

# Curiosity Capability Competitiveness

Charting Ireland's Research  
and Innovation Future

2026–2030



# Talent Economy Society

**Research Ireland is a new agency with a new strategy and purpose: to develop an internationally renowned research and innovation system for the prosperity of the people of Ireland.**

Ireland has transformed its research and innovation capacity over the last 25 years, with a higher volume and quality of research outputs, more PhD-trained researchers, growth in private R&D investment, and increased impact of research on public policy and societal well-being.

However, international competition is intense, with many countries growing investment in research and actively connecting their research and innovation systems.

In response, Research Ireland will ensure the continued development of Ireland's research and innovation proposition.

We will invest across the breadth of disciplines, and we will support discovery research. We will invest to enable the attraction, retention and development of research talent, the growth of our economy, and the delivery of societal impact which improves quality of lives.

We will focus on strengthening connections between academia, enterprise, public policy, and society.

We will work in partnership with all key stakeholders to ensure increased ambition, improved alignment and a proactive approach to maximising benefit for Ireland.

We will support trained researchers bringing their skills and expertise from academia to the private and public sectors; the attraction and further embedding of foreign direct investment; the development of scaling spinout companies; improved policy making and society; and an enriched culture.

Research and innovation are critical to Ireland's societal and economic future.

# Curiosity Capability Competitiveness

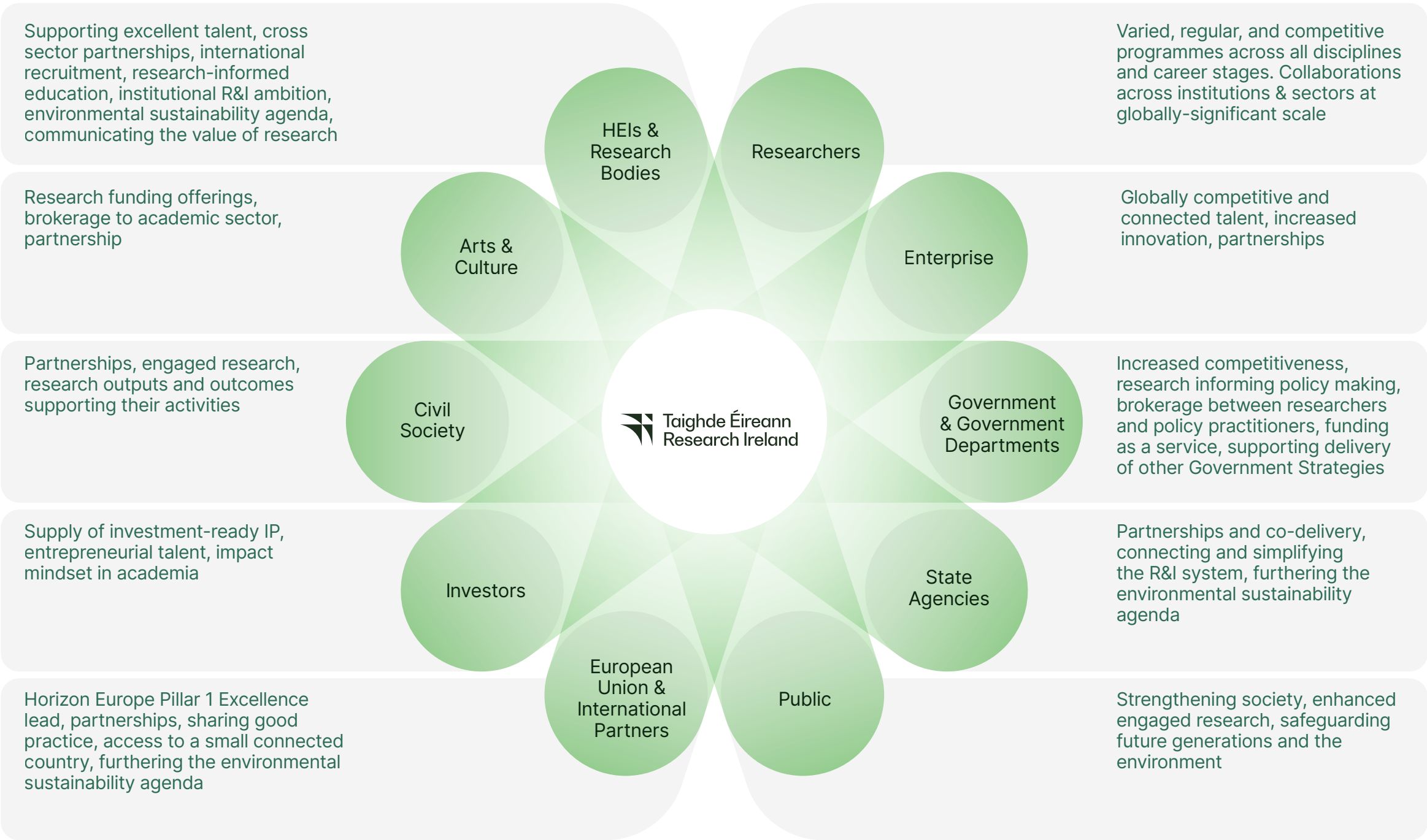
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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Purpose:    Develop an internationally renowned research & innovation system for the prosperity of the people of Ireland |                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                 |                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                               |                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                |                                        |
| Themes                                                                                                                   | Talent<br><br>Empowering People                                                                                                                                                         |                                 |                                                                                                                    | Economy<br><br>Strengthening Competitiveness                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                               |                                          | Society<br><br>Driving Solutions                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                |                                        |
| Actions                                                                                                                  | Enhanced Suite of PhD Programmes<br><br>Predictable Funding Programmes at all Careers Stages<br><br>Mobility Programmes<br><br>International Recruitment<br><br>Research Infrastructure |                                 |                                                                                                                    | Research Centres<br><br>Research Translation and Commercialisation<br><br>Enterprise-academic Partnerships<br><br>Regional Partnerships<br><br>Future Skills Needs |                                                                                                                               |                                          | Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Research<br><br>Cross Sectoral Engagement and Collaboration<br><br>Delivery Agency for Government's R&I Ambitions<br><br>Public Engagement<br><br>Diverse Skills and Training |                                                |                                        |
| KPIs                                                                                                                     | 3800<br>PhDs                                                                                                                                                                            | 2000<br>Postdoctoral Fellows    | 1000<br>Investigator-led Grants                                                                                    | 14<br>Research Centres                                                                                                                                             | 36%<br>Co-Funded by MNCs                                                                                                      | 16%<br>Co-Funded by SMEs                 | 10%<br>Co-Funded by Societal Partners                                                                                                                                                                                 | 150<br>Grants in Partnerships with Govt. Dept. | 5<br>Initiatives Connecting R&I System |
|                                                                                                                          |  30<br>International Recruitment Grants                                                             | 3300<br>Publications in top 10% |  10<br>Strategic Partnerships | 50<br>Active Spin-Out Companies                                                                                                                                    |  €650m<br>In Trans-disciplinary Research | 1250<br>Researchers Engaging with Policy |                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                |                                        |
| Route to Impact:                                                                                                         | Funder<br><br>Best Practice                                                                                                                                                             |                                 |                                                                                                                    | More than a Funder<br><br>Accelerating Impact                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                               |                                          | Connecting Internationally<br><br>Global Reputation                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                |                                        |

# A New Agency

**The establishment of Research Ireland represents Ireland’s most ambitious commitment to developing national research competitiveness and ensuring that research and innovation will be a central pillar of Ireland’s future.**

There are many areas where Research Ireland can play a leading role for the country. Working in partnership with the Department for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, we will deliver the ambitions of *Impact 2030*, the *National Development Plan*, and the *Programme for Government*.

Research Ireland will be a research and innovation development agency for the country, working in close collaboration with all our stakeholders to enhance our ability to deliver substantial benefits to the risk economy and society.



# Case Study Talent

## Global Influence in the Mission for Accountability in AI



During her PhD, Dr Abeba Birhane exposed harmful bias in AI training, leading to the withdrawal of 80 Million Tiny Images, an image dataset from MIT.

Now Director of the AI Accountability Lab at the ADAPT Research Ireland Centre, Abeba has

- featured in Time100's most influential people in AI
- advised the UN Secretary General
- joined Ireland's AI Advisory Council

**Partners:**

Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, MacArthur Foundation, Omidyar Group, Luminate Foundation, European AI & Society Fund, Bestseller Foundation, and UK Dept For Science, Technology, and Innovation.

# Case Study Economy

## From Start-up to a Global Leader



APC Ltd., co-founded in 2011 by UCD faculty and alumni, are now partnering with 8 of the world's top 10 pharma companies to accelerate the delivery of medicines to patients through industry-leading science and digital.

Currently investing €100m at the Cherrywood, Dublin 'Medicine Accelerator' site, to include an additional 300 R&D jobs, driving demand for PhD-trained researchers.

APC Ltd. partner across the R&I system in Ireland setting a benchmark for Irish spinouts collaborating with Universities to accelerate global impact.

**Partners:**

University College Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, NIBRT, SSPC the Research Ireland Centre for Pharmaceuticals, Enterprise Ireland.

**Co-Founders APC Ltd. & VLE Therapeutics:**

Dr Mark Barrett (CEO) and Prof. Brian Glennon (CTO).

# Route to Impact

To deliver this strategy we will: be an agile and innovative funder following best international practice; accelerate impact by being more than a funding agency; and connect our research and innovation system to Europe and the rest of the world.



# Best Practice Funder

**Principles**  
The following six principles will be used to guide implementation of all Research Ireland funding programmes.

|                           |                                              |                          |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Excellence</b><br>     | <b>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</b><br> | <b>Open Research</b><br> |
| <b>Simplification</b><br> | <b>Sustainability</b><br>                    | <b>Trust</b><br>         |

## Commitments to the Research Community

- Retain a balance in our core investment between investigator-led and thematic
- Implement minimum thresholds across three discipline domains
- Increase predictability through annual / regular calls
- Streamline and simplify the programme offering

# Research Ireland's Indicative Offering



# More than a Funder

To be the development agency for the research and innovation system we will be a strategic leader, partner, and connector, working with the research and innovation community, with the public and private sectors, and with wider society, nationally and internationally.



|                                                                                                     |                                                                                                          |                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Attract and Support Excellent Researchers<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>01                 | Boost the Competitiveness of Ireland's HEIs<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>02                    | Raise the Global Reputation of Irish Research<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>03        |
| Increase Enterprise Collaboration and Innovation Capacity<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>04 | Catalyse Regional Economic Growth<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>05                              | Strengthen Ireland's Resilience<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>06                      |
| Shape Evidence-Informed Public Policy and Practice<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>07        | Provide Evidence-based Research and Innovation System Insights<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>08 | Enhance Engaged Research to Strengthen Irish Society<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>09 |

# Connecting Internationally

We will advance Ireland's global reputation as a leading destination for research and innovation. Through showcasing the excellent talent and research base in Ireland and building stronger international partnerships, we will attract people, companies, funding, and investment to Ireland.

Our international Strategy is built around 5 pillars:

- Europe
- International Partnerships
- International Recruitment
- Trade and Research Diplomacy
- Mobility



Language as a  
Path to Justice & Healing



A mature society has a moral imperative to confront historical injustice, and researchers play a critical role.

The Language, Terminology, and Representation project worked directly with those affected and informed the Government’s response to the *Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes*.

This work set a benchmark for respectful public dialogue with those affected by historical institutions.

**Partners:**  
UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre at University of Galway and Collaborative Forum of Former Residents of Mother and Baby Homes. Jointly funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth.

**Co-authors:** Prof. Caroline McGregor (pictured), Dr Carmel Devaney, Dr Sarah-Anne Buckley.

Key Messages

- 01 Our new agency has a new purpose – to develop an internationally renowned research and innovation capability for Ireland.
- 02 We will develop and connect Ireland’s research and innovation systems to ensure that Ireland is competitive with other small advanced economies.
- 03 We will invest across the breadth of disciplines and will support discovery research, recognising its value in shaping Ireland’s long-term research and innovation capability.
- 04 We will ensure that Ireland is a globally attractive location to build a research career – across industry, public policy, civil society, and academia.
- 05 We will be “more than a funder”. This developmental role will comprise strategic leadership, proactive partnering, and connecting. Close collaboration with all stakeholders will enhance our ability to deliver substantial benefits to Irish economy and society.
- 06 We will take an international approach, connecting our research and innovation system to Europe and the rest of the world. This will advance Ireland’s reputation, enable talent flow, increase international funding of Irish research, and connect Irish researchers globally.



Research Ireland is central to developing Ireland's talent pipeline, from skills development to cutting-edge research, embedding the strategically critical research and innovation system needed to continue attracting and scaling international companies in Ireland.

**James O'Connor**

Corporate Vice President for Microsoft  
Global Operations Service Centre  
and Microsoft Ireland Site Leader

Research Ireland is a strategic agency for Ireland that, in partnership with universities, can enable the country to attract and develop global talent across all disciplines and career stages, connect our research and innovation systems, build partnerships with industry, enhance Ireland's competitiveness in winning international research funding, and deliver impact for society.

**Professor John O'Halloran**

President, University College Cork,  
and Chair, Irish Universities Association

Cuan is proud to partner with Research Ireland. I welcome Research Ireland's ambition to deliver a step-change in collaboration, enabling researchers across the breadth of disciplines to address pressing societal issues, thereby contributing to social cohesion and national wellbeing.

**Dr Stephanie O'Keefe**

CEO, Cuan

Research Ireland is critical to Ireland's future, enabling the development of talent, intellectual property, and entrepreneurial capability that together create a consistently high-quality, investable pipeline of university spin-out companies. These companies will be well positioned to attract venture capital in key sectors, from seed to growth, enabling them to scale internationally from universities.

**Elaine Coughlan**

Co-Founder and Managing  
Partner, Atlantic Bridge

Research Ireland is critical to unlocking the full research and innovation potential of our technological universities, enabling us to deliver transformative regional and national economic and social impact.

**Professor Veronica Campbell**

President, South East  
Technological University



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