



EIC

Together we innovate

Innovator Insights Survey Report 2022

Outputs and Action Plan



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1 Introduction

The EIC Partnership is continually looking to improve the support provided to innovators in order to accelerate the deployment of innovation and as such, it actively seeks out and listens to the feedback and suggestions provided by innovators. Through this feedback, the EIC and the UK energy networks can determine areas for improvement in delivering support, guidance and information. This ensures innovative ideas, solutions and products are not only developed but fully tested and successfully deployed and commercialised across the UK.

On behalf of its Industry Partners, the EIC has conducted three surveys to Innovators in 2017, 2019 and 2020. These surveys were developed to identify the main barriers experienced by Innovators and get direct feedback on Industry experience.

The barriers identified included:

- Connecting with the right people
- Accessing funding
- Embracing disruptive innovation
- Procurement
- Terms & conditions
- Testing & demonstration
- Measuring innovation success
- Transparency of industry problems and processes
- Pace and business as usual deployment



“ Ofgem uses insights from innovators to understand how to best regulate the sector and support the delivery of innovative solutions. I would encourage Innovators to take every opportunity to make sure that your voice is heard.

Graeme Barton
Ofgem, Head of Price Control Operations

Action was taken to address all barriers and the EIC also led the creation of an Innovation Measurement Framework now being adopted by all Network companies (See section 5 of [ENA ENIP Process](#)), which is a direct result of previous surveys. Another example of the progress made is that the EIC now offers bespoke funding assistance, helping innovators identify suitable funding options outside of NIA, which was shown to be an area causing significant concern in previous iterations.

The latest Insight Survey closed early 2022. The majority of respondents were small & medium sized businesses (SMEs) and the response rate was higher than seen in previous surveys, with over 200 Innovators sharing their experience and providing more than 1,000 comments. Whilst all Networks have been assessed, the plan highlighted in this document will be led and delivered by the EIC Partnership.

The primary goal was to understand the experience of innovators when engaging and collaborating with the UK energy networks and assess the progress made towards eradicating the barriers already identified.



The support of the individuals we were working with was fantastic but the processes within the customer organisation made it difficult for both parties.

Innovator

The Survey also focused on gaining further insight into the following:

- 1 What support is of most value to Innovators.
- 2 The ease of access to relevant industry information and resources.
- 3 How to ensure successful deployment in business-as-usual operations.

Additionally, as part of a separate initiative undertaken in conjunction with Baringa Partners, the EIC Partnership conducted detailed 1:1 interviews and held several workshops with selected representatives from the EIC global Innovation community and Networks staff. The objective was to understand the improvements required to the end-to-end innovation and procurement processes.

The findings, proposed plan and 10 priority actions contained within this report have been informed by data from the Insight Survey, as well as findings from the workshops and interviews.

Important note:

The detail of the percentages for positive, neutral and negative responses has been provided for the purpose of transparency. It should be noted that the proportion of neutral responses is high across the survey response, leading to lower positive or negative percentages. This will be addressed in future surveys.

2 Key survey insights & feedback from Innovators

The response rate was higher than seen in previous surveys with a good diversity of Innovators.

High level response statistics together with the profile of Innovators who responded are detailed below.



200+
Responses



1,000+
Comments



114
Respondents with solutions
developed or being developed
in partnership with Networks



75
Respondents with
Innovations deployed into
business-as-usual operations



82%
of respondents were SME's



31%
of respondents were innovators
new to the Energy industry

“ We collectively welcome the engagement of our innovation SME community with the EIC to provide us with a breadth and depth of insights across the end-to-end process of innovation deployment. Whilst it is encouraging to note that progress has been made in key areas, we know there is more work to be done to address the barriers to Innovation identified. Doing so is critical to ensure that the investment we make in innovation projects results in the effective and timely implementation of innovation that ultimately delivers consumer benefit. The EIC Advisory Board welcome and accept the feedback and the recommendations made following analysis by EIC, and we look forward to working collaboratively with the innovation SME community to ensure we deliver tangible and long-term improvements for everyone involved.

Nicola Todd
National Grid Electricity Transmission,
Chair of the EIC Advisory Board, on behalf of EIC Network Partners

The following are high-level insights drawn from the survey response and comments analysis (See key statistics table):

- 1 **Feedback from Innovators has reinforced that the following is required:**
 - Faster implementation of innovation into business as usual (BAU).
 - More consistency across Networks (from an idea submitted to BAU deployment).
 - Streamlined processes.
 - Improved collaborative working and partnerships.
 - Easier access to data and information.
- 2 Continued effort is needed to mitigate the barriers to innovation previously identified. The EIC and its Partner Networks will develop a roadmap by the end of 2022 that will highlight future timelines and milestones.
- 3 Networks need to be more approachable, more open to new ideas and the overall pace of engagement and decision making needs to be further increased.
- 4 Additional support and signposting of support already available is required for new Innovators.
- 5 The experience of Innovators working on projects with Networks and deploying innovation into BAU is mostly satisfactory.
- 6 New Innovators are keen to engage with the industry and likely to propose ideas.
- 7 Innovators value the support provided by organisations like the EIC.

“ Most innovators don’t understand the IP requirements of NIA - causing lengthy issues in negotiating contracts.
 Innovator

Key statistics from survey	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The barriers identified have been addressed (Average across all barriers listed in section 3)	37%	40%	23%
Networks are approachable and open to new innovative ideas, products & services	36%	40%	24%
New innovators are satisfied with the current level of support	48%	31%	21%
New innovators are keen to engage with the industry	75%	12%	13%
Innovators have a positive experience with Networks (Average across Developments & BAU)	60%	32%	8%

3 Detailed Survey Response

The table below presents an overview of the survey response for each barrier.

From the insight and feedback provided, the EIC Partnership identified 18 actions which have been validated by members of the EIC Innovator Impact Panel. These actions will further address the barriers identified, improve Innovator experience, and accelerate the pace of Innovation deployment. Additionally, whilst the industry is making some progress, continued effort is required to address the barriers to innovation previously identified. Whilst all 18 actions will be worked upon by the Partnership, there are 10 priority actions identified by the innovators which will deliver the greatest improvements overall.

The detail of these actions can be found in section 4 and an overview of which stage of the end to end process they will improve in section 5.

“ It is clear from the feedback received which includes 1,000 comments, that innovators are extremely committed to creating innovative solutions for the Energy Networks and supporting the transition to Net Zero. The action plan contained within this summary report details how the EIC Partnership will respond, increase the support provided to Innovators and improve their experience when engaging and collaborating with the UK Energy Networks to accelerate those solutions into operational practice.

Denise Massey EIC, Managing Director

Barriers	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Barrier 1 Innovators have access to the required industry information and expertise to support the adoption of their innovation (See priority actions 1 to 6)	44%	33%	23%
Barrier 2 Innovators have relevant and timely access to funding information besides NIA & SIF (Other actions to be progressed)	32%	44%	24%

Agree Neutral Disagree

Barrier 3

Innovators recognise that the Energy Networks are now **embracing disruptive innovations**

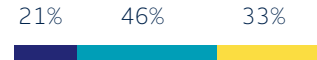
(Other actions to be progressed)



Barrier 4

Energy companies have improved their **procurement process** to accommodate smaller companies

(See priority action 5)



Barrier 5

Innovators have clarity in relation to the Energy Networks: **General Terms and Conditions, Intellectual Property rights requirements, Insurance Requirements, Procurement process**

(See priority actions 5.7 & 10)



Barrier 6

Do you know what **Testing & Demonstration facilities** are available in the energy sector?

(Other actions to be progressed)



Barrier 7

The Energy Networks provide sufficient **clarity in relation to the challenges** they need to address

(See priority actions 1, 3 & 4)



Barrier 8

Innovators have seen an **improvement in the pace of engagement** of technology development and adoption in the past 12 months

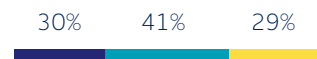
(See priority action 9)



Barrier 9

Innovators have greater clarity in the **end-to-end requirements that will increase the likelihood of deployment of their innovation** within an Energy Network company

(See priority actions 6 & 8)



4 Priority actions

Action 1

Innovators & Networks Briefing Packs Development

Whilst guidance is already provided to innovators (e.g. innovation call briefs, 'Ultimate Guide to Innovative with the UK Energy Networks'), the EIC will work with Networks to provide additional contextual information, some of which will be call/challenge specific. Innovators will be provided with as much relevant information as possible regarding the brief and the process to better equip them to respond. Finally, a pack will also be developed for Networks including expectations on the quality of feedback required.

Action 2

One Stop Shop Innovator Support Signposting

The Innovator Support Page will undergo a review this financial year to increase its value to Innovators. Working in conjunction with key Industry organisations, we will be developing a comprehensive signposting platform, providing SMEs easy access to a variety of industry support schemes, saving Innovators both time and effort.

Action 3

Challenges Prioritisation

Networks are not always articulating or qualifying the problem requirements effectively before issuing calls for innovation. The process for qualifying and prioritising problems and innovation requirements will be strengthened. This will increase the quality of call briefs and will ultimately accelerate the deployment into business as usual once a solution is found or developed.

Action 4

Additional Challenges Engagement

We understand that sometimes innovators require clarifications directly from Networks. This is why we continually evolve our service and adapt to the changing needs and insight we gain from innovators. The EIC Partnership will seek new and more effective ways for our Innovators to directly engage with Network companies. [Short summary videos](#) will also be used for certain innovation calls to facilitate the flow of information about challenges from Industry colleagues to Innovators.

“ Often the innovation teams in the organisations are not clear on the routes into business as usual, as they can be more focused on the technical success of the project rather than the commercial models needed for 'at scale' deployment.

Innovator

Action 5

Procurement “Route to Scale” and Standardisation

Procurement and contracting processes may differ between Networks and can be complex in nature. These processes will be documented and socialised, to ensure that they are clearly communicated and understood by both Network staff and Innovators across the sector. Networks will also assess what parts of their procurement processes can be aligned, in order to facilitate access for SMEs and increase the pace of project delivery into BAU. Finally, an industry FAQ procurement guide will be developed.

Action 6

BAU Readiness Checks

Networks will ensure that the key elements required to ensure successful deployment are clearly defined for each innovation project (e.g. business sponsorship, policies & procedures, testing required, etc.). These will be assessed through regular live innovation project health check(s) and action taken when gaps are identified. This will help both Innovators and Networks ensure that innovation projects and solutions are ready for BAU.

Action 7

Review Terms & Conditions

Networks will review their starting position regarding a variety of Terms and Conditions such as Intellectual Property and liability insurance, to ensure they are appropriate for innovation projects, partnerships and smaller Innovators.

Action 8

BAU Transition Process Efficiency and Communications

The biggest challenge facing Innovators and Networks alike, is getting an innovation into BAU. Networks will streamline their internal end-to-end deployment process to enable more productive and collaborative relationships between their internal business functions. The BAU transition process will also be clearly documented to ensure that it is well understood by all stakeholders (both Networks and Innovators) who play a part in it.

Action 9

Accelerating Pace

The EIC Partnership will continue to drive the acceleration of pace from idea submitted to deployment into business as usual. This will be done by ensuring that defined Pace targets (e.g. for an idea to be progressed to a project) are met by both Innovators and Networks, as well as adopting more agile practices throughout the process to fast track proposals when appropriate.

Action 10

Intellectual Property (IP) Consistency

Networks can have slightly different approaches to dealing with IP and this can sometimes delay the progression of a project. Networks will deliver a more consistent approach to IP to speed up contract negotiations.

5 End to End Process Map

The process map below provides an overview of the 18 actions and which stage of the end-to-end process they will improve. A high-level description of the priority actions can be found in section 4.



“ As a representative of the SME community and on behalf of the EIC Innovator Impact Panel, we are pleased to note that the action points address the highlighted concerns across the end to end process, and that a robust, and achievable plan has been developed. We now look forward to monitoring progress and providing additional feedback as required.

Kate Edwards Outram, Member of the EIC Innovator Impact Panel

6 Conclusion

The industry is making some progress and the experience of Innovators who have secured funding from the Energy networks, either for development or BAU deployment, is mostly satisfactory (60% have had a positive experience).

However, there is significant room for improvement and a lot of work remains to be done to address the barriers identified in this report. i.e. facilitate access for new Innovators, increase pace, develop a closer working relationship between Networks and Innovators, increase consistency across the sector, etc., and ultimately accelerate the deployment of Innovation into BAU.

Work is already underway to deliver the priority actions listed in this summary document, which are only a selection from the wider framework of activities developed as a direct result of the latest feedback received from Innovators.



7 Next steps

1

Delivery

The delivery of the actions identified will continue and work will be undertaken in conjunction with other Industry organisations such as UKRI and the ENA as appropriate.

From August 2022

2

Roadmap development

The EIC Partnership will develop more detailed plans for each action including key milestones, timescales and how success will be measured. A high level delivery roadmap which will be published towards the end of 2022.

September to December 2022

3

Progress tracking and reporting

The EIC Partnership intends to regularly report back progress. A formal progress update will be published in Q1 2023/24 and additional updates will be provided as and when objectives or key milestones are achieved.

Next 12 months

4

Further insight

160 Innovators responded that they would be happy to be contacted to further discuss their answers. The EIC will arrange 1:1 discussions or focused workshops to gain additional insights as required.

Next 12 months

5

Benchmark

Finally, the outputs of this survey will be used as a benchmark to measure the progress made by the industry over the next 3 years.



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