

Rolls-Royce secures more UK innovation funding than any firm in 18 years, research finds

Aerospace giant Rolls-Royce has been awarded the most innovation funding of any UK company over the last 18 years, new research suggests.

The company, which has its UK sites in Filton, near Bristol, and Derby, has been handed £689m by Innovate UK over nearly two decades – equivalent to nearly £38.2m each year. It is over four times more than any other company has received for their innovation projects, and accounts for 7% of all funding awarded by the government's innovation agency.

In July, Rolls-Royce announced it was in the [final stages](#) of building the world's largest jet engine. Significant investment has been made to develop the UltraFan demonstrator and associated technologies by [Rolls-Royce](#) and a variety of funding agencies.

The research – conducted by intellectual property services and R&D tax credit firm GovGrant – analysed publicly available Innovate UK data.

Luke Hamm, chief executive of GovGrant, said: “Rolls-Royce is a compelling success story and it highlights the vital role that innovation funding plays in supporting local economies, and could contribute to the wider ‘levelling up’ agenda if targeted correctly.

“It’s extraordinary that Rolls-Royce PLC has received 11.73% of all Innovate UK funding to commercial entities, which is a huge sum to be awarded to one company. This either underlines

the importance of collaboration and the role large organisations play in our innovation economy, or brings into question whether the funding process is a level playing field for smaller businesses.

“However, I’m sure there are instances of SMEs local to Rolls-Royce locations – and collaborators across the UK – who experience a trickle-down effect from this funding.”

Overall, businesses in the South West region have attracted 11.03% of funding from Innovation UK since 2004, worth over £647m. This is the third-highest figure from the UK’s 12 regions, ranking above East of England (10.79%), West Midlands (7.71%) and East Midlands (6.83%).

As well as Rolls-Royce, a third of the UK’s aerospace and defence GDP can be found in Bristol, including Airbus and Boeing. Airbus Operations and Airbus UK are other Bristol-based companies featuring in the top five best-funded businesses for innovation, winning combined total funding of over £210m from Innovate UK since 2004.

Neil Fraser, director of defence and space programmes at NSSLGlobal, added: “It is vital that the UK continues to invest across multiple aerospace companies in key sectors – to support national security and critical services, whilst enabling economic growth and contributing to net zero targets.”

Top five commercial recipients of Innovate UK funding

Rank	Name	Sector	No. of fundings w/value	Total value of funding (award offered)
1	ROLLS-ROYCE PLC	C Aerospace – Space	214	£ 688,544,903.68

2	AIRBUS OPERATIONS LIMITED	C Aerospace – Space	58	£ 162,089,411.51
3	GKN AEROSPACE SERVICES LIMITED	C Aerospace – Space	47	£ 113,648,171.74
4	JAGUAR LAND ROVER LIMITED	C Machinery	87	£ 75,317,582.97
5	AIRBUS UK LIMITED	C Aerospace – Space	43	£ 48,784,356.00

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