

SUPA Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund Meeting

15 January 2018

Aims:

- Provide an overview of the ISCF
- Networking of researchers
- Identification of areas of strength
- Initiation of collaborations
- Project ideas to take forward
- Plans for responding to and influencing calls
- Identify other funding opportunities, e.g. EU

Alan Miller, SUPA CEO welcomed talks from a variety of organisations, including academic and industry. Presentation PDFs are available at <https://www.supa.ac.uk/node/574>

Rory Duncan, Heriot Watt
Mat Wasley, KTN
Mike Barrett, SULSA
David Gray, University of Edinburgh
Frank Tooley, Scottish Enterprise
David Porter, University of Glasgow
Gail McConnell, University of Strathclyde
Peter Estibeiro, Crucible Medtech
Stephen Taylor, Technology Scotland

Discussion session consisting of 6 tables (full transcript in appendix) addresses the following points:

- How can academia support SMEs in the application process?
- How do we bring together SMEs and Universities to create a critical mass for strong applications?
- What are the areas of strength in Scotland and can we identify credible projects to drive forward this year?
- What can be put in place to enable us to be responsive to future calls?
- What is missing in the current ISCF themes and how can we influence future calls?

Main points arisen from the discussion session:

- Need for up to date information portal for universities and companies to find expertise and research areas. This should be through a dedicated database (possibly maintained by KTN, Interface or Research Ventures). In addition, LinkedIn is an ideal platform for linking up with partners. Note Interface host a [specialist facilities](#) list.
- Networking events should be advertised widely to industry to make them aware of the opportunities available and raise Scottish SMEs' profile in academia. This also applies to SME-to-SME networking.
- Large consortiums should be created to be 'call ready'.
- University BDMs should meet periodically to share knowledge and encourage partnerships.
- Universities should offer the expertise of their technology transfer offices. The nondisclosure and IP process needs to be more readily available and transparent.
- Further focused networking events required.
- SFC should play a role in disseminating information on calls via research pools.

- Putting a call together on safety in the home related to healthy aging should be straightforward.
- Missing Big Data and Sensing & Imaging in ISCF calls. Can we leverage the Innovation Centres?

SUPA actions:

- Disseminate slides and outcomes from ISCF meeting to attendees and SFC and other relevant interested parties
- SUPA and SULSA to organise focussed meetings (initial planning meeting 5th March)
- SUPA will work with KTN, SFC and Technology Scotland to advertise calls and encourage application and collaborations

Appendix – Table Transcript

Table 1:

Noted the positivity of LinkedIn when used as a source to connect with potential partners. Ask academics to update their LinkedIn pages.

Universities Scotland have a non-disclosure template online and this should be used widely.

Suggestions that all academics should disperse their own questions to see what comes back. But what mechanism would be best for this - KTN?

University business development managers should meet each other occasionally to compare notes.

SMEs possibly unaware of networking events, these should be better promoted to include a wide variety of participants.

Equally, Academia do not fully understand what SMEs exist and what their areas of expertise may be.

[Interface](#) provide a funnelling process for SMEs to reach the correct academic.

SMEs find it difficult to find companies who they can partner with. Suggested that databases be used to keep all calls in one place.

Many areas of strength in Scotland. Highlighted smart soils, aquaculture and seeds.

Online chat forum where academics register an opportunity or idea would enable the companies to be more responsive. Suggested a [Research Professional](#) database for this or the existing blog on innovate uk.

What missing in ISCF – health not related to aging, especially hardware. Sustainability of biodiversity towards a healthier planet.

Table 2:

Table 2 suggested that SMEs/Academics should create large consortiums, in an attempt to undertake larger challenges. Also questioned was the urgency of the ISCF calls; calls released with a tight timescale which does not allow to build up strategic relationships and would mean that all calls would be made with existing partners.

Important to focus on transformational impact potential rather than transformational technology e.g. cost savings generated by modest technology improvements.

Larger agency should take care of database to help link SMEs and Academia by enabling them to fine tune their requirements.

Identify methods to generate new networks: start up new relationships by offering the use of University technologies/equipment to organisations which could then lead to longer term collaborations.

Identify various motivated individuals to assist who have specific expertise and involve a wide range of different colleagues.

Encourage SMEs to include partners and other SMEs in future applications.

There is a requirement for industry/academia having more focussed meetings e.g. on putting challenges together, which would direct existing meetings.

Table 3:

Table 3 noted there are certain barriers to SMEs, the application process is often unfamiliar to those working in industry and perhaps those in academia who are used to these processes can offer practical advice. Make better use of tech transfer offices.

IP issues for SMEs as universities request a large percentage. Need a reliable point of contact in the universities.

There are issues with financing from SMEs which makes participation difficult; investment opportunities should be found such as investment banks. Often restricted to 75% maximum funding and need to secure the other 25% over while timeframe of project.

Access to equipment a key way of attracting SMEs.

There were further calls for databases to hold up to date information and recognised the importance of Interface.

Bids – Healthy aging attractive, including safety in the home. This is an area where it should be relatively straight forward to put a bid together.

Missing from the ISCF:

Big data as an enabling technology.

Sensors and Imaging – can we leverage the innovation centre?

Space Port

Table 4:

Should focus on current calls which are opening now.

Further calls for “matchmaking” to bring SMEs and academia together.

Focus events through SULSA and SUPA requested.

Lots of academics do not understand how Innovate works and SMEs often don’t understand timing of grants.

How do you get academics to want to help SMEs? If you look at it as a way to get equipment or RAs you will put off the companies. Suggestions that this shouldn’t be seen as “getting money” and should be seen as the overall project with outcomes.

Table 5:

Noted there was a lack of grant-writing knowledge in SMEs, suggested using academia as a means of writing grants for SMEs. SMEs are often not fully aware of their legal liabilities and hiring lawyer out with their capabilities. Can universities help SMEs understand the legal framework?

Bringing SMEs and Universities together, again a central database. Series of very targeted workshops.

Inventory of available equipment linked to ‘light touch’ legal framework to enable timely access.

Scotland has great strengths in biosciences. Use this strength to help other areas – learn from good practice. Digital health – how can we use Scotland’s extensive medical records securely to enable researchers to probe the data.

Why is Scotland not responding to calls – information is not available. SFC & others should disseminate via pools. Looks at ways we can quickly bring people together.

Missing in ISCF – implementation of new ways of looking at data. Climate change.

Table 6:

Bringing SMEs and academics together – interface, innovation centres, Scottish Enterprise, European Enterprise Network.

Strengths in Scotland – medical imaging. IT systems would be good to lead something around. Big partners may be elsewhere in the UK. NHS as a partner would be key to economic impact. Need to be ready when call come out.

Influencing future call – key companies and academics directed by the pools.