

New body to make UK world-leading centre for telecoms innovation

- Will guide firms seeking R&D funding or collaboration on Open RAN and other disruptive tech
- Comes as new stats show two-thirds of UK premises can access lightning-fast gigabit broadband

The UK will be a world leader in telecoms research and development under plans for a new government-funded organisation dedicated to boosting innovation in the country's telecoms supply chain.

The UK Telecoms Innovation Network (UKTIN) will act as an information point for telecoms companies looking to access funding or testing facilities for R&D and opportunities to collaborate on developing new and improved technologies for UK mobile and broadband networks.

The government has today [launched](#) a competition for organisations to apply for up to £10 million to establish and run the centre, which will support innovators at the right time to scale up, develop their products, gain better access to telecoms markets and drive exports abroad.

It comes as new independent figures from [ThinkBroadband](#) show that two-thirds of UK homes and businesses (66.75%) can now access lightning-fast gigabit broadband. This is a huge rise on 2019 when coverage was just 6 per cent and shows rapid progress is being made in the government's plan to speed up the rollout of better broadband and level up communities with faster internet speeds.

The UKTIN will be run by a consortium of organisations with telecoms expertise and will support knowledge sharing and collaboration on open and interoperable network technologies such as Open RAN, which allows telecoms companies to mix and match telecoms equipment rather than having to rely on a single supplier when building or maintaining networks.

The technology is considered crucial to the government's £250 million [strategy](#) to lower barriers for firms seeking to enter the UK telecoms supply chain – which will increase competition, drive up the quality of products and services and reduce the UK's current reliance on a small number of international suppliers.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Julia Lopez said:

The UK Telecoms Innovation Network will be the first port of call for any telecoms company looking to access R&D funding and a matchmaker for firms looking to join forces on cutting-edge projects.

Ultimately this is about making the UK the best place in the world

to develop rapid and seamless new technology for the digital networks that will power our economy well into the 21st century.

The UKTIN will be tasked with creating an up-to-date database of information on R&D funding in the public and private sector. It will also create an annual report which maps out the latest developments and opportunities in disruptive and innovative telecoms technology in the UK, including Open RAN.

Setting up the UKTIN was one of the key recommendations in last year's report from the Telecoms Diversification Taskforce: an independent body set up by the government to advise on necessary steps to transform the UK's telecoms supply chain so it is more competitive, innovative and secure.

The UKTIN is expected to be up and running by the end of the year, with the winning consortium announced in the summer.

ENDS

Notes to editors

- Up to £10m is available for the competition. We are asking applicants to submit two bids one for £5m and another for £10m. We will then determine the bid which represents the most value for money.
- Funding for the UKTIN is subject to Programme Business Case approval.
- The deadline for applications is noon on 20 May 2022.
- We will be holding a briefing event for companies who are interested in applying to the competition on the 7 April 2022. Please register your interest online [here](#) to attend.