

Future Leaders Fellowships: an introduction for businesses applying to round 4

This document provides an introduction to the Future Leaders Fellowships scheme and will be of particular relevance for businesses seeking to apply to Round 4. The [general scheme overview](#), the guidance for applicants and the [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\)](#) documents provide full detailed information about this scheme.

Background

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) brings together the UK Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England into a single organisation to create the best environment in which research and innovation can flourish.

UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships is a £900 million scheme that supports UK registered businesses, and other research and user environments including UK Universities, research councils' institutes and laboratories as they invest in the most talented researchers and innovators. Your business can host an individual fellow who is ready to lead their own team and project. The funding can be used to cover salaries and other overheads, as described below.

Though the quality and novelty of the proposed project or projects is very important, the aim of this investment is to help you develop an individual you have retained or attracted to help you create innovative solutions for your business. We will invest in fellows who can demonstrate outstanding potential in the innovation or research undertaken and who have the ability to develop strong leadership skills.

A business might decide to host a fellow directly, or to collaborate with a fellow hosted by a university or other eligible organisation.

We are continually engaging with the community to ensure the scheme meets the needs of businesses alongside those of academic communities. For rounds 4 and 5, we are trialling additional flexibility for business hosted applicants. These alterations have been developed through feedback from the business community and are detailed on the [UKRI FLF webpages](#).

Scope

The Future Leaders Fellowships scheme provides funding for applications that demonstrate innovation and/or research excellence, in conjunction with clear plans to develop the leadership potential of the applicant.

Innovation and/or research excellence can be demonstrated either through delivery of a single project, or a portfolio of projects, addressing a particular question or need. The proposal should be focussed on a single exceptional applicant who lead this program.

Applications can cover any area of innovation and be applied to any part of the economy.

Eligibility

If you want to host a fellow, your business must be eligible for UKRI funding. You can apply for funding if you are a UK-based business eligible under Innovate UK rules. All kinds of businesses are eligible for funding - from start-ups and new micro companies to large multi-nationals.

The person applying to become the fellow (“the applicant”) must meet the requirements in the scheme’s individual eligibility and [person specification](#). We are looking to fund people who are ready to lead their own project.

Costs

The Future Leaders Fellowships offers grant funding of up to £1.2m. However, there is no fixed amount you should apply for: you may apply for more or less. If your project costs exceed £1.2m, you will need to submit additional information as part of your outline proposal.

UKRI can provide funding to cover all aspects of the proposed programme of work up to, but not including, commercialisation costs. For example, salaries for the fellow and staff working on the project, materials and consumables, training and development costs, travel and subsistence, use of national facilities, and overheads. Funding will be in line with State Aid requirements, further guidance can be found on the [UKRI FLF web page](#). All costs requested must be fully justified.

State aid

Any UK-based business requesting funding must be eligible to receive State Aid at the time of application. If you are unsure, please take legal advice. Additional guidance for State Aid funding rates is provided on the [UKRI FLF web page](#).

Duration

Proposals should cover four years of grant funding. All applicants have the option to extend this for up to a further three years if requested and subject to a successful review. The full proposal should outline the costs of the innovation and/or research to be carried out for the initial funding period only. Both the above durations should be extended pro rata for part-time applicants.

The fellowship may be made up of a single program of work, or through multiple consecutive/ concurrent interlinked projects led by the fellow (a ‘Portfolio Fellowship’). Where multiple shorter projects are spread over the 4 or 4(+3) years, applicants should ensure the proposed research/innovation is of sufficient scale and ambition to maximise the potential and career prospects of the fellow. The applicant should justify how this approach will enable them to maximise their development over the course of the fellowship.

Time commitment

Where a fellow is hosted by a business, under State Aid rules it is not possible for UKRI to fund salary for activities outside of the fellowship itself. However a fellow’s career may also benefit from taking on non-fellowship activities. Business-hosted fellows may therefore hold the fellowship on a ‘Reduced Hours’ basis, where up to 40% of a fellow’s time may be spent on other work commitments within the same organisation. This should only be requested where these commitments are demonstrably crucial to the career of the fellow (e.g. ongoing external contracts, business as usual activities, time committed to professional memberships etc.). Costs arising from any working-time the fellow spends on other commitments may not be claimed as part of the FLF.

Fellows should highlight in their Cover Letter where they are applying for a ‘Reduced -Hours’ Fellowship. Applications of this type should justify how the fellow will fully develop their skills and experience in the time allocated to the FLF and how a ‘Reduced -Hours’ Fellowship will benefit their career.

Collaboration

Collaboration with any number of registered businesses, research organisations, public sector organisations, and charities are eligible. Each collaboration should be fully justified to demonstrate the benefits to all parties. Full details of the different ways in which another organisation can be involved in the fellowship can be found in the [Guidance for Applicants](#).

How to apply

The application process for the Future Leaders Fellowships has two stages. The first stage is an outline proposal, and the second stage is a full proposal. Both stages are mandatory. No feedback will be provided after the outline stage and it is non-competitive; only those who submit an outline proposal may submit a full proposal.

Full proposals to this scheme must be submitted using the [Joint electronic Submission \(JeS\) system](#). Guidance on how to use this system can be found on the [JeS web pages](#).

The submission deadline for current and future rounds of the Future Leaders Fellowships scheme can be found on our [‘for applicants’ webpage](#).

Assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed across four factors:

- Research and innovation excellence
- Applicant and their development
- Impact and strategic relevance
- Research and innovation environment and costs

Applicants should demonstrate how they will maximise the potential of the scale and flexibility offered in the Future Leaders Fellowships scheme, and why this is the right time to receive the support on offer from this grant.

Individuals who have already achieved significant success in innovation and/or research in the area of the grant application, where the award would not significantly advance their career, will not be competitive.

Individuals who have achieved significant innovation and/or research success when working in a substantively different sector to this grant application are eligible to apply.

Additional information on the assessment criteria for this scheme can be *found in the ‘for applicants’ section of the [UKRI FLF web pages](#)*.

UKRI will not fund proposals that do not meet the assessment criteria of this competition.

Assessment process

The Future Leaders Fellowships scheme has a three-stage assessment process including independent review, a shortlisting panel, and an interview panel.

During the independent review, applications will be assessed by reviewers from a range of business, academic, public and third sector backgrounds. Businesses have the freedom to identify specific organisations or individuals who should not be involved in the assessment in their proposal Cover Letter. Applicants will be invited to respond to reviews they have received before application progresses to shortlisting panels.

Applications are then progressed to shortlisting panels, where the independent reviews provided for each proposal and the applicant comments on these reviews are discussed by

members of the Future Leaders Fellowships Panel College. College members are from across the Research and Innovation base, including businesses, and understand how to assess the quality and validity of major research and innovation projects. High scoring applications will be progressed to the interview stage.

If an application progresses to the interview stage, the applicant will be invited to interview.

Further information

The [guidance for applicants document](#) and the [frequently asked questions](#) (FAQs) document provide further detailed information about this scheme.

You can sign up to receive updates and to participate in webinars on our website: www.ukri.org/FLF

If you have any outstanding queries, please contact the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships team on fellows@ukri.org or 01793 416409.