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Inquiry 9: Research funding – driving regional economic prosperity

Public Call for Evidence

DEADLINE: Friday 18th June

Inquiry Chairs: Rt. Hon. Chris Skidmore MP

Lord Norton of Louth

Outline of the ninth inquiry

The Higher Education Commission's ninth inquiry focuses on the vital role universities can play in promoting research and innovation that helps generate economic growth throughout the UK, especially by leading to product/service innovation and commercialisation.

The inquiry follows the Government's ambition to 'level-up' regional economies across the UK and increase R&D spending to 2.4% of GDP. The inquiry aims to investigate how universities and businesses can increase their research and innovation outputs in all parts of the UK, whether independently or via external collaboration, and how this can contribute to tackling regional economic inequalities. The inquiry will look into the current challenges, barriers and potential solutions to increasing the magnitude and success of research by universities and how that can best flow into business innovation throughout the UK. The target is to produce a policy report which can inform Government policy and enhance a system of research and innovation which can deliver results across all regions of the UK.

Respondent information:

1. What is your name and role?
2. Which institution or organisation are you submitting evidence on behalf of?
3. Do you give permission for the Commission to quote your submission?
4. Can we attribute the submission to the institution/organisation?
5. Can we attribute the submission to you personally?

Instructions for submissions of evidence

Please use the questions below to frame your response to the call for evidence, but do not feel restricted by or compelled to answer every question.

The Commission welcomes all types of evidence, from data, including analysis or internal studies your organisation has carried out, to personal or organisational views on these issues.

The deadline for submission of evidence is **Friday 18th June**. Evidence can be submitted to Daniel Monaghan at daniel.monaghan@policyconnect.org.uk. For more information about the Commission, please visit the [Policy Connect website](#) or contact Daniel Monaghan.

General – All Respondents

- If applicable, please briefly outline your organisation's current UK-based research and development work. Please include details of collaborative engagements with external partners – such as HEIs, Catapults, OEMs, SMEs etc.
- We may contact you about featuring your organisation's work as a case study in the policy report. If we do, we will seek your full written permission in advance.

General Questions – All Respondents

- Who should provide funding and how should it be allocated to maximise R&D activity and economic impact?
- How should skills provision and training change to enable greater R&D output?
- Would devolution of powers and/or funding help increase your organisation's R&D output? Which powers and/or funds specifically would assist R&D in your local area? To what kind of organisation should these powers and/or funds be devolved?
- What would enable more collaboration between universities and industry on innovation?
- What would be the best way to facilitate more extensive pan-regional collaboration on innovation?
- What would you like to see from local leaders in terms of increasing R&D activity?
- Should national agencies, including UKRI and its component organisations - Research Councils and InnovateUK - better take the needs of local communities and economies into account in policy and funding decisions - and if so, how?
- What should be the primary focus of the UK Government's Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA) in order to maximise economic impact?
- In the devolved nations, what is the appropriate division of responsibility for research, development and innovation between the devolved administrations and the UK government? How well do current arrangements work?

Questions to Higher Education Institutions

- What mechanisms and incentives would enable your institution to increase its contribution to applied research and commercialisation?
- What would enable your institution to undertake more collaborative work with SMEs on innovation?

- What further non-financial support / resources would be most beneficial to increasing your institution's R&D activity? (e.g. brokerage services, etc.)
- What would incentivise and encourage greater collaboration between university institutions on innovation?
- How should the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) evolve to enable you to participate in more innovation projects with external partners?
- What should change in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) to enable greater innovation-related work from HE institutions?
- In your experience, please describe which funds have been most helpful in increasing your institution's innovation output?: Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF); Connecting Capability Fund (CCF); Expanding Excellence in England (E3); Strength in Places Fund (SIPF)
- Has your institution previously lost an opportunity for innovation work due to funding provision?
- What has been your experience of obtaining regional funds and how can they be improved in the future?
- What should the REF 2027 look like in order to facilitate greater innovation work from the HE sector?

Questions for Business & SMEs

- What would be the key drivers in enabling your organisation to undertake more R&D work?
- What are the best ways to incentivise private investment in R&D?
- How should local authorities and local enterprise groups (e.g. LEPS, chambers of commerce, etc.) aim to assist business in increasing R&D activity? What services should they provide to facilitate R&D projects?
- How can University Enterprises Zones (UEZ) improve to enable greater R&D activity and collaboration between industry and HE institutions?
- For SMEs, what has been your experience of accessing the support of the Catapult network and how could this be improved in the future?
- For SMEs, what barriers have you faced when accessing funding or grants? What would help improve access to funding?

Questions for Agencies & Regional Bodies (Local Authorities, LEPs, Chamber of Commerce, etc.)

- What needs to happen to make your locality a more attractive destination for R&D and investment?

- What would help increase R&D capacity and activity in your local area?
- How can central and local government assist in promoting a region's existing specialisations and industries?