



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

REPORT

Innovation Advisory Council for Wales: private sector engagement report

Summarises private sector feedback on the Amplyfi and Cardiff University innovation reports.

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Context

Welsh Government recently commissioned two pieces of research through the Innovation Advisory Council for Wales (IACW): one on the innovation landscape in Wales, past, present and future, carried out by a team from Cardiff University; one on international innovation comparators, by a team from Amplyfi. This research was concluded at the end of March 2021, and IACW then presented a series of recommendations to Welsh Government. These recommendations, along with the full versions of the two research reports, are available on the IACW webpages.

The Innovation Team within Welsh Government is now in a period of stakeholder engagement, to hear opinions on the research, and to inform future decisions and strategy. There will be three formal stakeholder engagement sessions in total: one aimed internally within Welsh Government, one for the public sector, and one for the private sector.

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The event

We advertised the private sector event via the Innovation newsletter and Twitter. All participants had the opportunity to read the reports and recommendations in advance of the session. We had nearly 50 participants in the event.

Agenda

1. Welcome from Innovation Team
2. Introduction to the research by IACW
3. Presentation from Cardiff University team
4. Presentation from Amplyfi team
5. General discussion

Key question

The Innovation Team posed four key questions to participants in advance, to get the discussion started:

1. Do you have a clear sense of Welsh Government innovation priorities and policies?
2. Do you think there are strong innovation networks in Wales?
3. If you wanted to access innovation funding or support, would you know where to look?
4. Would you welcome a National Innovation Body for Wales? What role would you see for this body?

Key themes from the discussion

Shape of new Innovation Strategy; integrated approach: There was substantial

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discussion about what a new innovation strategy should look like. Participants suggested that it should take a holistic and connected approach; that it should involve more private sector engagement from the bottom up, starting with SMEs; that it should spark a new innovation culture within Wales; that it should keep up with the rapidly changing UK Government innovation policy landscape.

Collaboration across sectors: Several participants raised points around better collaboration between the public and private sectors, perhaps with a role for Welsh Government as an enabler or facilitator. In terms of building clusters, which many saw as a useful route forward, there would need to be better university and corporate collaboration.

Social innovation: There was a strong sense that innovation needs to be part of the wider context of social and economic change within Wales. There were calls for a new strategy to address larger social challenges such as climate change and net zero, healthcare, social mobility and skills, etc., and for innovation to set a well-being agenda.

Simplified message: A strong emerging theme from the discussion was the need for simplification and streamlining: of the message from Welsh Government, of the types of support available, of support for bids and applications, and of project monitoring. There were also calls for more focused support to avoid the 'valley of death' for industry exploitation of innovation research.

Procurement: In terms of public sector procurement, there was general agreement that this is an important driver for innovation, and that NHS university health boards are crucial players in this sphere.

Strengths: There was a general sense that Wales needs to be clearer about where its strengths lie, and bolder in talking about these both nationally and internationally in order to be competitive.

Quality bid writing: Several participants called for better strategies to improve large-scale bid writing and support applications for funding to both Welsh Government and external sources.

Feedback

If you have any feedback on the research, or on stakeholder engagement so far, please email InnovationStrategy@gov.wales to contribute to the discussion.

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