

UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships

Overview of the scheme

Version 6 – March 2020

Version History – March 2020

Version	Section	Change
5	2.1	Applicant Eligibility – clarification of wording about open-ended contracts.
	3.2	Academic Host Organisation – clarification of wording around Host commitment
	3.3	Business Host Organisation – clarification of wording around Host commitment
6	1	Clarification of amounts funded through FLF
	1	Increase £1.2m to £1.5m, applicant must contact UKRI office in advance of applying
	2.1	Clarification of clinically active fellow time commitments

1 Objectives of the Future Leaders Fellowships

UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) is a £900 million fund that is helping establish the careers of world-class research and innovation leaders across the UK.

The scheme will support early career researchers and innovators with outstanding potential in universities, UK registered businesses, and other research and user environments including Research Councils' institutes and laboratories¹.

The support of the institution will be a critical component of all fellowships which will enable the fellow to transition to or establish their research/innovation independence in any area supported by UKRI.

Investment of up to over £1.5 million over four years, with the ability to extend to up to seven years, will enable the next generation of researcher and innovators to benefit from outstanding support to develop their careers, and to work on difficult and novel challenges. The FLF scheme has funded fellowships from £300,000 to over £2m, and there is no preference for lower or higher cost proposals.

The objectives of the scheme are:

- To develop, retain, attract and sustain research and innovation talent in the UK.
- To foster new research and innovation career paths including those at the academic/business and interdisciplinary boundaries, and facilitate movement of people between disciplines, organisations and sectors.
- To provide sustained funding and resources for the best early career researchers and innovators.
- To provide long-term, flexible funding to tackle difficult and novel challenges, and support adventurous, ambitious programmes.

These fellowships support applicants from diverse career paths, including those returning from a career break or following time in other roles.

The support offered is long-term and flexible, with seven years of support available on a 4(+3) model, with a review in year four. The case for support should make clear the long-term aims of the programme, and why they matter – while providing more specific plans and costings for the first four years.

For business-hosted applicants, those in the user community, or other applicants, four years of support may be sufficient and there is no need to apply for a further three years of funding if this is not required.

Successful applicants will have the intellectual and financial freedom to develop and change direction over this period, subject to approval from UKRI.

Applications may exceed £1.5m (over the first four years) if fully justified in the application, this must be discussed with UKRI staff prior to submission.

There are six calls for Future Leaders Fellowships with two calls per year between 2018 and 2021. Submission deadlines are published on the [UKRI FLF webpage](#).

2 Who can apply?

This scheme is for early career researchers and innovators and aims to support excellent, high potential future research and innovation leaders. Applicants must demonstrate within their application how the UKRI FLF award will support and enable their long-term career goals and clearly demonstrate that their skills and experience at the time of application match those expected (see 2.1 Applicant eligibility, below).

The fellowships support applicants from diverse career backgrounds, including those returning from a career break or returning to research following time in other roles. We also encourage applications from those wishing to work part-time or in job shares in order to combine the fellowship with personal responsibilities. Assessors will take into account time spent outside an active research and innovation environment, whether through career breaks, flexible working or as a consequence of working in other roles.

Fellowships are not restricted to work that would be seen as formal research in their area but can also lead and develop innovation. Innovation is defined as the practical translation of disruptive ideas into novel, relevant and valued products, services, processes, systems or business models, making them readily available to markets, government and society. Innovation means creating economic and/or social value from ideas.

2.1 Applicant eligibility

These fellowships are for early career academics and innovators who are transitioning to or establishing independence. Senior academics and innovators are not permitted to apply.

As the FLF aims to enable the fellow to transition to or establish their research/innovation independence, applicants who have already achieved research/innovation independence (e.g. by securing funding aimed at this career stage, or by already managing their own significant programme of work within a business) will not be competitive.

There are no eligibility rules based on years since PhD or whether the applicant currently holds a permanent/open-ended academic position or job role.

Applicants should use both the individual eligibility and the person specification (below) to assess and justify their suitability for the scheme with reference to the objectives of the programme.

Individual eligibility

1. Applicants are expected to hold a doctorate by the start date of the fellowship or to be able to demonstrate equivalent research/innovation experience and/or training.
2. Applicants must have significant support from their hosting organisation(s), described below in section 3. Host organisations are also encouraged to use the scheme to bring outstanding individuals to the UK from abroad.
3. Applications are welcome from those returning to research or innovation from a career break or following time in other roles; there are no time limits in respect of time spent outside a research or innovation environment.
4. Fellowships may be held on a part-time basis in order to combine research/innovation with personal responsibilities (with fellowship duration on a pro-rata basis); job shares are also possible.

5. It is expected that fellows' full working time will be committed to these fellowships or activities related to the fellowship from the start of the award.
- **Fellows hosted by an academic¹ organisation.** Those with substantial ongoing research commitments as a result of participation in other grants must relinquish these in order to hold a UKRI FLF award. Full time fellows may spend up to six hours a week (pro-rata for part-time applicants) on other commitments and related activities which will enhance their career development (for example, teaching, demonstrating, peer-review, other funded projects or business-related activities). Clinically-active fellows may not work more than the time commitment for clinical studies outlined in their proposal. For the majority, this will equate to 20% of their normal working hours. Clinically-active fellows undertaking patient-orientated research may spend up to 40% of their time on these duties.
 - **Fellows hosted by a business.** Where it is essential for the fellow's career, applicants may apply to commit up to 40% of their time on non-fellowship activities (for example, business as usual activities, work on ongoing contracts, membership of professional bodies etc), on a Reduced Hours Fellowship. There is a minimum commitment of 60% FTE on the FLF.

Awardees will have the flexibility to develop a breadth of experience and partnerships, and secure further research/innovation funding later in the award but should ensure that these other activities do not compromise their focus, or achievement of the aims of the fellowship.

Further information is available on our website:

- [Career breaks and flexible working](#)
- [Job-share FAQs](#)

2.2 Person specification

FLF applicants should:

- Demonstrate broad knowledge of the area of interest and offer a compelling vision for the excellence and importance of the proposed research or innovation.
- Take advantage of the long-term and flexible support offered, justify how the proposal would have wider influence in the field.
- Have their own original and ambitious plans / ideas, which do not significantly overlap with their proposed collaborators, or former supervisors.
- Demonstrate the suitability of the proposed environment(s) for their research or innovation and its impact.
- Provide an approach to maximising the impact and influence of the proposed work, in the short and/or long-term. This may involve co-production of knowledge and implementation of this knowledge with the business sector, public sector, civil society sector or the wider community.
- Be capable of leading and developing a team or taking a leading role in their field; and show an ability to identify and maximise potential in others.
- For business-hosted applicants, have secured the backing of the business that employs them. For academically-hosted applicants, have secured the backing of an institution that

¹ Academic organisations include HEIs, IRO and Institutes i.e. eligible for Research Council funding.

is prepared to host them, and which offers, in line with organisational employment policies and practices, a commitment to an open-ended position for the individual at the end of the fellowship.

- Demonstrate the ability to choose and develop appropriate collaborations and networks nationally, internationally or across disciplines.

Experience and potential:

- Applicants must have the necessary level of skills, knowledge and experience to take forward the proposed project / programme.
- Have a track record of producing challenging, original and productive research and/or innovation outputs that stand out in their field.
- Demonstrate flexibility to adapt to opportunity and embrace new directions.

Personal development:

- Have identified and proposed opportunities for their own development as impactful and influential research or innovation leaders. This could include time for work in other environments, developing international links, development of new skills (e.g. in policy impact or commercialisation, etc).
- Have identified opportunities to access career development support, e.g. mentoring and professional training and development, and relevant training courses that will underpin their future career ambitions and learning. A clear programme of skills development is an essential component of this training fellowship.

Skills:

- Have strong communication and interpersonal skills and aim to develop these through engagement with different audiences.
- Demonstrate how the outcomes of the fellowship will be communicated and used within and outside their immediate community.

2.3 Responsibilities of the applicant

UKRI expects all the researchers and innovators it funds to adopt the highest standards in the conduct of their work. This means exhibiting impeccable integrity and following the principles of good research practice detailed in the [RCUK Policy and Guidelines on Governance of Good Research Conduct](#).

The decision to submit an application rests with the applicant/host organisation. UKRI will not be able to provide advice to individual applicants on their eligibility for this scheme.

3 Host organisation eligibility

Future Leaders Fellowships can be hosted at any UK-based organisation currently registered as eligible to apply for funding from Innovate UK or the Research Councils. Details of eligibility and a list of recognised Institutes and Independent Research Organisations can be found on [the UKRI website](#). Cross sector and organisational links, and research and innovation collaborations in both the UK and internationally are encouraged.

Hosting businesses or other privately-owned research Organisations must be eligible to receive State Aid from the UK Government. They should provide an innovation and/or research environment of international standing. Such organisations should note: Fellowships in these contexts will be expected to comprise a programme or portfolio of research or innovation above and beyond the normal research/innovation activity of the Organisation. This could include, but is not limited to, entering a new sector, developing a new technology or taking the business in a new direction.

Organisations may be funded at differing levels. For academic organisations, funding will be at 80% of the full economic cost (fEC) of the Fellowship, see Annex 2 of the [Guidance for Applicants](#) for advice. For businesses, the funding level will depend on the requirements of EU State Aid Rules and therefore the company size and nature of the project. Further guidance is available in Annex 1 of the [Guidance for Applicants](#).

Other Organisations are welcome to be project partners for these Fellowships, in conjunction with a hosting organisation of a type listed above. Such Organisations could include:

- Charities
- Government departments
- Community groups
- Non-UK based HEIs, companies and research organisations
- Companies on academically hosted Fellowships

Where Organisations of this type are not receiving funds from the fellowship, they should be listed as Project Partners on the application. Their role and contribution must be clearly set out in an accompanying letter of support. Companies based outside the UK are also eligible as project partners or collaborators, but their role will be considered carefully to ensure this does not conflict with the competitiveness of UK-based companies.

Organisations not registered on Je-S (i.e. businesses) are advised to refer to the organisational funding rules prior to applying and ensure they self-register on the Je-S system well in advance of the final application. If the applicant is shortlisted for interview, then the Host Organisation should ensure that full registration of the organisation takes place before the interview date. See 'How to Apply', Section 2.2 of the [Guidance for Applicants](#).

3.1 Responsibilities of host organisations

These highly prestigious fellowships require commitments from both UKRI and the Host Organisation.

Host Organisation	Commitment to Fellowship from Host Organisation
Academic	Tapered salary commitment from year 3 (see Table 3.1.2 in Completing the Application Form). Open-ended position during or at the end of the Fellowship. Applied for based on Full Economic Costing model (typically 80% FEC)
Catapults	Tapered salary commitment from year 3. Organisation not contributing to total costs of the Fellowship aside from the salary support

Large business²	A typical business contribution of 50% of costs dependant on EU State Aid Rules (see Annex 1 of Guidance for Applicants)
SME	A typical business contribution of 30% of costs, dependant on EU State Aid Rules (see Annex 1 of Guidance for Applicants)

3.2 Academic host organisations

Academic Host Organisations should carefully consider whether the applicant's interests align with their institutional strengths and longer-term strategies before submitting an application. Academic Host Organisations will also be expected to demonstrate that they are providing a supportive research/innovation environment for the fellow, not only through the basic provision of office and laboratory space as required, but also by providing relevant training, mentoring, support and, for example, access to specialist research facilities.

The academic Host Organisation is expected to have an annual review process in place to assess the fellow's progress and is expected to administer this process in accordance with its relevant policies. The outcome of the review may result in a fellow failing to progress at any point during the fellowship and, following due process, terminating their contract of employment. In the event of a Host Organisation terminating an award early, UKRI must be informed. This outcome will be captured in the wider monitoring of FLF outcomes.

The typical FLF award will be structured as 4(+3) years, initially applying for four years with the option to extend for a further three. The academic host organisation will be required to commit to tapered salary support for the fellow from year three. Tapering is only applicable to the fellow's salary.

All applications based in academic organisations must have secured the backing of an institution that is prepared to host them, and which offers, in line with organisational employment policies and practices, a commitment to providing an open-ended UK based independent research/innovation position to be taken up during or upon the completion of the fellowship.

UKRI will review progress during year four of the award to determine whether a further period of funding is offered. This review will assess the quality and significance of the fellow's work and achievements to date and will involve the host organisation and the fellow. Fellows securing the second period of funding would be expected to progress into an open-ended post at the end of the fellowship.

Host Organisations which do not provide the expected support, or where fellows are not progressing (if remaining in academia) to open-ended positions may not be awarded further fellowships, in the absence of an acceptable justification.

The application must include a letter of support signed by both the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research (or equivalent) and the relevant Dean/Director/Head of Department, confirming their commitment to supporting the tapered salary and to providing a pathway to an open-ended academic appointment during or at the end of the award.

If the fellow wishes to move institution during the tenure of the award, UKRI approval must be sought. As a minimum, the new Host Organisation must meet the commitments to salary and host support made by the current Organisation. This includes plans for supporting the fellow's programme of work; enabling the time commitment needed; ensuring access to

² In certifying your organisation status please pay particular attention to organisation ownership. Make sure you follow the European Commission (EC) [small to medium enterprise \(SME\) definition](#) when establishing your organisation size.

space, equipment/facilities, other resources and other relevant programmes; and enabling the applicant to maximise the social / economic impact of their work.

3.3 Business host organisations

Business Host Organisations should carefully consider whether an applicant's interests align with their organisational strategies and interests before submitting a proposal. Organisations will also be expected to demonstrate that they are providing an appropriate working environment for the fellow, including not only basic provision of office/laboratory space as applicable, but also relevant training, mentoring, support and, for example, access to specialist facilities as dictated by the project.

Business hosted applicants should have secured the backing of an organisation that is prepared to host them and is willing to provide the necessary funding and environment to host a research/innovation program of this type.

The Host Organisation is required to commit to meeting an appropriate percentage of the project costs as required by the EU State Aid Rules (further information available in Annex 1 of the [Guidance for Applicants](#)) and should complete the [Business Finance Form](#) to confirm the company's status. The proposal must include a letter (or letters) of support signed by the senior business representative holding budgetary authority, stating that the business will support the financial commitment for the duration of the fellowship and acknowledging that these commitments are a condition of award. Applications without appropriate letters of support will not be considered.

The Host Organisation is expected to have an annual review process in place to assess the fellow's progression. The Organisation is expected to administer this process in accordance with its relevant policies, and the outcome of the review may result in a fellow failing to progress at any point during the fellowship. In the event of an organisation terminating an award early, UKRI must be informed and this outcome will be captured in the wider monitoring of FLF outcomes.

Host Organisations not delivering on their commitments to individuals may be refused any future awards.

Fellows may ask to move Organisation during the tenure of the award and continue their work elsewhere. This can only be with the mutual agreement of the original and proposed new Host Organisation. As far as possible the business should support the fellow to relocate and ensure that the new Host Organisation undertakes to meet all on-going commitments to the fellow. If no mutually acceptable transfer can be agreed UKRI should be consulted and the award will either be terminated or, under exceptional circumstances, may be retained by the original Host Organisation.