

## **UKRI Policy Fellowships 2023: What Works Innovation Fellowship Opportunity Description**

**Fellowship Title:** Education Endowment Foundation Fellowship on Recruitment and Retention in Social Services Research

**Available budget:** The full economic cost is £210,000 inclusive of additional £40,000 budget for research and collaboration costs, for further details on the additional budget see the 'How to apply' section specific to the What Works Innovation Fellowships. UKRI will fund 80% of the full economic cost of the grant.

**Host What Works Center:** [Education Endowment Foundation](#)

**Host Team:** Evaluation Team

**Summary:** Opportunity to explore, test and optimise recruitment and retention strategies in social services research

**Fellowship Theme:** Data and Evaluation. Please see the full call text 'What We Are Looking For' for a detailed summary of the research themes targeted in this call.

**Policy Topic:** Improving education, social care and early-help outcomes, overcoming socio-economic disadvantage

**Research Council:** ESRC

**Academic Discipline/s:** Education, sociology, economics, social research methods (field research, evidence synthesis, rapid cycle (A/B) testing, data analysis)

**Research Career Stage:** Open to early and mid-career researchers (role can be adapted depending on level of experience/expertise)

### **Fellowship Structure**

#### **Inception Phase:**

**Estimated Start Date:** October 2023. Exact date to be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements.

**Duration:** 3 months

**FTE:** 0.4 FTE

#### **Main Placement Phase:**

**Duration:** 12 months

**FTE:** 0.8-1 FTE

#### **Knowledge Exchange Phase:**

**Duration:** 3 months

**FTE:** 0.4 FTE

### **Work Arrangements**

**Location Requirements:** Our office is located in Millbank Tower in central London.

**Hybrid Working:** The general expectation is for staff to work from the office for a minimum of one day per week, usually on an agreed team day. Alternate arrangements are possible and can be discussed. Eligible travel and subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details.

**Security Clearance:** No security clearances are required to start the role. Depending on the development of the research, a basic DBS may be required.

### **Fellowship Opportunity Description**

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is seeking to embed a Fellow within its Evaluation Team. This Fellow will focus on a pair of core challenges in conducting high-quality field research – research recruitment and retention.

Although recruitment and retention are significant challenges to a successful evaluation, there is little robust evidence on the most efficacious approaches to maximisation.

The role will involve mixed methods and interdisciplinary research, leading to the development of practical guidance in the form of tangible strategies to maximise recruitment and retention in research. We expect the outputs from this Fellowship to be of significant interest to the research community, including the broader What Works Network, government departments, academic institutions, and independent research organisations.

The Fellow will first scope the scale and nature of the challenge, and then the most appropriate methods of generating understanding, insights and practical guidance on alleviation strategies. They will be supported by colleagues across EEF but will also have significant autonomy to frame the work. We anticipate that methods are likely to include, but by no means be limited to those outlined below, and we will work with the Fellow in the Inception phase to agree the approach based on the Fellow's interests and input:

- A literature review: focused on best practices on research recruitment, attrition minimisation, and incentives.
- Exploratory qualitative research: via data collection (e.g. interviews; proformas) with a range of internal and external stakeholders. Key foci could be understanding challenges faced in study recruitment and retention and the variety of strategies utilised to overcome these. Data could be collected from staff within EEF and other WWCs, and staff in government research departments, and/or academic/research organisations.
- Data analysis: the EEF has conducted more than 140 trials and has used a variety of financial incentives for schools to participate in research. These data could be used to explore:
  - the recruitment 'ratio' (where known) – i.e. the number of settings contacted vs the number recruited, the extent to which this differed according to the nature of the intervention and the demands of the evaluation; and any learning about differences in strategy that may need to be applied for different types of study
  - correlations between the types and amounts of incentives used, and levels of a) recruitment and b) retention/attrition. The Fellow could potentially seek to identify patterns, looking for examples of success (as well as poorer outcomes) in the use of incentives and the strategies associated with these.
- Rapid-cycle testing: the Fellow could contribute to setting up A/B tests within trials funded by the EEF during the period of their fellowship to support new evidence generation. For example, this might involve testing of different types of recruitment message; testing of the offer of different types of incentive (financial/non-financial) and so on.

The knowledge-exchange phase of the Fellowship will culminate in a guidance briefing for the research and policy making communities. The briefing will synthesise the outcomes of the research-phase of the fellowship, identifying key insights and making recommendations about promising strategies to maximise recruitment to and retention in research and evaluation. The Fellow will receive support from EEF's evaluation, policy, and communications teams to produce this briefing, as well as any presentations/workshops that would support further dissemination of the findings among policy makers, the What Works Network, and the broader research community.

Throughout the Fellowship, the Fellow will benefit from a range of rich developmental opportunities. These will include a detailed organisational induction programme, dedicated line-management and team support, a range of learning opportunities, presentations and workshops that are available to all EEF staff, and wider networking opportunities both within and beyond EEF.

## **Person Specification**

Applications will be assessed against the following opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria.

### **Essential Criteria:**

EEF is looking for a strong candidate with an academic background in the social sciences, who meets the following criteria:

- A commitment to, and interest in, the aims of the EEF/WWN
- Proficiency in all aspects of mixed-methods research, specifically:
  - experience conducting literature reviews and/or evidence synthesis
  - ability to independently clean and analyse quantitative data
  - experience collecting, collating and analysing qualitative data (e.g. interview/pro-forma data)
- Excellent report writing/presentation skills
- Ability to act on own initiative, with agility and flexibility
- Willingness to collaborate, as part of a high-functioning team
- Ability to engage effectively and credibly with a range of stakeholders – both internal and external

- Experience leading, or contributing to, knowledge-exchange activities

**Desirable Criteria:**

- Experience designing, running, and/or analysing randomised controlled trials
- Understanding of the schools landscape and the issues associated with recruiting schools to research
- Experience recruiting research participants