



UK Research
and Innovation

RT1 02

UK Research and Innovation – High-level Sector Round Tables

ROUND TABLE 1

Valuing and Measuring Natural Assets for Infrastructure

Tuesday 26 June 2018, 11:00-15:00

(refreshments available from 10:30)

[Prince Philip House](#), 3 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5DG

OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT UKRI FUNDING INSTRUMENTS/PROGRAMMES FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

This paper outlines why the Research Councils engage with business, why NERC is investing in this Round Table, and existing mechanisms to support academic and business collaboration.

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1. WHY THE RESEARCH COUNCILS ENGAGE WITH BUSINESS

As part of the newly formed [UK Research & Innovation](#) (UKRI), the [Natural Environment Research Council](#) (NERC) has a role in supporting business access to the latest research to develop innovative tools and approaches and support business growth, thereby maximising the value from publicly funded research. NERC does this by:

- working with business to understand their needs and priorities and sharing these with the research base;
- supporting business to make connections within the research base by signposting to where particular research strengths exist and facilitating access to knowledge, skilled people, data and infrastructure;
- building effective partnerships between academia and business by funding collaborative projects which translate research into industry-relevant tools and approaches;
- strengthening the capacity of the research base to address the needs of business.



2. WHY IS NERC INVESTING IN THIS BUSINESS ROUND TABLE?

Issues around Valuing Nature are increasingly of interest to businesses. As funders of the £6.5M NERC is investigating how Valuing Nature research can be translated into business decision-making and innovation, and what role NERC has in supporting academic-business collaboration. Through the round table NERC would like to:

- understand what businesses are doing to develop and operationalise the concept of valuing nature/ natural capital within their organisations;
- identify where there are opportunities to apply existing knowledge/data/skills from the research community and to identify what new knowledge is required to help business do this;
- gauge the interest and capacity of business to work collaboratively with the research base to access knowledge;
- explore different models of collaboration and funding which would enable greater interaction between academics and business around this agenda, and is workable for and brings benefits to both sectors.

The Valuing Nature programme [Valuing Nature Programme](#) already supports academic-business collaboration through the [Business Interest Group](#), [Business Impact Schools](#) and funding [Valuing Nature placements](#) for academics to work within a policy and business setting. The findings from this Round Table will inform further investment in research and innovation (in particular by NERC but also by other relevant funders).

3. EXISTING MECHANISMS TO SUPPORTING ACADEMIC AND BUSINESS COLLABORATION

The purpose of this section is to: (1) highlight a number of funding opportunities which may be suitable to take forward academic-business collaboration around the ‘valuing nature’ agenda; (2) stimulate a discussion on what mechanisms and types of funding can support academic-business interaction around Valuing Nature issues in the future.

A large number of funding mechanisms exist to promote the exchange of knowledge between academia and industry to enable the development of innovative technologies and approaches by companies as well as to drive world-leading academic research related to real-world challenges. Funding is available from the EU, UK public bodies (including Research Councils, [Innovate UK](#), national academies) as well as universities and companies themselves. Each funder has their own rules for who is eligible to lead bids and receive financial support, what subject areas they are willing to support and how the application process operates.

As highlighted by the [Dowling Review of Business-University Research Collaborations](#) (July 2015) the support for the innovation system is complex. The creation of UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) in April 2018, a new organisation incorporating the seven Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England, responds to the Dowling agenda.

Scheme name	What it supports	Focus of schemes	
NERC Knowledge Exchange Fellowships	Academic-led bids for 1-3 years, funding only to academic, business shares cost.	Must demonstrate the application of UK environmental science to business challenge	Funding for researchers to spend time working with, or within, a business, bringing in knowledge, technology or skills acquired through academic research to help the business innovate and grow. This can act as a foundation for long-term collaboration and development.
NERC Innovation Placements	Academic-led bids for short 6-12 month placements, funding only to academic, NERC funds.	Must demonstrate the application of UK environmental science to business challenge	
Innovate UK’s Knowledge Transfer Partnerships	Business-led bids for 1-3 years, funding to both business and academic, business shares cost.	Must delivery benefit for business e.g. increased profitability, improved products/ operations, increased sales	
NERC Innovation Projects	Academic-led bids for 1-18 months projects, funding only to academic, NERC funds.	Must demonstrate the application of UK environmental science to business challenge	
NERC Innovation Programmes	Collaborative programme with business over 3-5 year, £3-5M, NERC funds.	Must demonstrate the application of UK environmental science to business challenge	Business and academics collaborate on <i>sector-wide topic</i> areas where there is a strong shared need for environmental research
Innovate UK Open programme	Business-led bids, funding to both business and academic.	Supports game-changing or disruptive ideas from market research to demonstration	

Although in early stages, the creation of UKRI signals evolution in how the academic-business interface as well as the interface between research disciplines (which crosses the boundaries between the seven research councils) are supported. The new [UKRI Future Leadership Fellows](#) supports early career researchers and innovators with outstanding potential in universities and UK registered businesses to tackle difficult and novel challenges, including those at the academic/business and interdisciplinary boundaries. The UKRI [Strength in Places](#) fund takes a place-based approach to research and innovation funding, to support significant regional economic growth.