



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

REPORT

Innovation Advisory Council for Wales: public sector engagement report

Summarises public 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 held the public sector event on 19 May, and invited representatives from across academia, health boards, local authorities, city and region deals, and housing associations. All participants had the opportunity to read the reports and recommendations in advance of the session.

We had around 60 participants, who represented the following public sector bodies:

- AberInnovation
- Aberystwyth University
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- ARCH
- Bangor University
- Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
- Caerphilly Council
- Cardiff Metropolitan University
- Cardiff University
- Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board
- Cyngor Gwynedd
- Cyngor Sir Ceredigion
- Growing Mid Wales
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW)
- Hywel Dda University Health Board
- Innovate UK / UKRI
- SPECIFIC IKC
- Springboard Business Innovation Centre Wales (Torfaen County Borough Council)
- Swansea University
- Torfaen County Borough Council
- University of South Wales
- University of Strathclyde
- University of Wales Trinity Saint David
- UWTSD / ATiC

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- Vale of Glamorgan Council
- Wales Institute of Digital Information
- Welsh Government
- Welsh Local Government Association

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 questions

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

1. Do you think that Welsh Government needs a new Innovation Strategy?
2. Would it be helpful to have a coordinated cross-departmental strategy from Welsh Government?
3. What role do you think procurement plays in supporting innovation ecosystems?
4. How can we increase risk appetite in public sector investment?
5. How might a regional approach to innovation in Wales work?
6. Would you welcome a National Innovation Body for Wales? What role would you see for this Body?

Key points from the discussion

Procurement: One of the main themes centred on public sector procurement,

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and the need for procurement to play a greater role in the innovation ecosystem in Wales, and to embrace a wider approach.

Collaboration across sectors; integrated approach: There was a strong emphasis on the need for more collaboration across sectors and organisations, and within Welsh Government. Participants said that there should be greater visibility and more opportunity for linking up.

National Innovation Body: Another key theme was on the question of a National Innovation Body (NIB) for Wales, with arguments both for and against. There were questions about what kind of form it might take, with the majority of those in favour of an NIB wanting it to look more like a community or network of innovators than a formal body. There were several comments indicating that an NIB would need to be open and able to remove barriers, rather than being too controlling or constricting, and that it would need to align with regions.

Risk taking and risk aversion: There was a focus on the importance of taking risks in innovation, and the current problems of risk aversion in the public sector. There was acknowledgement that there are different levels of acceptable risk between organisations and individuals, and that there would need to be a cultural change around risk.

Shape of new Innovation Strategy: There was stress on the need for a new innovation strategy to emphasise the importance of people and individuals, particularly when it comes to identifying leaders, and including the next generation of innovators in Wales.

Innovation responsibility: Several participants suggested that innovation stakeholders would need to produce their own innovation action plans and take responsibility for innovation in their sphere.

Data: There was some discussion around the importance of data as a driver of innovation, and as a key currency for the future, as well as around data sharing and storage.

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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