

Future Leaders Fellowships: Round 6

Opportunity status:	Open
Funders:	UK Research and Innovation, Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) , Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) , Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) , Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) , Innovate UK , Medical Research Council (MRC) , Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) , Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)
Funding type:	Fellowship
Total fund:	£900,000,000
Publication date:	28 October 2020
Opening date:	10 November 2020
Closing date:	19 January 2021 16:00 UK time

Last updated: 13 November 2020

[Start application ►](#)

This fellowship is open to researchers and/or innovators with outstanding potential, who are transitioning to or establishing independence. You may be based in universities, UK-registered businesses, and other environments including Catapults and institutes.

Four years' funding is available to support ambitious research/innovation programmes across UKRI's remit, and fellows benefit from outstanding support to develop their careers. There is no minimum or maximum award value, and awards may be renewed for a further three years.

You must have the support of your host organisation for your outline application.

Who can apply

This scheme is for early career researchers and innovators who are transitioning to or establishing independence or who may be developing their own original and ambitious plans within a commercial setting.

Applicants who have already achieved research/innovation independence (for example by securing funding aimed at this career stage, or by already managing their own significant programme of work within a business) will therefore not be competitive. Senior academics and innovators are not permitted to apply.

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. If you are applying from business, there is no requirement to hold a PhD, however you should be able to demonstrate equivalent research/innovation experience and/or training.

Read the [overview and objectives of the scheme \(PDF, 187KB\)](#) and the [person specification \(PDF, 101KB\)](#) to assess and justify your suitability. Note that UKRI cannot confirm eligibility prior to submission.

The fellowship offers flexibility to support outstanding individuals:

- from diverse career backgrounds
- returning from a career break or returning to research and/or innovation following time in other roles
- wishing to work part-time or in job shares in order to combine the fellowship with personal responsibilities
- coming to the UK from abroad – researchers and innovators are eligible for a Global Talent visa under the ‘exceptional promise’ category for future research leaders. They must have the support of their host organisation. [Find out about the Global Talent visa](#)

Fellows hosted by an academic organisation may spend up to six hours a week (pro rata for part-time applicants) on other commitments or related activities, provided they enhance career development. 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.

Fellows hosted by a business can come from commercial organisations of any size, in any sector or region. Reduced-hours fellowships are available to applicants hosted by a business, enabling fellows to spend up to 40% of their time focused on other activities within the business in order to enhance their career.

Before applying you must:

- ensure that the host organisation agrees to support the fellowship
- read the [guidance for applicants \(PDF, 729KB\)](#)
- refer to the [frequently asked questions \(PDF, 336KB\)](#)

- read [guidance on career breaks and flexible working \(PDF, 24KB\)](#) and [job share FAQs \(PDF, 158KB\)](#).

Eligible host organisations

Fellowships must be held at an eligible UK-based host organisation – universities, UK-registered businesses, and other research environments including Catapults and research council institutes and laboratories.

[Find out more about organisations eligible for funding.](#)

Academic institutions can be any UK higher education institution that receives grant funding from one of the UK higher education funding bodies, research institutes and independent research organisations. Cross sector and organisational links, and research and innovation collaborations in both the UK and internationally, are encouraged.

For academic applicants, full proposals should highlight the commitment to the salary of the fellow and to providing an open-ended UK based independent research and/or innovation position, to be taken up during or on completion of the fellowship (in line with organisational employment policies and practices). We recently wrote to higher education institutions with some [key messages for round 6 \(PDF, 103KB\)](#).

Businesses or other privately-owned research organisations hosting fellowships, should provide an innovation and/or research environment of international standing and must be eligible to receive UK Government state aid. Fellowships will only be awarded to support research and/or innovation above and beyond the standard activities of the organisation.

Businesses looking to host fellows should read the [introduction for businesses \(PDF, 970KB\)](#).

What we're looking for

We're looking to fund fellowships of up to seven years (funded for four years in the first phase with the option to extend for a further three years) to support talented researchers and innovators who are transitioning to research and/or innovation leadership.

You must clearly demonstrate:

- how the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) award will support and enable your long-term career goals
- broad knowledge of the area of interest and a compelling vision for the excellence and importance of your proposed research or innovation
- your own original and ambitious plans/ideas
- you can take a leading role in your area

- the suitability of the proposed environment(s) for your research or innovation and its impact.

The scheme aims to:

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

We support fellowships across our remit

We support fellowships in all areas of UKRI's remit, including multi- and interdisciplinary projects. Fellowships can also lead and develop innovation. We define innovation 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, creating economic and/or social value from ideas.

Future Leaders Fellowships are personal awards to support fellows develop as impactful and influential research or innovation leaders.

You are encouraged to think broadly about the type of activities you may pursue as part of your research and/or innovation objectives. This could include time for work in other environments, developing international links, and development of new skills (for example in policy or commercialisation).

You should also consider what career development support opportunities are appropriate, for example mentoring and professional training and development, and relevant training courses that will underpin your future career ambitions and learning. A clear programme of skills development is an essential component of this fellowship.

How much funding you can request

There is no limit to the amount of funding you can request under this scheme, but requests must be appropriate to the project and you must be able to justify the amount you need to meet the objectives of your proposal. You must notify UKRI at outline stage of any request for more than £1.5 million total UKRI contribution.

The fellowship will provide salary support. For academic and Catapult-hosted fellows, in partnership with the host, this is tapered throughout the fellowship, with host organisations required to commit to funding an increasing percentage of the applicant's salary as the fellowship progresses. The precise details for non-business and business hosts are available in the [guidance for applicants \(PDF, 729KB\)](#).

The host's supporting letter should commit to the salary of the fellow and, for academic applicants, should confirm an open-ended UK-based independent research and/or innovation position, to be taken up during or on the completion of the fellowship (in line with organisational employment policies and practices).

Collaborating with others

You may wish to work in collaboration with individuals or organisations. They may be added as a co-investigator, collaborator, or project partner depending on their role, however please ensure their inclusion is fully justified (such as through bringing complementary and different skills to the project, or providing access to samples or equipment).

Read the relevant sections of the [guidance for applicants \(PDF, 729KB\)](#) and [frequently asked questions \(PDF, 336KB\)](#) fully.

Fellows can spend periods overseas or in other internationally leading research or innovation organisations if it can be clearly justified in terms of their programme of work and meeting the overarching aims of the scheme.

Start date

Please note each round has a mandatory published start date and you should ensure your host is able to facilitate setting up your award within this timeframe.

How to apply

There are two stages to the application, outline and full. All outline and full applications must be submitted through the [Joint Electronic Submission System \(Je-S\)](#).

We recommend you start your application early. You can save completed details in Je-S at any time and return to continue your application later.

In order to gauge interest and inform panel development, an outline proposal must be submitted for all applications. We must receive your outline proposal by 10 December 2020. Je-S opens for full applications on 3 December 2020.

When applying select 'New document' then:

- council: MRC (MRC are hosting the FLF proposals on behalf of UKRI)
- document type: Outline proposal
- scheme: UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship Outline
- call: UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships Outline Dec 2020

You can find advice on completing your application in the [Je-S handbook](#) and in our [guidance for applicants \(PDF, 729KB\)](#). If you experience difficulties using Je-S or have questions regarding its use, please contact the Je-S help desk.

Email: jeshelp@je-s.ukri.org

Help with your application

Your host organisation will be able to provide advice and guidance on completing your application. If your host is a business that is not currently registered with Je-S, you should ensure they register as soon as possible.

You must complete the following fields in the Je-S outline proposal form:

- project details (host organisation, department, grant reference, project title)
- fellow's details
- a summary with a 4000-character limit (including spaces)
- co-investigator details
- any project partners
- objectives
- relevance to research council(s) or Innovate UK.

You should also provide in your outline proposal an indication of costs for the initial four-year period of the award.

A covering letter must also be uploaded where the applicant is requesting any of the below:

- funding totalling over £1.5 million (80% full economic costing for academic-hosted applications – or total project cost for business-hosted applicants)
- funds of more than £138,000 for an individual item of equipment (inclusive of VAT and Import Duty) (not applicable for business-hosted applicants)
- funds for instrument development (not applicable for business-hosted applicants)
- business-hosted fellows applying for a reduced-hours fellowship, with justification
- where the proposal is intended to be held on a job-share basis.

(Please note that the covering letter requirements for the full application differ. Please check the Guidance for Applicants when completing your full application.)

For data analysis purposes, we ask applicants to not include the words 'Cov-19', 'Covid-19' or 'Coronavirus' in the summary or title sections unless the application relates to proposed research and/or innovation in this area.

Important documents

You will need the following templates:

- [CV and outputs list template \(Word, 40KB\)](#)
- [academic salary template \(Excel, 100KB\)](#)
- SoECAT form for NHS Costs if applicable ([find on the National Institute for Health Research website](#))
- [data management plan template \(Word, 115KB\)](#)
- [finance form for business applicants \(Excel, 80KB\)](#) or [finance form for Catapults \(Excel, 83KB\)](#).

You should read the following documents before applying:

- [overview of the scheme \(PDF, 187KB\)](#)

- [introduction for businesses \(PDF, 156KB\)](#)
 - [guidance for applicants \(PDF, 729KB\)](#)
 - [individual eligibility and person specification \(PDF, 103KB\)](#)
 - [career breaks and flexible working \(PDF, 70KB\)](#)
 - [job share FAQs \(PDF, 112KB\)](#)
 - [FLF common application errors \(PDF, 130KB\)](#)
 - [FLF FAQs round 6 \(PDF, 401KB\)](#)
 - [how do I register with Je-S? \(PDF, 452KB\)](#)
 - [state aid guidance \(PDF, 149KB\)](#)
 - [key messages to HEIs for R6 \(PDF, 103KB\)](#).
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How we will assess your application

Your outline proposal is not assessed. We use it to gauge interest and plan for peer review.

Your full application is assessed by at least three independent experts from the UK and overseas. You can nominate up to three independent reviewers to assess your application, but we will only use one nominated reviewer assessment and may decide not to approach any of your nominated reviewers.

Peer reviewers will assess your application and provide comments. They will also score it using the peer reviewer scoring system against the following assessment criteria:

- research and innovation excellence
- applicant and their development
- impact and strategic relevance
- research and innovation environment and costs

[Find out more about the assessment criteria \(PDF, 199KB\)](#).

You will be invited to respond to reviewers' comments. The independent reviews and your comments go to a shortlisting meeting where your application is assessed against the criteria by members of the Future Leaders Fellowships Panel College and other relevant experts.

Panel college members are experts from across the research and innovation landscape, including from business, public and third sectors, and have significant experience or understanding of assessing the quality of major research and innovation projects across a range of areas, beyond their own specialist area, and across interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research.

Applications are assessed against the four assessment criteria. Panels will consider the added value of fellowship support rather than the use of standard project grant support across all four criteria.

You will be notified whether your proposal is progressing to interview. Interviews will be held virtually, and last for 30 minutes. Multiple interview panels take place at

the same time, and roving panel members and UKRI observers move between them to ensure consistency.

The following documents are recommended as essential reading to fully understand how your application will be assessed:

- [assessment criteria \(PDF, 199KB\)](#)
- [principal investigator \(applicant\) response guidance \(PDF, 141KB\)](#)
- [example interview process and questions for candidates \(PDF, 163KB\)](#).

Outcomes and feedback

You will be notified of the outcome of your interview within two weeks. The team will inform you when you are likely to receive written feedback, which will be included with the system-generated email sent by Je-S with the final outcome.

Contact details

If your question isn't covered in the guidance, or you need further information, email fellows@ukri.org

Additional info

Supporting documents

- [award rate, number and proportion of applicants and awardees for Future Leaders Fellowships \(Excel, 20KB\)](#)
- [diversity data for UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships rounds 1 to 4: Narrative report](#)
- [equality impact assessment form \(PDF, 181KB\)](#)

Timeline

- **10 November 2020**
Opens for outline proposals
- **3 December 2020**
Opens for full applications



Related content

[Find out more about Future Leaders Fellowships and about our successful fellows](#)

[Find information and guidance for existing fellows, applicants to round 5 and peer reviewers](#)

NOTE This is the first phase of our new website – let us know if you have [feedback](#) or would like to [help us test new developments](#).