Freedom of Information request: 2018/0249

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request received on 13th December 2018 in which you requested the following:

Your Request:

Please could you provide information on all late payments of invoices (over 30 days) during 2016/17/18 to all research councils and then UKRI (from April 2018) including;

Invoice number (your system reference)
Supplier invoice number
Supplier number (your system reference)
Supplier name
Supplier address (or postcode or postal town) Invoice date (date on invoice) Date invoice was paid
Invoice net value Invoice VAT value Invoice gross value

This is in relation to invoice payment performance and recording as required under Late Payment Legislation 1998 and Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Our response:

I can confirm UK Research and Innovation hold information relevant to your request.

Your request to obtain information on all late payments of invoices (over 30 days) during 2016/17/18, to the level of detail you’ve requested, would exceed the cost limit as set out in Section 12 of the Freedom of Information Act (hereafter referred to as FOIA).

The table below shows volumes and percentages of ‘undisputed invoices’ paid in 30 calendar days along with totals covering the 3 years in question for UKRI, excluding Innovate UK who use an independent system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UKSBS</th>
<th>2015/16</th>
<th>2016/17</th>
<th>2017/18</th>
<th>3 Year Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undisputed Invoices Paid</td>
<td>245,766</td>
<td>159,793</td>
<td>136,236</td>
<td>541,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undisputed Invoices Paid in 30 days</td>
<td>238,353</td>
<td>153,720</td>
<td>130,900</td>
<td>522,973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% paid in 30 days</td>
<td>97.0%</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>96.1%</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please note that not all suppliers work to a 30 day payment window, as this is determined by their individual contractual T&Cs.

This UKRI data has been provided by UK Shared Business Services, who are our contracted service provider for the purposes of invoice payments; UK SBS is a Company wholly owned by its public sector customers and shareholders: the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), and UKRI made up of the seven UK Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England.

Section 12 of FOIA allows a public authority to refuse to deal with a request where it estimates that it would exceed the appropriate limit to: - either comply with the request in its entirety or; - confirm or deny whether the requested information is held. The estimate must be reasonable in the circumstances of the case. The appropriate limit is £450 for UKRI (18 Hours*£25= £450).

It is our reasonable estimation that if UKRI were to manually attempt to collate the data requested, (approximately 5 minutes to investigate each invoice, multiplied by 18,822 invoices = 1568.5 hours) it would exceed this cost limit.

As a result of your request, we will be identifying a way of categorising these invoices clearly so that we can provide the figures for late payments as a specific category going forwards.

Innovate UK has a separate finance system from the rest of UKRI. They have confirmed that whilst this data is held, the Section 12 exemption is also applicable for the following reasons:

- Providing data from 2016 requires interrogation of 3 finance systems (legacy and current)
- Consistency checks and cleansing of data will be required on the data e.g. some invoice receipts dates are reported in different data fields and because a significant proportion are intra-government transactions where elimination may be appropriate
- From July 2018, Innovate UK have implemented a new finance system, however it would need further development to extract the requested information

If you have any queries about this response please contact me, or if you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request and wish to request a review of our decision, please write to:

Complaints Officer
UK Research and Innovation
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon
SN2 1FL
Email: foi@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Enquiry/Information Line: Between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745
Further information about the Office of the Information Commissioner can be found at http://www.ico.gov.uk/

Yours sincerely,

UK Research and Innovation, Information Governance Team
Email: foi@ukri.org