

Draft Northern Ireland Innovation Strategy – 2013-2025

Public Consultation Questionnaire

Completion Instructions

We would be very grateful to receive your comments and views on the draft Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Please answer the following questions as completely as you can.

About you

1. Title: Dr (delete as appropriate)

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Organisation Name: Institute of Physics in Ireland

2. **Which best describes your area of interest / expertise.**

Academia Business Local Government

Member of Government Department

Member of the Public Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO)

Political Party

Social Enterprise Voluntary Community Sector

x Other (Please specify) Professional Body for physicists working in academic, education and business

3. Permissions – I am responding as

Individual / Group/Organisation

Please tick as appropriate



(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public?

Yes No

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available **or**

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address **or**

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public.

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate



Yes No

Innovation

4. Do you agree with the vision set out in the draft Innovation Strategy?
Agree /

Comment Box

The Institute of Physics in Ireland broadly agrees with the draft innovation strategy. Policymakers and economists are generally in agreement that innovation is a major driver of growth and a critical aspect of innovation is physics. In the UK, physics-based businesses have long punched above their weight in the economy, accounting for as many jobs as the construction sectors and as much gross value added as finance, banking and insurance. (IOP Report – Importance of Physics to the UK Economy 2012). Areas such as communications, medical technology, space industry and energy are all significant drivers in the UK economy. In addition these are highly productive jobs with a Gross Value Added (GVA) per employee at £69,000 - 70% higher than the UK average. Given Northern Ireland's current low GVA per employee, it is clear that it is growth in this type of employment which is essential for the region. Northern Ireland's economy is particularly weak in relation to high tech manufacturing. In the UK, physics-based manufacturing contributes over 50% of manufacturing GVA. However, in Northern Ireland, that number drops to under 25%. In terms of total employment: in the UK, physics-based manufacturing accounts for almost 48% of the manufacturing workforce; in NI that number is under 30%.

5. Do you consider the key themes in the draft Innovation Strategy are appropriate to ensure that businesses are better supported to engage in innovation?

Yes

If you have answered no, please detail other actions you would propose

Comment Box

Knowledge Generation

6. Are there any additional actions to those identified in the Knowledge Generation Section, necessary to deliver the aims of this strategy?

Yes / No / Don't Know

If you have answered yes, please detail other actions you would propose

Comment Box

The IOP agrees with the actions identified with the possible exception of the proposed new research and technology capabilities study across the public and private sectors. A good deal of the information likely to come from this study has probably already been identified by the Matrix reports. <http://www.matrix-ni.org/#/publications-and-reports/4570999724>

In addition a key area of concern is to ensure the pipeline of suitably qualified technicians, scientists and engineers. This requires action at all levels of education not just at postgraduate level. Eg support at schools to ensure uptake of the physical sciences, plus support re careers information at all stages.

Knowledge Exchange

7. Are there any additional actions to those identified in the Knowledge Exchange Section, necessary to deliver the aims of this strategy?

No

If you have answered yes, please detail other actions you would propose

Comment Box

Knowledge Exploitation

8. Are there any additional actions to those identified in the Knowledge Exploitation Section, necessary to deliver the aims of this strategy?

Yes /

If you have answered yes, please detail other actions you would propose

Comment Box

Cultural Change

9. Are there any additional actions to those identified in the Cultural Change section, necessary to deliver the aims of the strategy?

Yes / No / Don't Know

If you have answered yes, please detail other actions you would propose

Comment Box

The IOP agrees with the actions identified, in particular the proposal to appoint a government chief science advisor.
We would suggest that this appointment should be at a senior level within the structure of the N. Ireland government, particularly as this person will need to liaise across a range of government departments. A good model for the type of governance needed is that of the Chief Science Advisor for Scotland. In this case The CSA is supported by the Office of the Chief Scientific Adviser (OCSA). OCSA currently comprises two small teams entitled Science in Government and Science in Society. The former provides general support to the CSA across her many roles while the latter supports science and society initiatives through the science centres network and other public outreach programmes.

The CSA also co-chairs the Scottish Science Advisory Committee, for which OCSA provides the Secretariat. Within the Government, the CSA represents those sciences not presently covered by the Chief Scientists in Health and Environment, and leads on cross-cutting scientific issues across the Scottish Government, in partnership with the other two Chief Scientists. The CSA also has a role in the professional development of scientific staff within the Government and represents Scotland at certain high level scientific committees in Whitehall.

Measuring Progress

10. Do you consider that the performance indicators and proposed monitoring arrangements are appropriate to provide timely indications of progress?

Yes /

If you consider that there are other indicators which should be used, please detail below.

Comment Box

The indicators are useful ones. It might also be useful to integrate these indicators with those of the Northern Ireland Science Park Connect Knowledge Economy Index.

<http://www.nisp.co.uk/nisp-connect/the-ni-knowledge-economy-index/>

Equality Impact Assessment

11. Do you have any comments on the Equality Impact Assessment (available on consultation website page at www.detini.gov.uk/innovationstrategy)?

No

If you have answered yes, please provide details

General Comments

12. Are there any additional comments you wish to make in relation to the draft Innovation Strategy?

Comment Box

The Institute considers that actions on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) related skills must take a high priority. All of the reports cited highlight the essential nature of such skills to the Northern Ireland economy. To facilitate this and to act as a driver for change, the IOP would strongly recommend the full implementation of the Northern Ireland STEM Review proposals and in particular would say the rapid appointment of a chief science advisor or champion is vital to ensure a strong, fully co-ordinated approach to the implementation of proposals in this area.

Questionnaire Complete – Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to complete the questionnaire.

Please email your response to innovationpolicyunit@detini.gov.uk

Or send by post to Innovation Policy Unit, Room 125, Netherleigh,
Massey Avenue, Belfast, BT4 2JP.