagues develop and refine policy options.

Priorities

We're now a thriving business, making an impact across government

Number of projects we've delivered since 2016

Our average customer satisfaction score

Projected savings for gov in 2023/24

1,500+

100+

23

4.8/5

£300k+

£5.7m

Experts from academia and industry have contributed to work we've delivered for government since 2017.

Number of departments we've worked for, including **Cabinet Office, Home Office, DfE, DCMS** and **BEIS**.

Projected surplus for 2023/24

Having established a successful business, we're now prioritising our policy impact

Policy impact

Policy impact has always been an important goal for us, but it has had to sit alongside other objectives, such as diversifying our income and developing our core products.

Having established a sustainable business, we're now in a position to focus more of our attention on increasing our policy impact.

We say our work has had policy impact if it contributes to a change in:

- the way government **delivers a service to citizens**

- the way government **spends public money**

- the way officials **think** about their policy area

But prioritising policy impact doesn't mean ignoring other kinds of win

Other wins

Where possible, or where the potential impact is large enough, we also want to use our skill and flexibility to add value for government in other ways. For example:

- **Capability** – we already do some capability-related projects and we're beginning to experiment with others

- **Research** – we're obviously well placed to steer policy-related research and we may want to use some of our surplus to fund this kind of research where there's a good case

- **Efficiency** – we expect to save at least £5.5m for DfE in 2023/24 alone, and our new evaluation service will probably increase the amount we're saving government per year.

To make better decisions, we'll improve project selection and impact monitoring

Selecting for impact

As demand for our support rises across government and consistently exceeds our capacity, we will experiment with more **systematic project selection**.

We already get feedback from customers about our work and its impact, but we want to do more to **monitor immediate and long-term impact**.

Colleagues in our new evaluation services division will help us design and implement a suitable monitoring and evaluation framework.

Action areas: Drivers

Objective: increase the impact of our existing services and introduce new services that allow us to add value in other ways

Priorities for the next 12 months
Review and improve our approach to project impact monitoring and evaluation
- Expand our offer into options development
- Experiment with a digital offer
- Introduce an evaluation service
- Establish an incubator unit for other business-like ideas

Longer-term options
- Scenario planning and futures
- Behavioural science
- Training in collaboration with universities
- Economic appraisal
- Tech development e.g. proof of concepts

Services

Objective: increase the number, range and impact potential of policy customers that want to work with us

Priorities for the next 12 months
- Select priority targets and agree business development plans for each
- Explore partnerships with departments and/or policy teams
- Consider establishing an advisory board of senior officials
- Experiment with a more systematic project selection process

Longer-term options
- Partnerships with CS professions or other CS groups e.g., strategy directors, analysis directors, permanent secretaries
- Partnerships with external organisations e.g., OECD, LGA
- Invest in our new business capability, either through training or adding specialist resource

Business development

Action areas: Enablers

Objective: sustain a high-performing and inclusive team

Priorities for the next 12 months
- Increase investment in L&D
- Identify areas for improvement in equality, diversity and inclusion and take action to address any weaknesses
- Increase investment in leadership and line management training
- Recruit more SEOs & G7s and continue to make incremental improvements to our recruitment process

Longer-term options
- Develop relationships with external teams to secure secondments for staff
- Broaden capability by recruiting staff with specialist skills, e.g. events, graphic design, economics, evaluation etc
- Increase senior management capacity
- Increase administrative capacity to support senior leaders
- Create an L&D and career development package to support existing staff and help attract talent

People

Objective: deliver an efficient and high-quality service to our university partners across, ensuring that we meet or exceed all agreed targets

Priorities for the next 12 months
- Ensure all university partners are on track to receive all agreed benefits
- Deliver an expanded policy fellowship programme involving all partners
- Scope out at least one significant additional collaboration involving multiple partners e.g. introducing an offer for local authorities or experimenting with a commercial training offer

Longer-term options
- Facilitate greater collaboration between university partners
- Explore opportunities to fund policy-relevant research
- Expand our partnership activity to areas of capability we have not previously explored e.g. working more closely with arts and humanities academics or professional services staff

University partners

Objective: cover our costs as we grow and generate a healthy surplus that we can use to increase our policy impact in other ways

Priorities for the next 12 months
- Diversify income from policy projects across a wider range of departments, reducing the share that comes from DfE
- Review project pricing to ensure it remains competitive
- Develop plans for using our annual surplus to increase our impact

Longer-term options
- Experiment with new approaches to income, e.g. subscription models, call off contracts
- Explore the possibility of a new operating models that allow us to roll-over more of our surplus to invest in policy impact and innovation
- Experiment with day rate charging

Income

Objective: grow our reputation, establish a network of advocates, and increase the number of high-quality commissions OIT receives

Priorities for the next 12 months
- Finalise a communications strategy before the end of 2023
- Review and refine our priority communications channels
- Agree a resourcing and staffing approach for OIT communications
- Establish key messages and integrate into our communications and engagement

Longer-term options
- Deploy new technology to improve the efficiency of communications development and delivery

Comms

Delivery approach

We'll keep reflecting on our objectives and priorities

We'll treat this strategy as a living document, reviewing it **annually** to assess progress and ensuring that our priorities match the challenges and opportunities we encounter. We'll report on progress against the strategy to our **sponsors in DfE,** and on the delivery of our contractual services to our **partner universities.**

We'll use regular team away days to reflect on our progress internally and **make adjustments as we go**.

How we will deliver