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DfE 2019 - 0159

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Thank you for your request for information relating to the Small Business Research Initiative. The request was received on 3 November 2019 and the Department is dealing with it under the terms of the above legislation.

I will deal with each of your queries in turn:

1. A list of all SBRI competitions run, their titles, description, dates and budgets.

All of this information is held by the Department and has been released (attached).

2. A list of all awards made, including company name, funding amount, project titles and application forms.

Following a search of our records, I can confirm that the Department holds this information (attached).

Please note that personal information has been redacted as this is exempt under Section 40(2) of the FOI Act in respect of information which is the personal data of third parties. Disclosure of this information would contravene the first data protection principle in that it would be unfair to those individuals to release it. This is an absolute exemption, therefore, a public interest test is not required.

3. The assessment criteria and scores for each project and successful application.

This information is held by the Department and has been released (attached).

4. Details of any projects which have led to the adoption of the innovation or further funding.

All of this information is held by the Department and has been released (attached).

5. Final project reports for any completed projects.

The Department holds the Stimulating Innovation in Rates Maximisation Report by Future Cities Catapult. Some information has been redacted under Section 43: Commercial Interests as the information is commercially sensitive.

In making this decision the Department has carried out a Public Interest Test as follows:

Arguments in favour of disclosure:

- The right of the public to have access to information;
- The need for the public to be better informed and more competent to comment on public affairs and accountability for the use of public funds.

Arguments against disclosure:

- Releasing this information would be likely to result in a lack of confidence in the SBRI process and have a detrimental effect on the work carried out by the Department.
- The disclosure of the information requested would be likely to prejudice third party's commercial interests.

Conclusion

After weighing the various factors for all arguments for and against disclosure as set out above, it is the view of the Department that the arguments in favour of non-disclosure of the information redacted outweigh the arguments in favour of disclosure, therefore, on balance we believe that it is not in the public interest to disclose the redacted information.

Please note that personal information has also been redacted as this is exempt under Section 40(2) of the FOI Act in respect of information which is the personal data of third parties. Disclosure of this information would contravene the first data protection principle in that it would be unfair to those individuals to release it. This is an absolute exemption, therefore, a public interest test is not required.

6. Any post project assessments carried out to determine the outcomes or effectiveness of completed projects.

Following a search of our records we can confirm that the Department does not hold the information requested.

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<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/Privacy-Notice-FOI-EIR-SAR.pdf>

An Access to Information Factsheet which provides information on FOI/EIR procedures, including what to do if you are not happy with our response, and some useful contact points, is available at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/access-information#toc-3>

Yours sincerely



Elizabeth Cameron
Strategic Policy Division