Our objectives and key results 2026-2027

UK Research and Innovation

Advance knowledge, improve lives, drive growth

Our objectives and key results

This document sets out what we hope to achieve over five years, in line with our strategic direction of travel, recognising that the policy, economic and global context will continue to evolve. Our new strategy is designed to provide a consistent framework for action, aligned with government priorities, with enough flexibility to respond to new and emerging opportunities. We have also outlined our expected path towards achievement of our five year ambitions through high level summary one -year key results (KRs) to be achieved by April 2027 against which DSIT will hold UKRI to account. KRs are specific, measurable outcomes that help us progress achievement of our goals. They do not include everything we do and will be updated annually to draw out future priorities.

These outcomes are mapped against the five UKRI Objectives set out in the UKRI Framework Document 2025. They provide a focus on key priority outcomes for this year and over the duration of the strategy. We will report on our progress in delivering these outcomes and our Delivery Plan 2026-27 in our 2026-27 Annual Report and Accounts using key performance indicators.

Objective 1: Protect and promote basic curiosity-driven research through a long-term, sustainable funding model that underpins the UK research environment

By 2031 we will have:

- supported discovery and curiosity-driven research by protecting investment levels across the dual support system, through our strategic institutional investment and applicant-led research, investing £14.5 billion[1] in total over the Spending Review (SR) period
- sustained the UK's world-leading position in research excellence, including contributing to maintaining a high global ranking in field-weighted citation impact, through UKRI investments driving high-quality research outputs

By April 2027 we will have:

- invested £3.7 billion[2] in curiosity-driven research and strategic institutional investment to support it, and delivered Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 sector-informed guidance and criteria by November 2026
- reformed many of our applicant-led programmes to enable intellectual risk-taking and greater responsiveness to opportunities to sustain research excellence, including publishing revised guidance enabling weighted assessment for novelty and excellence in applicant-led opportunities by January 2027

1 This figure reflects the published curiosity-driven research allocation which includes £3.3 billion in applicant-led research, as well as £8.9 billion Research England quality-related research, and £2.3 billion in other investments supporting curiosity-driven research
2 This figure reflects the published 2026-27 curiosity-driven research allocation which includes £815 million in applicant-led research, plus Research England quality-related research, and other investments supporting curiosity-driven research

Objective 2: Ensure UKRI's portfolio is aligned with delivering the government's priorities, including the five Missions and Industrial Strategy

By 2031 we will have:

- used research and innovation to position UK industry for significant market share in our priority programme areas, including life sciences, digital & technology, national security & defence and clean energy, investing around £11.9 billion over the SR period (through goal 2 and 3 budgets) and mobilising investment from partners
- translated mission-driven research into real-world impact, investing £500 million over the SR period through the R&D Missions Accelerator Programme
- maximised impact for the taxpayer by achieving at least £3 of additional investment for every £1 of public investment across investments aligned to goal 2 and 3 investments over at least five years

By April 2027 we will have:

- established co-designed priority programmes with clear sectoral outcomes, opportunities for global leadership and approved programme delivery plans by December 2026, investing around £2.7 billion this year in these priority programme areas and mobilising investment from partners
- invested £50 million through the R&D Missions Accelerator Programme, launching at least three new challenges

Objective 3: Provide targeted innovation, commercialisation and scale-up support across the UK to drive economic growth

By 2031 we will have:

- increased the appeal of UKRI-supported businesses for private capital, raising the proportion of businesses in the live portfolio that have received private equity or venture capital investment to greater than 55%, by supporting the highest-potential innovative companies through a new account management approach tailored to individual business needs to support growth
- improved our identification of high-potential spin-outs and support them to grow and stay in the UK, increasing the total proportion of UKRI-funded spin-outs that secure private investment

By April 2027 we will have:

- introduced a new framework for tracking high-potential spin-outs from existing and past translational investments by March 2027 and piloted the Innovate UK Venture Builder Programme by December 2026; we will also have delivered the proof-of-concept portfolio, by awarding up to £9 million to new projects by March 2027
- delivered a tailored, concierge-style 'Velocity' approach to growth sector support, providing data-driven account management aligned to company maturity and accelerating commercialisation; and embedded investor-readiness pathways to connect high-potential UKRI-backed businesses with specialist private capital
- anchored IP exploitation and economic value from public investment in research and innovation (R&I) in the UK by refreshing UKRI's intellectual property (IP) policies by November 2026

Objective 4: Deliver local impact and enhance national and international collaboration, security and resilience

By 2031 we will have:

- ensured the benefits of UKRI's investments are felt across the UK by investing in national clusters of excellence through the Local Innovation Partnership Fund and the Industrial Strategy's eight priority sector programmes and helping to foster stronger place-based partnerships, empower local leaders, accelerate regional specialisation and drive long-term, innovation-led economic resilience
- targeted high-value international collaborations that enhance UK scientific influence, secure strategic advantage through major multilateral partnerships and break down barriers to global partnership

By April 2027 we will have:

- established programmes with 17 places through our Local Innovation Partnership Fund, alongside publishing a refreshed Place Funding Policy by end of March 2027 and supporting the UK government's ambitions for the Northern Growth Strategy and OxCam arc
- strengthened UK international R&I leadership and partnerships by March 2027 by increasing the UK's funding share of Horizon Europe in comparison to key competitor countries, and embedding international partnerships within all priority programmes where there is the highest opportunity for strategic advantage and return on investment for UK plc

Objective 5: Develop and sustain an R&D environment that supports national science capability and attracts and nurtures the best research and innovation talent

By 2031 we will have:

- delivered key elements of the UK Compute Roadmap, including operation of the new national supercomputing service at Edinburgh by April 2028, and implemented the new UKRI AI Strategy
- supported over 20,000 new doctoral studentships across the UK and leveraged partner co-investment to grow doctoral capability in priority areas
- reduced processing times for research through the UKRI Funding Service to a median of 90 days for applicant-led investments and 60 days for targeted investments[3]

By April 2027 we will have:

- enhanced cross-disciplinary access to national digital research capability aligned with government priorities, through at least four new National Compute Resource (NCR) supercomputing services, aligned with the implementation of the UK Compute Roadmap and of our new AI strategy
- supported 5,000 new doctoral studentships; leveraging co-investment of at least £1.25 from partners for every £1 invested by UKRI in new doctoral focal awards in government priority areas
- reduced processing times for research through the Funding Service to a median of 180 days for applicant-led investments and 120 days for targeted investments

3 Reducing from median decision times of 194.5 days for applicant-led investments, and 127 days for targeted investments in 2025-26

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