

Complaints Procedure

The Technology Strategy Board is committed to providing a high quality, responsive and accessible service. However, there may be times when you feel unhappy about the service you receive or wish to make a suggestion about how we might improve. We also hope that you might want to tell us when you have been particularly happy with the service you have received. Your complaints, suggestions and compliments are important to us because they help us improve our services.

The following sets out the formal process for making a complaint. Please note that complaints relating to disagreements about scientific judgments and any matters that are the subject of legal proceedings are excluded from this complaints process (see section on Scientific Judgments at the end of this document). Compliments and general feedback will also be dealt with outside of this process.

Definition of a complaint

Complaints submitted through this procedure should be concerned with the way in which a decision has been made or an action taken, rather than objections to the merits of the actual decision or action. Examples include:

- When we have said we would do something and it has not happened;
- When the quality of our process was not as expected e.g. we took too long, lacked consistency or were unclear;
- When a member of our staff or someone working on our behalf acts in an inappropriate or discourteous way.

How to make a complaint

Stage 1

The people who dealt with your enquiry, application or project are probably best equipped to deal with the complaint. A simple misunderstanding may have arisen and we would therefore hope to be able to resolve it quickly and informally. Please contact the member of staff who has been dealing with your enquiry, proposal or project initially.

Stage 2

If this is not possible you can make your complaint in writing, by letter or email to the Complaints Officer, Technology Strategy Board, B1, North Star House, North Star Avenue, Swindon, SN2 1JF complaints.officer@tsb.gov.uk

You will receive an acknowledgement within 3 working days and a written response within 10 working days. If this is not possible, you will be given an explanation of the reasons for the delay and a timescale by which you will receive a full reply.

The Complaints Officer will co-ordinate the handling of the response in conjunction with the Programme Manager or senior officer with responsibility for the area to which the complaint refers. The process will generally include the following activities:

- Gathering of all relevant information;
- Agreeing the issues and facts with the complainant;
- Assessing the validity of the complaint in the context of stated procedures and, if applicable, published service standards;
- Informing the complainant of the outcome and, if applicable, any remedial action to be taken.

Stage 3

If you remain unhappy with the outcome, you can ask for the complaint to be referred to a Director of the Technology Strategy Board. We would normally appoint a Director who did not have direct responsibility for the area in which the complaint resided so that a fresh review can take place. If this is not possible then this review may be undertaken by our Chief Executive. As we escalate our part of the process we would

expect a reciprocal escalation on the part of the complainant e.g. involvement of an executive at a higher level in the organisation than the complainant.

Stage 4

If your complaint has gone through all our internal processes and you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, you have the right to refer the matter to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration (the Parliamentary Ombudsman). Further information on how to go about this is available from <http://www.ombudsman.org.uk/>

Data Protection and Recording of Complaints

As a public body we have a duty to record and track any complaints we receive. This requires us to keep information concerning complaints and to evaluate our responses in order to improve our services. Information about complaints will be stored on our electronic data storage systems but access will be restricted to staff dealing with the complaint and our professional advisors. Personal information is stored in accordance with The Data Protection Act.

Scientific Judgments

Competitions for Research and Development funding are regularly issued by the Technology Strategy Board. Please note the following points regarding judgements made in these competitions.

- Ultimately a Research & Development Competition is precisely that, i.e. a competition where an application is judged in relation to other applications.
- The Technology Strategy Board employs a panel of independent assessors to review, assess and make recommendations as to suitability for funding.
- The panel operates under a confidentiality agreement with the Technology Strategy Board and names of panelists are not disclosed, to allow full and thorough judgments to be expressed freely.
- The panel assesses applications using its skills and experience and is charged with creating a ranked ordered list which includes a recommendation or otherwise for funding.

- The Technology Strategy Board does not change the ranked ordered list provided by the panel, and uses it to finally agree the list of successful applicants according to the funding available for that particular competition.
- Feedback is offered to applicants aiming to provide some understanding of why they might have been unsuccessful.
- Unless an issue arises which falls into the complaint definition described above, it is not Technology Strategy Board practice to reconsider applications after the panel has made its decision.
- For decisions on the continuation of funding the Technology Strategy Board may use a single assessor to make recommendations.

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