

## UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships: an introduction for businesses applying to Round 6 – updated September 2020

This document provides an introduction to the Future Leaders Fellowships scheme and will be of particular relevance for businesses seeking to apply to Round 6. The Overview of the Scheme, Guidance for Applicants and the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) documents provide full detailed information about this scheme, all found on [the funding opportunity webpage](#).

### 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 applicant (referred to as a 'fellow') who is ready to lead their own team and project. The fellow can be a person currently employed by the business, or a new recruit. The funding can be used to cover salaries and other project costs, as described below.

Though the quality of the proposed innovation and/or research project or projects is very important, the aim of this investment is also to help you develop an individual you have retained or attracted to 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.

### 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 fellow, and their team.

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 application should be focussed on a single exceptional applicant who is able to lead this programme of work.

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

### Eligibility

To host a fellow, you must be an innovative UK-based business with a business bank account, registered on Companies House at the point of application. All kinds of businesses are eligible for funding - from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to large multi-nationals.

The person applying to become the fellow must meet the requirements in the scheme's individual eligibility and person specification, found in the Overview of the Scheme. We are looking to fund people who are ready to lead their own ambitious innovation and/or research project over 4 years.

### Costs

The Future Leaders Fellowships scheme typically offers grant funding of up to £1.5m. However, there is no fixed amount you should apply for: you may apply for more or less. If your project costs exceed £1.5m, you will need to inform us of this when you submit your mandatory outline proposal.

UKRI can provide grant 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. Costs for backfilling staff roles are not permitted. Funding will be in line with state aid requirements. All costs being requested must be inputted into the Finance Form for Business Applicants, and fully justified in the Justification of Resources.

### State aid

Any UK-based business requesting funding must be eligible to receive state aid at the point of funding. If you are unsure, please take legal advice. UKRI is unable to advise you on state aid. Additional guidance on 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 four-year funding period only. Both of the above durations should be extended pro rata for part-time applicants.

The fellowship may be made up of a single programme of work, or through multiple consecutive/ concurrent interlinked projects led by the fellow. 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 fellow 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 requested.

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 their Future Leader Fellowships grant 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 scheme has two stages. The first stage is an Outline proposal, and the second stage is a Full application. Both stages are mandatory. The Outline proposal stage and is non-competitive and no feedback will be provided; however you must submit an outline proposal in order to submit a Full application.

Both Outline proposals and Full applications to this scheme must be submitted using the [Joint electronic Submission \(Je-S\) system](#). Guidance on how to use this system can be found in the [Je-S helpdesk](#). We also produce guidance webinars for each round of the scheme, which include details on how to self-register a business, and how to create an individual Je-S account.

The submission deadlines for [current rounds](#) of the Future Leaders Fellowships scheme can be found on the funding opportunity webpage.

## Assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed on 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.

The Assessment Criteria for this scheme can be found on [the funding opportunity webpage](#).

UKRI will not fund applications 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. Applicants have the freedom to identify specific organisations or individuals who should not be involved in the review of their application in their application's Cover Letter, noting that this letter is not sent to reviewers but is visible to UKRI and panel members. Applicants should also suggest suitable

individuals that UKRI may approach to provide a review. Applicants will be able to respond to the reviews they have received before the application progresses to shortlisting panels.

Applications are then progressed to shortlisting panels, where the independent reviews provided for each application and the applicant's comments on these reviews are discussed by members of the Future Leaders Fellowships Panel College. College members are drawn from across the innovation and research base and understand how to assess the quality and validity of major innovation and/or research projects. High scoring applicants will be progressed to the interview stage.

If an application progresses to the interview stage, the applicant will be invited to an interview. If the applicant is successful at interview, grant funding will be awarded pending successful completion of due diligence checks.

Further information

[The funding opportunity webpage](#) has everything an applicant needs to apply.

You can also sign up to receive updates and to participate in webinars on this page.

If you have any outstanding queries, please contact the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships team on [fellows@ukri.org](mailto:fellows@ukri.org).