INNOVATION ADVISORY BOARD
01 March 2017

Minutes of the Fifth Meeting

Medical Research Council, One Kemble Street, London

Present: Richard Worswick – Chair
Debbie Buckley Golder – InnovateUK
Phil Kaziewicz – GI Partners
Mike Kelly – DataCentred
Massimo Noro – Unilever
Kenji Takeda – Microsoft
Jennifer Thompson – Teesside University

Apologies: Paul Beasley – Siemens plc (by phone for item 4)
Frank Salzgeber – European Space Agency

STFC: Tim Bestwick – Executive Director, Business and Innovation
Sharon Cosgrove – Executive Director, Strategy Planning and Communications
Lisa Kehoe – Strategy Manager, Secretary to the IAB
Janet Seed – Associate Director, Strategy, Planning and Communications
1. Item 1 - Welcome and Introductions

1.1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and all those present introduced themselves.

1.1 The Board welcomed two new members:

- Dr Kenji Takeda, Director of the Microsoft Azure for Research program
- Dr Mike Kelley, CEO of DataCentred

1.2. The IAB congratulated Jennifer Thompson on her recent appointment as Associate Dean for Employability & Business Engagement within the Faculty of Engineering at Teesside University.

2. Minutes and Actions

2.1. The IAB approved the minutes and actions from the September 2016 meeting. There were no outstanding actions.

3. UKRI Design

3.1. The bill was now at the report stage in the House of Lords. Four non-Government amendments had been introduced in the Lords and it was expected that the Bill would complete the Lords stage during March.

3.2. The Board noted that Sir Mark Walport had been appointed as Chief Executive Designate of UKRI and was currently working 50% of his time in the new position. It was likely that his full time appointment would occur after the passing of the bill.

3.3. The advert for UKRI Board Members was still open, with a deadline of end March 2017. At least one of the Board members would be a business expert who would also sit on the Council of InnovateUK.

3.4. The Board hoped that the creation of UKRI would provide an opportunity to rationalise some innovation programmes and define common processes for the Councils' innovation activities. The commercialisation process including funding, the way investment was raised, management teams defined etc. could be carried out on a common basis to reduce the complexity.

3.5. A significant opportunity within the new structure was expected to be 'hiding the wiring' of the funding mechanisms which would be extremely helpful for companies looking to access funding. The Board recommended that ideally there would be a single point of entry for funding applications and it wouldn’t be necessary for the applicant to identify a specific Council for their submission. This would remove the current perception that an artificial close fit to a specific Council’s remit was essential.
3.6. The Board suggested that there was an opportunity to ensure that the businesses developed via the commercialisation process were ‘InnovateUK ready’ to help the transition between research and business funding.

3.7. The STFC / InnovateUK analysis for innovators pilot scheme was designed so that InnovateUK could help businesses to identify their problems with STFC providing translation / solutions. This idea was that the scheme would help companies to access solutions without needing to be experts on the techniques available.

3.8. The Board noted that co-location of national facilities and companies presented an important opportunity for the UK science base.

3.9. The Board discussed the importance of physical locations such as clusters and campuses and noted that InnovateUK were also part of this system via the Catapults.

3.10. The Board discussed the difference between National Assets and Campuses. Some attributes of a campus were suggested to be:

- Home to longstanding world-leading or internationally significant research infrastructure
- For the benefit of the national economy
- Embedded in an environment designed to support innovation

4. Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund


4.2. The Green paper didn’t address entrepreneurial skills or culture, which the Board considered to be one of the most significant bottlenecks to commercialisation. The Board discussed some of the mechanisms which could be used to develop these skills and noted the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund.

The Board discussed the difficulty in interpreting the ISCF criteria for research infrastructure funding.

5. Grand Challenges Research Fund

5.1. The Board received an overview of the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), a £1.5 billion fund announced by the Government to support cutting-edge research that addressed the challenges faced by developing countries. The fund formed part of the UK’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment.
6. Corporate Strategy Update

6.1. The Board received a brief update on the progress with STFC’s Corporate Strategy update. IAB gave positive feedback on the updated Summary of the innovation section. The IAB noted that the strategy placed a very significant emphasis on innovation and, if it was to be delivered successfully, it would have to be backed by appropriate resources and a strong innovation culture.

7. AOB

7.1. The board received an update on the STFC Skills Balance of Programme exercise which was being initiated with the overall objective of identifying a desirable skills programme balance over the next 5 year period.