

About AIRTO

AIRTO - the Association of Innovation, Research and Technology Organisations - champions the UK's Innovation, Research & Technology (IRT) sector which is a strategic enabler for businesses.

November 2024



About AIRTO

The Innovation, Research & Technology (IRT) sector, with a combined turnover estimated at ~£7Bn, employs over 57,000 scientific and technical staff (equivalent to the academic staffing of the Russell Group of universities). The sector contributes more than £34Bn to UK GDP. IRT organisations work at the interface between academia and industry, for both private and public sector clients. The role of the UK's IRT sector is critical to delivering the UK's Industrial Strategy providing laboratories, test-beds and world-leading expertise at the disposal of businesses, the government and its agencies.

AIRTO represents the UK's Innovation, Research & Innovation sector. Our membership comprises approximately sixty of the principal organisations operating across a diverse range of industry sectors. Members include independent Research and Technology Organisations, Catapult Centres, Public Sector Research Establishments, National Laboratories, and some privately held innovation companies known as RTOs (Research & Technology Organisations).

We work on behalf of our member organisations to 'fly the flag' for the critical work that they do to tackle some of society's most pressing challenges (such as energy security and the transition to Net Zero, sustainable food production and delivering quality healthcare for an ageing population) and driving economic growth and prosperity for the UK.

Our Vision:

Our vision is to 'Make innovation work for our economy'.

The UK needs to remain globally competitive at innovation to maximise its future economic success. In recognition of this need, the government's Industrial Strategy and subsequent Science & Technology Framework places people, businesses and global collaboration at its core. It sets out ambitions to grow R&D intensity (as a percentage of GDP) and attain global 'Science Superpower' status. These ambitions present an opportunity for AIRTO to harness the potential of the IRT sector to help make innovation work for our economy.

AIRTO aims to lead an ambitious, strong, decisive and influential movement to champion the role of the IRT sector, positively shaping the climate for innovation to benefit the wider economy, enhancing national prosperity and quality of life.

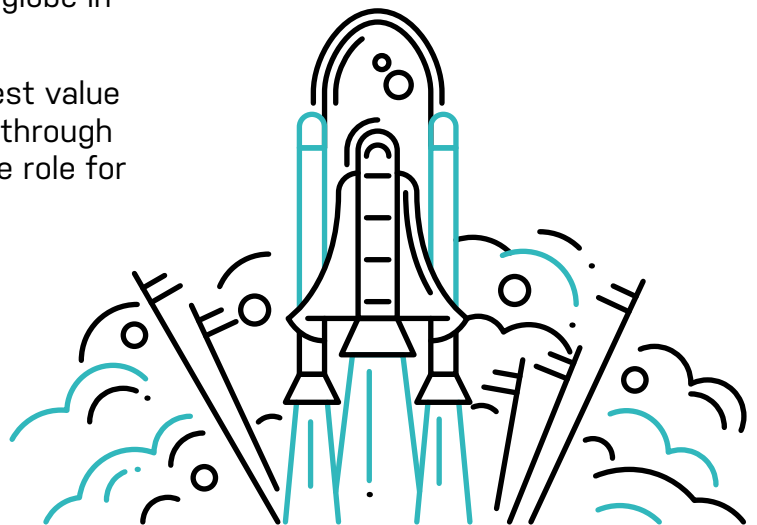
Our Mission:

To achieve the vision of 'making innovation work for our economy', we:

- Work alongside partners in government, industry, finance, and academia to join up capabilities across the IRT sector;
- Support our community to provide the UK's innovation capacity, including: Skills and future pipeline of talent, Impact measurement, Thought Leadership, Access to finance, Advocacy, Networking and learning, Access to facilities and capabilities, Commercialisation expertise;
- Advocate for the innovation sector to raise its profile and help improve the climate for innovation;
- Enable members to improve their business performance via mechanisms to share knowledge and best practice;
- Drive diversity and inclusion across the sector to make our organisations the best places to work and attract talent;
- Advocate for the sector to play its part in enthusing and training the next generation of leaders in innovation.

The role of the Innovation, Research & Technology Sector in delivering the UK's Industrial Strategy

- 1.** The IRT sector has a critical role to play in supporting the government's delivery of the Industrial Strategy, especially the UK's attainment of the goal to increase national investment in R&D as a proportion of GDP and help the UK play a global leading role for Science and Innovation. The sector, which is a key part of the national capabilities for driving growth through industrial innovation.
- 2.** AIRTO members provide trusted, safe and validated innovation capabilities to the marketplace via specialist knowledge of the academic, industrial, government and financial sectors in the fields of science, technology and engineering, for the benefit of the UK economy and society. This sector expertise, combined with deep technological specialisation, puts IRT organisations in a unique position to coordinate, collaborate, catalyse actions, and to act quickly with agility in the support of UK industry.
- 3.** Our members bring together a diverse range of ideas, perspectives and people from different industry sectors, and offer the infrastructure to help UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) to deliver their vision for commercialising innovative technology arising from the UK, especially across key national challenges which put the UK at the forefront of future industries, including: artificial Intelligence and data; ageing society; future of mobility; clean growth, including achieving Net Zero carbon emissions by 2050 – as discussed in our position statement ['Towards Zero'](#).
- 4.** AIRTO's members are geographically placed and operate with industry throughout the UK, and internationally. They are important players in the 'levelling-up' agenda. They are often prominent players within their regions, acting as natural consolidation points bringing together local strengths in industry, academia. They are often influential with good relationships with local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and other regional players. In addition, they are active around the globe in exporting British innovation.
- 5.** AIRTO continues to explore how the best value for public investment can be achieved through commercialisation of R&D (including the role for smarter regulation and procurement), an activity in which our members play a pivotal role, and the key role that our members have to play in driving international collaboration, especially in European programmes.



Our members:

Our membership comprises approximately sixty of the principal organisations operating in the UK's IRT sector. This important sector has a combined turnover of ~£7Bn, employing over 57,000 scientific and technical staff (equivalent to the academic staffing of the Russell Group of universities) and, for comparison, is significantly larger than the network of Fraunhofer Institutes in Germany, both in size and scope of activities. The sector contributes a £34Bn (est.) to UK GDP.

AIRTO's members work at the interface between academia and industry, for both private and public sector clients in the UK and overseas. Organisations in this critical sector work with industry, government and academia to promote and implement innovation, and provide technical solutions to challenges and crises.

Members cover a wide range of industries from, for example, agriculture and food, pharma and bio, energy generation and distribution, manufacturing and the built environment. They may be industry specific or have cross-sectorial expertise. Members include Independent Research & Technology Organisations (RTOs), Catapult Centres, Public Research Establishments, National Laboratories and privately held innovation organisations.

Our list of member organisations is available here:

www.airto.co.uk/about/members/

enquiries@airto.co.uk | [@airtoinnovation](https://twitter.com/airtoinnovation) | www.airto.co.uk

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