UKRI Response to the Inclusive selection and support for the Future Leaders Fellowship scheme - Investigation of current practice and identification of good practice examples Report Authored by Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) and commissioned by UKRI

Background

The UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship scheme aims to develop the next wave of world-class research and innovation leaders in academia and business. The scheme provides long-term support to enable fellows to tackle ambitious programmes or multidisciplinary questions, and new or emerging research and innovation areas and partnerships. The scheme supports people on diverse career paths, including those returning from a career break or following time in other roles.

To date it has made awards to over 550 fellows, over seven rounds. Through support provided by the UKRI FLF Development Network, this cohort of emerging research and innovation leaders are increasingly forming new collaborations amongst both themselves and with the wider research and innovation community. As a pan–UKRI scheme, the FLF cohort comprises talented researchers with a broad range of cross-disciplinary expertise. Solving the most complex research and innovation challenges requires a diversity of approaches, skills, and perspectives as this supports collaborative and creative problem-solving, fostering novel ideas and innovations. Research and Innovation outputs and impacts are strengthened when people with different expertise, experiences, approaches and ways of thinking work together[1][2]. This is one of the reasons that diversity which encompasses host organisation types, varied career pathways, protected characteristics and breadth of disciplinary expertise has always been at the core of the UKRI FLF scheme. Furthermore, the FLF approach supports the ambitions set out in both UKRI strategy and the Government's People and Culture strategy to create an open and inclusive research and innovation culture that attracts a diversity of people to enhance UK research and innovation capabilities and boost productivity and growth.

UKRI recently commissioned CRAC to review[3] the preparation and selection processes which have been undertaken in research and innovation organisations who have submitted applications to the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships scheme.

The aim of this review was to:

- Better understand the level of inclusivity within selection processes currently used by host organisations.

- Better understand the level of support provided for those who are enabled to apply for the UKRI FLF scheme and how this varies across different sizes/types of host organisation.

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[1] How diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) matter | McKinsey
[2] Why Diversity Matters in Decision-Making | Dimensional Insight (dimins.com)
[3] CRAC - Identifying Good Practice Relating To Inclusive Selection Within The Future Leaders Fellowship Scheme

- Identify and publish examples of good practice relating to inclusive selection processes.

- Identify any changes which could be made to UKRI Fellowship application processes to ensure inclusive selection processes are implemented.

- Highlight recommendations for further investigation or analysis.

The review makes several recommendations, including five for UKRI. These recommendations are provided below in italics followed by the associated UKRI response:

1.   Demand Management

"The recent introduction of demand management should be retained as data so far suggests it has made the scheme more inclusive by broadening the footprint of hosts with applicants and awards, including more smaller and specialised institutions".

Demand management (with the same application caps as rounds 7 &8) has been retained for FLF round 9. This approach will be reviewed before the launch of FLF round 10.

2.   Data Collection

"To increase transparency and accelerate the progress of hosts in collecting and analysing applicant profile data, UKRI should continue to publish EDI data about FLF applications and awards and consider requiring academic hosts to provide recent profile data to accompany their inclusive selection statement. UKRI should also partner with other funders and schemes to reduce fragmented data gathering and potential tensions with requests from others".

UKRI will continue to publish aggregated and anonymised EDI data[4] as part of the FLF scheme commitment to transparency and supporting access and inclusion.

As a pilot, academic host organisations wishing to submit applications to round 9 of the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship application must complete diversity monitoring templates to provide anonymised information on the number of prospective applicants by sex and gender, ethnicity, disability, and broad disciplinary groupings. Details of this requirement are contained within Annex A.

As Higher Education Institutions have a responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to advance equality of opportunity, the collection and reporting of data at a scheme level will provide hosts with insights/evidence to demonstrate compliance with this duty alongside providing insights into how effective their current attraction and selection policies and procedures are. Data collection is an early and vital step in the process of designing initiatives to tackle issues related to inequality, checking that an initiative is having the desired effects and making changes to an initiative, if required.

UKRI are currently working on the evolution of their talent offer for collective talent funding[5]. Providing details on the demand for fellowships at this career stage to UKRI will help determine what an ongoing offering for a fellowship scheme at this career stage should look like. Additional

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[4] Future Leaders Fellowships outcomes and EDI data – UKRI
[5] Explainer: UKRI's support for people and careers – UKRI

insights provided by this data will also help UKRI better understand the holistic inclusivity of the FLF scheme, with a breadth of diversity within the important to ensure the delivery of high-quality impactful research.

As part of this pilot, UKRI will seek feedback from host organisations on the practicalities of collecting and reporting on diversity monitoring data. The FLF team will also seek dialogue with other funders and across UKRI to try and harmonise approaches to diversity monitoring in the future.

3.   Inclusive Selection Statement

"The requirement for academic host organisations to provide an inclusive selection statement for each application round (or updates to the previous one) should continue, although the guidance/prompts given to hosts should be reviewed in the context of findings of this report".

Hosts that provided an inclusive selection statement during round seven and/or eight will be asked to confirm if the original statement still reflects their process, and if not provide an update.

Due to the requirement for diversity monitoring data to be reported on during the round 9 application process, hosts might like to review the data collected and consider:

- Were candidates put forward to UKRI broadly representative of the early career researcher population at their institution?

- If not, was this due to the attraction or selection stage?

- Are any changes to policy/process required because of this?

- Should any action be taken to investigate further?

Hosts will also be asked to highlight any updates to their inclusive selection statements in two sections:

a) Changes which were planned prior to the publication of the CRAC report on inclusive selection and support.

b) Changes which have been implemented based on the findings of the CRAC report on inclusive selection and support.

Information provided as part of the inclusive selection statement will not be used in the assessment/outcome of this funding opportunity. UKRI will review the information provided in the round 9 selection statements and diversity monitoring data and publish a high-level summary of their findings. This review and community feedback will help determine the approach taken for FLF round 10.

4.   Review and Improvement

"To encourage a culture of review and improvement, UKRI should conduct a diversity review of its own process for selection of FLF final applications and publish the results".

Continuous improvement and diversity which encompasses host organisation types, varied career pathways, protected characteristics and breadth of disciplinary expertise has always been integral to the UKRI FLF Programme. UKRI colleagues who sit outside the FLF programme will undertake a critical friend review of the FLF processes for assessment of applications. This will include:

- A review of external facing guidance to applicants – by end Jan 24

- Observations of FLF R8 Sift panels - w/c 26th Feb 24

- Observations of FLF R8 Interview panels - w/c 22 April 24

- A review of internal FLF processes/guidance – by end April 24

- A summary of review findings is expected to be finalised by the end of May 2024, which would enable recommendations to be incorporated for the launch of FLF round 10.

- Summary of review findings – by end May 24

5.   Contextual Issues:

"It would be valuable for all parties for UKRI to lead an investigation into methods for fair and consistent assessment of contextual issues in selection for FLF or related funding applications, and share any good practice identified".

UKRI recently published the Technopolis commissioned report on the Review of peer review. The review of peer review considers peer review from the perspective of research culture and is a resource for all funders looking to optimise and innovate their peer review processes. The report provides a synthesis of evidence on different types of interventions in peer review processes, their aims, drawbacks, and impact.

The FLF Programme is committed to continuous improvement and will actively seek feedback on the contextual issues in FLF selection processes where additional guidance and or publication of good practice would be seen as useful. The FLF team will then feed this information into scoping currently underway to determine next steps following the publication of the review of peer review.

As part of UKRI's Simpler and Better Funding Programme, additional guidance is currently being prepared on how contextual information provided in the "Additions" section of the Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI) should be considered within the assessment of the applicant. The FLF Programme will implement the R4RI as part of the round 9 application documentation and will seek feedback from people providing reviews to feed into this project and aid the development of good practice in this area.

UKRI FLF Action Plan in Response to CRAC report recommendations

	Action	Target dates
1.	Pilot an approach to accelerate the progress of hosts collecting and analysing prospective applicant data by requesting that academic hosts submitting to FLF round 9 complete the templates contained within Annex A of this response	Pilot launch November 23, with submissions by round 9 call close April 24
2.	Seek feedback from host organisations on the practicalities of collecting and reporting on diversity monitoring data	Workshop feedback – Nov 23 Feedback via survey – May 24
3.	Seek dialogue with other funders and across UKRI to try and harmonise approaches to diversity monitoring in the future.	June 24
4.	UKRI will review the information provided in the round 9 selection statements and diversity monitoring data and publish a high-level summary of their findings. This review and community feedback will help determine the approach taken for FLF round 10.	October 24
5.	Seek feedback from host organisations on the implementation of demand management for rounds 7-9, and consider changes which would be implemented for FLF round 10	October 24
6.	UKRI to undertake a critical friend review of the FLF processes for assessment of applications. This will include: A review of external facing guidance to applicants – by end Jan 24 Observations of FLF R8 Sift panels - w/c 26th Feb 24 Observations of FLF R8 Interview panels - w/c 22 April 24 A review of internal FLF processes/guidance – by end April 24 A summary of review findings is expected to be finalised by the end of May 2024,	Jan – May 2024
7.	Seek feedback on any contextual issues in FLF selection processes where additional guidance and or publication of good practice would be seen as useful and feed into wider UKRI work which is ongoing as part of the review of peer review.	Phase 1 – workshop feedback – Nov 23 Phase 2 – wider consultation April – June 24
8.	FLF Round 9 will be the first round of the scheme to implement R4RI. Feedback will be sought from reviewers and panel members on the need for additional guidance around the assessment of contextual issues.	Feedback from reviewers – June 2024 Feedback from panel members – March 2025

Diversity Monitoring Template for UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships Round 9

Academic host organisations wishing to submit applications to round 9 of the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship application must complete the following four tables, providing anonymised information on the number of prospective applicants by sex and gender, ethnicity, disability, and broad disciplinary groupings.

The completed template must be submitted to fellows@ukri.org by call close TBC expected summer 2024.

This requirement is one of the recommendations contained within the UKRI commissioned report authored by The Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) titled "Inclusive selection and support for the Future Leaders Fellowship scheme - Investigation of current practice and identification of good practice examples[1]".

Background

To date around 550 Future Leaders Fellowships have been awarded, over seven funding rounds. Through support provided by the UKRI FLF Development Network[2], this cohort of emerging research and innovation leaders are increasingly forming new collaborations amongst both themselves and with the wider community. As a pan–UKRI scheme, the FLF cohort comprises talented researchers with a broad range of cross-disciplinary expertise. Solving the most complex research and innovation challenges requires a diversity of approaches, skills, and perspectives as this supports collaborative and creative problem-solving, fostering novel ideas and innovations. The impact and benefit of research and innovation will be more relevant and useful for everyone when people with different expertise, experiences, approaches and ways of thinking work together. This is one of the reasons that diversity which encompasses host organisation types, varied career pathways, protected characteristics and breadth of disciplinary expertise has always been important to the UKRI FLF scheme. Furthermore, the FLF approach supports the ambitions set out in both UKRI strategy[3] and the Government's People and Culture strategy[4] to create an open and inclusive research and innovation culture that attracts a diversity of people to enhance UK research and innovation capabilities and boost productivity and growth.

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[1] [CRAC - Identifying Good Practice Relating To Inclusive Selection Within The Future Leaders Fellowship Scheme](#)
[2] [FLF Development Network - Future Leaders Fellows Development Network (flfdevnet.com)](#)
[3] [Our strategy 2022 to 2027 – UKRI](#)
[4] [Research and development (R&D) people and culture strategy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](#)

Data Collection at UKRI

When research organisations submit FLF applications to UKRI, the application system collects personal data including date of birth, ethnic origin, gender and disability. UKRI use this personal data to:

Inform analysis to investigate if applicants to the scheme who share a protected characteristic:

    a. suffer a disadvantage linked to that characteristic

    b. have different needs to other groups, or

    c. have a disproportionately low level of participation

If this results in an evidenced need then UKRI may make appropriate and proportionate interventions, including in final funding decisions. This is in accordance with UKRIs duty to advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

UKRI publish aggregated and anonymised data[5] as part of the FLF scheme commitment to transparency and supporting access and inclusion.

Data collection at academic research organisations

As Higher Education Institutions have a responsibility under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to advance equality of opportunity, the collection and reporting of data at a scheme level will provide hosts with insights/evidence to demonstrate compliance with this duty alongside providing insights into how effective their current attraction and selection policies and procedures are. Data collection is an early and vital step in the process of designing initiatives to tackle issues related to inequality, checking that an initiative is having the desired effects and making changes to an initiative, if required

The data requested has been based on the [Advance HE Guidance on the collection of diversity monitoring data](). Whilst UKRI are currently only requesting reporting against categories collected within their legacy application system, depending on host organisation size, hosts should consider the purpose of collecting and analysing data for a wider range of protected characteristics.

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[5] [Future Leaders Fellowships outcomes and EDI data – UKRI]()

Additional notes

UKRI are currently working on the evolution of their talent offer for collective talent funding[6]. Providing details on the demand for fellowships at this career stage will help determine what an ongoing offering for a fellowship scheme at this career stage should look like.

Information contained within this template will not be used in the assessment/outcome of this funding opportunity but will be used in the development of UKRI strategy.

As discussed within the UKRI response to the CRAC report, this is a pilot initiative and additional work in this area is ongoing. Feedback on this approach can be sent to fellows@ukri.org.

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[6] Explainer: UKRI's support for people and careers – UKRI

Sex and Gender

	Sex			Gender identity					Gender identity same as sex registered at birth?		
	Female	Male	Unknown/Not Disclosed	Man	Woman	Non-Binary	Other	Unknown/Not Disclosed	Yes	No	Unknown/Not Disclosed
Number of candidates who expressed interest in applying to R9 FLF											
Number of candidates expressing interest who were considered to have competitive/supportable applications											
Number of candidates selected to submit applications to UKRI for FLF R9											
Benchmark data of early career researcher population at submitting Research Organisation	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Ethnicity

	Ethnicity (UK Nationals)						
	Arab	Asian, or Asian British	Black	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	White	Any other ethnic background	Unknown/ Not Disclosed
Number of candidates who expressed interest in applying to R9 FLF							
Number of candidates expressing interest who were considered to have competitive/supportable applications							
Number of candidates selected to submit applications to UKRI for FLF R9							
Benchmark data of early career researcher at submitting Research Organisation	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
	Ethnicity (Non-UK Nationals)						
	Arab	Asian, or Asian British	Black	Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	White	Any other ethnic background	Unknown/ Not Disclosed
Number of candidates who expressed interest in applying to R9 FLF							
Number of candidates expressing interest who were considered to have competitive/supportable applications							
Number of candidates selected to submit applications to UKRI for FLF R9							
Benchmark data of early career researcher at submitting Research Organisation	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Disability

	Disability		
	Yes	No	Unknown/Not Disclosed
Number of candidates who expressed interest in applying to R9 FLF			
Number of candidates expressing interest who were considered to have competitive/supportable applications			
Number of candidates selected to submit applications to UKRI for FLF R9			
Benchmark data of early career researcher at submitting Research Organisation	%	%	%

Discipline

	Primary Lead Council							Total
	AHRC	BBSRC	ESRC	EPSRC	MRC	NERC	STFC	
Number of candidates who expressed interest in applying to R9 FLF								
Number of candidates expressing interest who were considered to have competitive/supportable applications								
Number of candidates selected to submit applications to UKRI for FLF R9								