Supplementary information for the engagement events with host organisations and applicants.

Eligibility

During the webinars for host organisations and applicants we received many questions around the topic of eligibility. The Future Leaders Fellowships scheme is open to early career academics and innovators who are transitioning to or establishing independence, and the scheme is open to applications within or across any area(s) of research and/ or innovation covered by UKRI, from basic through to applied research and innovation. Due to the open nature of the scheme, we do not provide a 'ticklist' or a guide to specific circumstances which may make an applicant eligible/ineligible, and we are unable to engage in specific queries around an applicant's eligibility.

Applicants should read section 2.1 of the guidance for applicants and use the person specification in the annex to assess and justify their suitability for the scheme with reference to the objectives of the programme.

Round 7 Guidance for Academic-hosted Applicants can be found in the 'Additional info' section of the Round 7 Funding Finder page on the UKRI website

Q: Can you further explain independence?
A: These fellowships are for early career academics and innovators who are transitioning to or establishing independence. We require applicants to show that their current position does not demonstrate that they have achieved research/innovation independence and thought leadership. Applicants who have already achieved research/innovation independence (for example, by securing funding aimed at this career stage) will not be competitive. Senior academics and innovators are not permitted to apply.

Q: Is there a maximum level of previous grant funding that you would indicate as being an indicator of independence? And thus, not eligible for the FLF?
A: No, as the FLF scheme is open to applicants from all backgrounds it is impossible to provide a specific amount where an applicant would be ineligible. Our guidance states:
"Applicants who have already achieved research/innovation independence (for example, by securing funding aimed at this career stage) will not be competitive. Senior academics and innovators are not permitted to apply."

If you have already received significant funding and are concerned whether you are eligible for the FLF scheme, we would suggest you start by reading the person specification and then consult with your host organisation and mentors. You may wish to consider whether the current time commitment you have made to existing grants will allow you to commit to the FLF as required.

Q: Will someone who already has a permanent/open ended position be looked at less favorably by reviewers compared to someone on a fixed-term contract?

A: These fellowships are for early career academics and innovators who are transitioning to or establishing independence. Applicants should use the Person Specification in the guidance for applicants to assess and justify their suitability for the scheme with reference to the objectives of the programme.

All Reviewers and Panel Members are briefed on the scheme and key things to consider in their assessment. An individual's current employment status may be subject to many factors and there are differences across and within Institutions as to how different staff members are supported at a given time. Therefore, we do not ask any reviewer to consider current contract status as an indicator of for whether they are more or less competitive for funding.

Q: If a Research Fellow is currently in a fellowship scheme from a non-UKRI funder, would he/she become disadvantaged for applying for a second fellowship under FLF?

A: No, if an applicant has funding from another funder or if the applicant already has a fellowship it does not automatically make the applicant ineligible. However, depending on the award it may make the applicant less competitive. Please refer to the guidance for applicants and assessment criteria in these situations.

In addition, FLF awards allow fellows protected time to concentrate fully on their research and/or innovation, training and development and establishing an independent position. In most cases a fellow is expected to spend 100% of their working time on their fellowship (which includes all activities associated with the fellowship). Academic-hosted applicants may spend up to six hours a week during the initial phase of the award (pro-rated 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).

However, in order to make the commitment required to holding the FLF, **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.**

Clinically active applicants (including veterinarians) can work up to 20% of their time (on average over the lifetime of the grant) on their clinical commitments. Exceptions are made for applicants undertaking patient-oriented research as part of their fellowship, who may undertake up to 40% of their time on these duties. This is not in addition to the six hours per week.

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.

Q: Is my host organisation eligible?

A: Organisations eligible to host a Future Leaders Fellowships include:

- Any UK-based organisation currently registered as eligible to apply for funding from the Research Councils. Details of eligibility and a list of recognised Institutes and Independent Research Organisations can be found on the UKRI website.
- Any non-academic organisation eligible to receive Subsidies from the UK Government that will provide an innovation and/or research environment of international standing. More information on Organisations eligible to receive funding can be found here. Applicants applying with a non-academic organisation as their host, should refer to the Non-Academic-Hosted version of this guidance instead.
- UKRI has published an update on Catapult eligibility for funding and fellows wishing to apply for an FLF hosted within a Catapult should contact the team at fellows@ukri.org for further details

FLF Remit

Q: Is the FLF Scheme planning to fund more applications from the humanities/social sciences? Do the success rates in these areas differ from the overall?

A: We are open to receiving any number of competitive applications from this community. We do not see a difference in the success rates for arts, humanities or social sciences compared to any of the other STEM proposals that we receive.

Future Rounds

Q: When will the FLF team be able to announce the timing and deadlines for Round 8?

A: The dates of future rounds have not been confirmed at this time. Once we have a better understanding of the budgets and future commitment, we will share dates at the earliest possible time.

Start dates for R7 funded proposals

Q: What is the expected start date (range) for successful Round 7 FLFs?

A: Fellowships must start during Q3 and Q4 23/24 with latest start date 31 March 2024.

Assessment Process

Q: Is submitting an outline proposal mandatory, and do I need to include budgetary information in my outline proposal?

A: Yes, in order to gauge interest and inform panel development it is mandatory that Host Organisations submit an Outline Proposal for all the applications they intent to submit, prior to submitting the Full Proposal(s).

Costings will need to be included in the outline proposal, however only headline figures are required at this stage and no detailed breakdown or justification of costs are required. It is fine if there is a

reasonable change in the total requested from Outline to Full, as we acknowledge that costs associated with the fellowship may change as your proposal develops.

Q: How is impact assessed across the different applications submitted to the FLF scheme?

A: We appreciate that impact looks different in each community and we are able to ensure it is assessed consistently though a number of ways. To start, each application is assessed by expert peer reviewers. The reviewers consider the importance and potential impact of the research/innovation and the pathways to achieving this impact. In addition, our thematic generalist panels use the information in the specialist reviewer reports and draw upon their own broad sectoral expertise to assess the applications using the assessment and scoring criteria issued by the UKRI FLF team.

Q: Can you elaborate on what is meant by "added value"?

A: Added value is discussed in the assessment criteria:

"Across all four factors assessed a key issue will be whether the added value of the fellowship mechanism of support – for example, the scale, flexibility, and duration offered – is well demonstrated, as opposed to more standard project grant support. For business applications, consideration of the added value will include, for example, whether the novelty and levels of risk involved in the project mean that it is beyond the normal activity of the business."

In addition, applicants may wish to consider whether the timeliness of their proposal and the suitability to the funding scheme demonstrates that the FLF is particularly well suited and will be catalytic in advancing their career at a time they are establishing independence.

Q: How are business-based applications assessed alongside academic applications?

A: All applications are assessed using the same process and criteria. For business-based applications we ensure that they are reviewed by appropriate reviewers from the business community (and academic or third sector if appropriate to the proposal) and that the panels have appropriate business member representation. More information on the assessment process can be found in the Additional info section of the Round 7 funding finder on the UKRI website.

Q: Do you implement double blind peer review?

A: No. Reviewer identify is kept anonymized throughout, however, the identify of the applicant, and any co-applicants or collaborators involved in the application is known to reviewers and panel members making their assessments.

Q: Can I request to exclude specific reviewers from the peer review of my application?

A: Yes, anyone you wish to exclude from the peer review of your application must be detailed in the cover letter. Please include their name, organisation, and the reason you would like them excluded. Please note that the FLF team reserves the right to judge whether an exclusion request is reasonable.

Q: Can I nominate overseas reviewers?

A: Research and innovation is an international endeavor and as such, the FLF team (and other Councils) frequently approach international reviewers based overseas. Our priority is ensuring each grant is appropriately reviewed by experts in the right research and/or innovation areas, therefore

you may nominate overseas reviewers who are a good fit to your proposal. Please note, that we would not source all reviews internationally for any given proposal; UK reviewers are essential to our review process.

Q: Do all reviewers come from academia?

A: No. We obtain a large proportion of our overall reviews for the scheme from academic reviewers; however, the review of each proposal is considered on an individual basis and the balance or blend of reviewer specialties and sectors is taken into consideration carefully.

Q: How are conflicts of interest managed in the peer review process?

A: To ensure a robust and fair peer review all reviewers and their comments to identify conflicts of interest. If a conflict is identified during the written review process, a conflicted reviewer is not asked to assess the applications and conflicted reviewer comments are not used. Similarly, if a conflicted panel member is identified during our panel assessment process, they are required to leave the room and so do not participate in discussions.

Q: During the peer review process how do I update the panels on any developments?

A: During the peer review process there are two opportunities to update the panel on any changes. The first is the rebuttal to the reviewer's comments, should it be appropriate to the specific queries raised by reviewers. The second opportunity is at the interview as the Panel Chair will ask if there have been any changes to the project.

Q: What percentage of applications do you expect to take to the interview stage?

A: We have the capacity to take up to 200 applications through to the interview stage, however the exact number is dependent on the quality of the round. For Round 7 due to the demand management cap at ~500, we therefore anticipate taking a maximum of 40% of proposals through to interview.

Q: Are the example interview questions available online?

A: The questions are available online now and you can find them by searching "UKRI FLF Practice Interview Questions." In addition, we share the example questions with the applicants after they have been invited to interview.

Q: Can you explain the Tensioning process?

A: The Tensioning process happens immediately after each meeting (Sift and Interview). The purpose of the Tensioning meeting is to collate and discuss the results of the individual panels; the results of all panels are brought together, and with input from the Chairs, Roving Panel Members and UKRI staff we ensure that the scoring used by each panel is comparable. After the Tensioning process UKRI can decide on a final list to proceed to interview or fund.

Host support

Q: How can I ensure that my Head of Department statement will strengthen my application?

Ideally, a Head of Department statement will make a tailored and clear commitment to an applicant's career development, covering research and innovation, leadership, and other aspects of career development that will help the applicant to support an independent research group.

We have noted that weaker Head of Department statements tend to be generic or make only vague commitments to the open-ended opportunity at the end of the fellowship.

Q: Can you give some examples of 'significant support' from the host?

A: Significant support will vary depending on the application. We would like to see hosts provide tailored support that will help the fellow to deliver the ambitious programme of research and/or innovation, for example, access to cutting edge technologies or facilities, investment in equipment (along with appropriate request from UKRI as detailed in our guidance) or technical infrastructure support. Some Institutions may be able to offer additional project support in the form of staffing resource.   Ideally, there should be clear commitment to the applicant's training and development with a bespoke support package including training, mentoring, networking, and development opportunities. The minimum expectation of host commitment can be found in our guidance for applicants document in the Planning your application and Applicant section of the guidance document.

Costings

Q: Can we request funding for project managers?

A: Yes, if the project proposal requires it.

Q: Can we cost for PhD students?

A: No costs associated with PhD students may be requested in the application. Please note, that UKRI funds PhD students through Doctoral Training Partnerships.

Q: Do you offer any guidance on costing a fellow's salary?

A: Fellow's salary costs will be determined by the level of appointment and associated pay scales at the Host Organisation; it is not UKRI's role to offer any guidance on rates of remuneration however please see section 5 for information on how to include the applicant's salary into the proposal.

Q: Can you provide any guidance on visas for overseas applicants?

A: Applicants must comply with Home Office/UK Visa and Immigration requirements and hold a valid work permit where appropriate. Applicants who require a visa must ensure this is in place before the start date of the award. Host Organisations should advise and support applicants in securing the necessary visa.

Successful applicants who require a visa to work in the UK will be eligible to be considered under the fast-track Global Talent Visa route. This visa route is designed for researchers/innovators and gives the holder flexibility to pursue their research and collaborations.

Visa costs can be charged for the applicant and any DI staff directly employed on the grant for 100% of their contracted time, this is not extended to family members, or, under the TRAC methodology, some institutions provide visa cost support under estates and indirects. UKRI will not fund the healthcare surcharge.

For further information on visas please see section 2.2 of our Guidance for Applicants, which can be found in the Additional info section of the [Round 7 funding finder](#) on the UKRI website.

Q: Can I include Post-Doctoral Research Associates (PDRAs) or technicians in my fellowship application?

A: Yes, PDRAs and other support staff who will be responsible for delivering defined objectives, can be included in your application. Further information on costings can be found in section 5 of the guidance for applicants. Please ensure adequate time to work with your research support office on costing their involvement in the proposal.

FLF Scheme Policy

Q: Are projects involving Russia permitted under the scheme?

A: UKRI condemns in the strongest possible terms the Russian government's invasion of Ukraine. We are supporting the UK Government's response by not funding any new collaborative projects with Russia through our research and innovation organisations.

Q: Can I submit to other UKRI schemes at the same time as applying for an FLF?

A: Applicants may only have one fellowship application under consideration by UKRI (which encompasses all fellowship schemes led by any of the Research Councils and/or Innovate UK) at any point, unless expressly permitted in the Research Council/Innovate UK call documentation. Applicants may apply simultaneously to other funders' fellowship schemes (those funders outside of UKRI).

Applicants may simultaneously seek grant support for other projects, from UKRI or other funders, while their application is under consideration, however;
> • A substantial part of the fellowship programme may not be under consideration as a proposal with any of the constituent parts of UKRI, while under consideration for a FLF award.
> • Any funding secured from UKRI or other funders must comply with the Future Leaders Fellowships terms and conditions if awarded, including the time commitments.

Any public funding applications under consideration at the time of application must be declared in the 'Other Support' section of the proposal form. Applicants detailing multiple submissions will not be penalised during the assessment process, but applicants must inform UKRI if these submissions are subsequently funded and must withdraw their application from UKRI consideration if the project or parts of the project have already been funded elsewhere.

Academic-hosted fellows can apply to be on a grant for a different project while simultaneously holding a UKRI fellowship, but they cannot request additional salary support whilst the fellowship is funded, and the award must be within the 6 hours a week permitted during the initial phase of the award.

Q: Is it mandatory for academic fellows to work with businesses?

A: No. Applicants can be based at an academic organisation, a business organisation or both. If it suits the project, businesses can be involved in the application in many ways, but it is not mandatory that applications involve business.

Q: For applicants planning to resubmit revised proposals, do they need to address feedback from all stages - written review and interview feedback?

A: Resubmission of an unchanged proposal to the FLF scheme is not permitted.

Previously unsuccessful applicants can apply to subsequent FLF calls provided the proposal address feedback from reviewers and the interview panel (where applicable) and will be assessed alongside all other applications to that call without bias. A summary of these amendments and how the feedback has been addressed must be detailed in the Cover Letter attached to the application.

Q: Are part time applications permitted?

A: Fellowships may be held on a part-time basis (to a minimum of 0.5 FTE) in order to combine research and/or innovation with personal responsibilities. Fellowships may not be held on a part-time basis to combine the research and/or innovation with another activity, for example, a part-time job.

In all cases, the value of a part-time award should be requested on a pro rata basis (not exceeding the full-time equivalent of the fellowship scheme period). For example, a four-year fellowship on a full-time basis would equate to an eight-year fellowship with the fellow working 0.5 FTE, but the value of the award would remain the same.

Q: How much time do I need to commit to the fellowship, and will I have any time for other activities?

A: FLF awards allow fellows protected time to concentrate fully on their research and/or innovation, training and development and establishing an independent position by the end of the award. In most cases a fellow is expected to spend 100% of their working time on their fellowship (which includes all activities associated with the fellowship).

- Academic-hosted applicants may spend up to six hours a week during the initial phase of the award (pro-rated 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).
- 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.

Clinically active applicants (including veterinarians) can work up to 20% of their time (on average over the lifetime of the grant) on their clinical commitments. Exceptions are made for applicants undertaking patient-oriented research as part of their fellowship, who may undertake up to 40% of their time on these duties. This is not in addition to the six hours per week.

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.

Q: What is the role of a mentor?
A: A mentor is distinct from other roles on the project, such as the Co-Investigator. A mentor is a colleague that aids the development of the fellow by offering guidance. A mentor can be based at the submitting host organisation or from another organisation not linked to the project.
There are no specific eligibility requirements for a mentor and a fellow can have as many as required. The fellow should consider when choosing mentor/s is how they add to the project and the development of the fellow.

A supporting statement from each named mentor should be included as mandatory. The mentor statement should include details of the mentor and the specified commitment made to mentoring support.

Demand Management

Q: Is there any guidance on how many outlines you would expect to see (in proportion to an institution's individual cap on full proposals)?
A: No, but please keep submissions to a reasonable number. Although not assessed, we do use the outline stage to gauge resource demands.

Q: Do re-submissions count against the cap?
A: Yes.

Q: What is the cap number of the applicants each institution can put forward?
A: For the list if applied caps for institutions, please see Annex A our Guidance for Applicants located on our website.

Q: Will demand management be in place for R8?
A: At this point we can not confirm whether demand management will be implemented for R8.

Peer Review and Panel College

Q: Will the Panel College and Peer Review College still be used for Round 7?
A: Yes, the Panel College and Peer Review College are fundamental to the delivery of the scheme, allowing us to select written reviewers in a timely way, and ensure that we use panel members with appropriate experience of the FLF scheme for the panel assessment. We are currently growing the membership of both Colleges, addressing some particular expertise gaps, ensuring that both Colleges are well resourced for both R7 and any future rounds of the scheme.

Post-award

Q: If the funded Fellow moves to another institution from the host, is the fund transferable?
A: Yes, similar to other UKRI schemes, PIs can move to another host organisation during their fellowship and the funding can move with them. More detail on the post-award process is available on our website, and we also host webinars for fellows on the post-award process.

Q: Can the open-ended position at the end of the fellowship be somewhere other than the host organisation?

A: Yes, if evidenced in the application that the host organisation is working with other organisations to best support the applicant by committing to an open-ended position at the end of the fellowship then that will be acceptable.