



# Nurse review of UK RDI landscape

## Briefing: Independent Review of the UK's RDI Landscape

The publication of the [Independent Review](#) of the UK's Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Organisational Landscape coincided with the launch of the new [Science and Technology framework](#) for the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) on 6 March 2023. The Government also [announced a raft of new measures](#), including a guarantee for Horizon Europe applications, along with £370million of funding.

This comes within the context of a [new Spring budget 2023](#) which showed the Government's commitment to being a science superpower and having an enterprising focused economy with increased Research and Innovation spending.

### Review background

- The review was requested by UK Government's Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in 2021.
- The key goals of the review were to:
  - o explore the features and characteristics in the existing RDI ecosystem.
  - o identify whether improvements to the organisational research landscape are required to deliver the government's objective for the UK to be a science superpower.
  - o futureproof the UK landscape of organisations undertaking all forms of RDI to ensure an agile and sustainable system that can respond to future priorities.
- The review was undertaken by Sir Paul Nurse, Chief Executive and Director of the Francis Crick Institute.
- The final review report was published March 2023. Michele Donelan, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, [welcomed the review](#) recommendations and stated Government will respond in coming months about plans for implementation.

### Review headlines

The review articulates well why research, development and innovation matters for the UK; 'It is only through RDI that our country can thrive, driving sustainable economic growth through increased productivity, improving public services and the quality of our lives, protecting the environment, and meeting future global and national crises and challenges'

#### *Current landscape*

- The review highlights that the UK has a 'patchwork' of RDI organisations due to changing, sometimes short-term public policy priorities.

- The review identifies significant problems with UK's RDI endeavour and foresees that it is in danger to underinvestment.

#### *Improvements*

- The review states that the Government needs to address issues to improve RDI landscape - increased investment, reduced policy volatility, a clear focus on optimising and implementing change, good data collection, and a long-lasting, consistent, systematic approach to policy development and safeguarding of the RDI landscape.

#### *Future proofing*

- The review identifies ten important attributes for a successful RDI landscape.
- The review outlines 29 recommendations to address five general issues:
  - o Policy volatility needs to reduce - Stable and predictable policy environments build investor confidence and have the potential to increase access to both short and longer-term financing for UK RDI.
  - o UK RDI landscape is hard to navigate – interactions between sectors insufficient, not great interaction between academia and industry which affects productivity.
  - o Financial sustainability of public research funding – future success contingent on Government's commitment to grow RDI investment.
  - o Declining budgets – invest in a greater diversity of organisational types and approaches.
  - o Excessive bureaucracy for public funding – too much emphasis on audit rather than quality of research.

### **Key findings**

The review outlines findings and recommendations for different research organisations and sectors including Universities, Public Sector Research Establishments, Institutes and Units, Industry and Private Sector.

#### *Universities*

- It states universities are a major strength in UK RDI landscape – diversity and quality is positive
- It identifies that universities play an important role in supporting local RDI engagement.
- It highlights that universities receive the largest proportion of public RDI funding however longstanding issues around the financial sustainability of public funding. Commercial income (i.e. international student fees) underpinning university research not always reliable and sustainable.
- Recommendations:
  - o Government should consider the true cost of 'end to end' research activity. Should review and improve grant funding, more transparent assurance and accountability mechanisms.
  - o Universities should develop plans to optimise research operations and support researchers.

### **Actions for Government to support and improve RDI landscape**

#### *International collaboration*

- The review recommends that the Government should support UK role in global collaborations – relationships with EU collaborations need to be protected and the Government should support Horizon Europe.
- The review recommends that immigration policy, overseas development policy and education policy need to be aligned with RDI policy.
- The review recommends that the Government should consider opportunities to host new intergovernmental multinational funded research institutes.

#### *Policy stability*

- The review recommends that there needs to be a clear, coordinated, and systematic approach to RDI strategy and policy setting at every level within Government.
- The review recommends that the newly formed DSIT should set out a long-term vision and put in place policy and financial frameworks to maintain and upgrade local and national infrastructure.

#### *Funding*

- The review recommends that the Government should work with UKRI to consider a more stable and properly costed funding structure.
- The review recommends that the Government should increase long term investment.

#### *Diversity*

- Government must better map UK RDI and agree on shared picture of RDI landscape.
- Government should increase efforts to link sectors within RDI landscape.
- Reduce bureaucracy and avoid the often duplicative reporting and audit – instead develop a culture of confidence.

#### *Talent*

- Government should ensure a well-trained RDI workforce and long-term educational planning to ensure future pipeline of researchers.
- Strengthen career pathways, reform career structures for early career researchers and mobility between sectors should be encouraged.

## Review implications

The Review puts a spotlight on research and innovation, including the higher education sector, but also articulates the value and importance of supporting and growing research. There is clear alignment with the Council's policy priorities in terms of the need for cross department working within government, supporting research careers and growing the pipeline of researchers, upgrading research infrastructures, and increasing inter-sector and international collaborations.

The healthcare education sector will be vital in contributing to the implementation of these recommendations. The Council will continue to work to influence this agenda, particularly through engagement with its Research Strategy Policy Group and Innovation and Pedagogy Strategic Policy Group as well as across our Nation Groups. It is also forming a Manifesto of key policy asks for Government elections.

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