

Briefing note

UKRI Strategy 2022-2027 - Transforming tomorrow together

Overview of UKRI Strategy 2022-2027

The UKRI Strategy for 2022-2027, launched on 17th March 2022, sets out the framework for research and innovation (R&I) programmes in the UK over the next five years. At its heart is the government's target of increasing the UK's research and development intensity (spend as percentage of GDP) to 2.4% by 2027, using a significant increase in public investment to catalyse private sector investment. While this intensity remains below that already achieved by other countries, including the USA, Germany, Japan and South Korea, it marks a significant increase for the UK.

This briefing note provides a short outline of the strategy document, laid out along the same lines as the document itself for ease of reference. It then highlights key areas of the strategy which are of interest for the heritage science community, in line with the goals and associated outcomes set out in the National Heritage Science Forum Strategic Framework for 2018-2023.

4 Shifts (pp. 7-10)

The UKRI strategy identifies 4 key principles, or 'shifts', to guide change to the UK's research and innovation system. The first, diversity, is conceived of not just in terms of personnel, but also skills, ambitions, infrastructure, ideas and career paths. The second, connectivity, is based on collaboration, as well as mobility of both people and ideas, across disciplines and sectors to break down the barriers that divide them. Thirdly, resilience – particularly salient in light of the pandemic – refers to UKRI's commitment to ensure that the system is robust enough to withstand a range of shocks. The fourth principle, engagement, aims to embed research and innovation in the UK's society and economy, breaking down barriers between the sector and wider society, and involving a broader section of society in these activities.

6 Objectives (pp. 11-42)

World-class people and careers (pp. 13-17)

The UKRI strategy recognises the importance of people in driving research and innovation. To this end, it aims to make the UK more attractive to international talent by creating new opportunities for international talent and working with government to improve international visibility and accessibility of UK opportunities, by developing the full breadth of skilled people and teams needed for the system to thrive, promoting flexible career paths, and shifting the country's research culture in a more supportive direction.

World-class places (institutions and infrastructure) (pp. 18-22)

Ensuring that the UK has a strong set of institutions and infrastructures within which research and innovation can thrive is another objective of the strategy. Existing clusters are to be strengthened, with attention paid to addressing regional disparities, while partnerships will be promoted and

developed locally, nationally, and globally with other centres of research and innovation and with business. UKRI is also mindful that investment and funding must be structured in a way that ensures organisations are financially sustainable, to enable the UK to maintain its global significance. There will also be a focus on ensuring that UK research infrastructures are, and continue to be, cutting-edge.

World-class ideas (pp. 23-26)

Noting that the breadth of strong research and innovation is one of the UK's significant advantages, UKRI is committed to building and maintaining a balanced portfolio of activity. It stresses the need for greater agility and responsiveness in the UK funding environment, as well as incentives for and the removal of barriers to multi- and inter-disciplinary working to take full advantage of the breadth of activity undertaken in the UK.

World-class innovation (pp. 27-31)

Attracting private sector investment is a key aspect of the plan to reach 2.4% R&D intensity. This section of the strategy explains how UKRI plans to increase opportunities for private sector investment, foster collaboration, and support commercialisation and knowledge-exchange.

World-class impacts (pp. 32-38)

This section of the strategy outlines how UKRI aims to produce demonstrable social and economic impacts from research and innovation. The strategy envisions research and innovation playing a key role in tackling several key global and national challenges, harnessing opportunities from the seven technology families where the UK has a global advantage laid out in the government's [Innovation strategy](#), and transforming critical sectors for the future of the UK economy.

Making UKRI a world-class organisation (pp. 39-42)

The sixth objective concerns UKRI itself. The strategy envisions a more confident, efficient and agile UKRI, with greater collaboration and mobility across Councils and functions, long-term workforce planning, a streamlined operating model and a greater focus on partnership.

Implementation

UKRI's Councils will release their Strategic Delivery Plans later in 2022, which will detail their part in delivering the overall strategy. These are complemented by the annual UKRI Corporate Plan. This section also states that UKRI will track its performance in relation to the strategy internally, as well as monitoring and evaluating the impact of its activities. Progress and performance will be reported in Annual Report and Accounts.

Key points for Heritage Science

Although the UKRI strategy document is very broad in scope, and in many areas further detail is unlikely to be available until the release of the Strategic Delivery Plans, there are already some areas which will be of interest to the heritage science community. These are summarised below, organised in line with the three strategic goals set out in the NHSF Strategic Framework 2018-2023.

Excellent research that addresses the present needs and future requirements of heritage

The general increase in funding for research and innovation is a clear positive. Heritage science may see some portion of this increase, which would of course be greatly helpful. UKRI's commitment to developing excellent research infrastructures (p.22) is a clear positive, and the strategy's explicit recognition of the need for UKRI to be proactive in ensuring research organisations' financial

sustainability (p. 21) will benefit heritage science. Increased agility in funding schemes (p. 24) may also help to make funding more accessible and useful to heritage science organisations.

Throughout the strategy, it is stated that UKRI will work to develop and maintain partnerships both within the UK and internationally (pp. 20, 22, 24, 29, 34). Heritage science may benefit from such a policy, which will hopefully enable heritage scientists to continue and expand international research collaborations.

The emphasis on breaking down barriers between disciplines and sectors to facilitate and incentivise multi- and inter-disciplinary working (p. 25) aligns closely with NHSF's support for interdisciplinary research. This is particularly important for heritage science, which is fundamentally interdisciplinary. UKRI efforts in support of interdisciplinarity may offer opportunities to work with organisations and researchers from sectors and disciplines which have heretofore been relatively uninvolved in the heritage science community.

A skilled and diverse heritage science community (workforce and volunteers) that is well placed to respond creatively to future change

The strategy states UKRI's commitment to improving support for the development of skills and knowledge to support innovation and research (pp. 15-16). How far this aligns with NHSF plans for development of technical skills and knowledge, for accessible training, and for engagement with heritage science at school age is not wholly clear at this point, but the general direction offers cause for optimism.

Proposals for postgraduate research and fellowship opportunities to attract international talent (p. 15) may be of value to the heritage science community. The strategy also indicates UKRI's intention to work with government to better signpost UK opportunities to international researchers. The utility of these proposals will be amplified if UKRI is able to secure strong support with visa mechanisms in collaboration with the Home Office, as the strategy suggests. Although these are not the only factors which individual researchers will consider in making career decisions, they are those over which UKRI can exercise most control.

Emphasis on flexible careers and 'breaking down silos' (p. 15) presents an opportunity for heritage science, counteracting reservations people may have about entering the sector, making it easier and more attractive to enter a heritage science career, whether at the beginning of one's career or at a later stage. This may help heritage science organisations in attracting the best possible workforce.

Aspects of the strategy which emphasise broadening participation in research and innovation (p. 16) align well with NHSF ideas about citizen heritage scientists. Broadening participation may also, in general, present new opportunities for volunteers to get more involved in research and innovation in the heritage sector and develop their own skills and interests.

Demonstrable social and economic impact

Support for translation and commercialisation of research (p. 30) may be helpful for achieving the NHSF outcome relating to innovation and commercial application. The precise details of this are not yet clear, but it appears a worthwhile avenue of exploration for the heritage science community, especially as more details of UKRI support emerge in the coming months and years. This may open up further opportunities for heritage science to have an impact on society and the economy, as well as bringing in additional funds to improve financial resilience.

The strategy generally supports strategic partnerships between business and research organisations, which may bring benefits to heritage science, particularly in terms of private sector investment.

Support for research and innovation to tackle ‘major national and global challenges’ (p. 34) may bring direct and indirect benefits to the heritage sector and heritage science. In particular, the strategic themes of ‘Building a green future’ and ‘Securing better health, ageing and wellbeing’ are of relevance. Many heritage assets face challenges from climate change, and the research done within the organisations which care for them may be useful in tackling the larger issues. Likewise, the heritage sector is of clear relevance when it comes to ensuring the wellbeing of people and communities. Both the continued existence and accessibility of a range of heritage assets, and programmes and projects run by heritage organisations – often incorporating heritage science – play an important role in promoting social wellbeing. NHSF’s existing work on the identification of societal challenges to which heritage science research contributes aligns well to the areas of national and global challenge identified in this strategy. The Forum’s collection of associated case studies will form an important part of the sector’s demonstration of social, economic, cultural and environmental benefit to citizens.

Read the full document: [UKRI Strategy 2022-2027: Transforming tomorrow together](#)

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