



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council



Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

Executive Director for Portfolios, Partnerships and Engagement

Candidate Prospectus
September 2025


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About UKRI



UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is the UK's largest public funder of research and innovation. We invest more than £8 billion annually to advance our understanding of society and the world around us and deliver benefits for society, the economy, and the environment.

Our organisation comprises nine councils – the UK's innovation agency, Innovate UK, the seven disciplinary Research Councils and Research England, which is responsible for supporting research and knowledge exchange at higher education institutions in England. As a UK-wide organisation we work across the four UK nations and with the devolved funding bodies and governments to understand and support different priorities that span research and innovation in different parts of the UK.

Through our Councils and the critical national capabilities provided by our centres, units and institutes, we deliver, support and champion the creativity and vibrancy of research and innovation in the UK, for the benefit of society.

UKRI is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).

Find out more in our 5-year strategy, [Transforming Tomorrow Together](#)

About AHRC

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) is part of UK Research and Innovation and supports world-class research that furthers our understanding of human culture and creativity. It supports research and postgraduate training in a wide range of subject areas, from ancient history and heritage science to modern dance and digital content. Research into these areas helps us to interpret our experiences, probe our identities, interrogate our cultural assumptions and understand our historical, social, economic and political context. It adds to the economic success of the UK, through its contributions to the knowledge economy and innovation agenda. The research we fund can lead to improvements in social and intellectual capital, community identity, learning skills, technological evolution and the quality of life of the nation.

Further details about AHRC can be found [here](#).

About the role



We have an excellent opportunity for a highly skilled and experienced individual to take on the role of Executive Director for Portfolios, Partnerships and Engagement in AHRC. The post-holder will be a member of the AHRC's Executive Leadership Team.

Key responsibilities include leading AHRC's strategic partnerships and engagement domain, alongside management and delivery oversight of our flagship portfolios covering the Cultural and Creative Economy portfolios. This includes major current investments such as CoSTAR and RICHES, alongside the developing DiSSCo programme - all of which provide critical infrastructure underpinning these portfolio domains. The successful candidate will also have the opportunity to take on Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) responsibilities for these major programmes.

As a senior leader within AHRC you will also play a key role in driving the strategic research direction of the organisation by building partnerships and developing opportunities both across UKRI and the sector and manage the relationships with AHRC's broad range of strategic stakeholders including research organisations, Arts Councils, GLAM Sector, Creative Industry Partners, other government departments, partner universities and other delivery partners such as the Design Council.

Further resources on some of the key initiatives:

[CoSTAR National Lab – UKRI](#)

[Creative industries clusters programme – UKRI](#)

[Towards a National Collection](#)

Key Accountabilities

The Executive Director's responsibilities are set out in the following key areas:

Leadership (25%)

- To provide clear, collaborative and collective leadership, as part of the AHRC Executive Leadership Team, supporting the Executive Chair and fellow members of the Executive Leadership Team, to ensure the smooth running of AHRC
- Empower direct reports (Associate Director level) and their teams to be purposeful and strategic in their operations and delivery
- As a member of the broader AHRC leadership team, role model and champion organisational values and behaviours and equality, diversity and inclusion principles
- Working with and advising the Executive Chair and across the AHRC team to shape and lead the evolution of the organisation
- Lead the strategic Partnerships and Engagement domain - inspiring, empowering and developing a team which collaborates across the organisation, delivering for AHRC and UKRI

Portfolio Management (20%)

- Lead and provide delivery oversight of AHRC's Cultural and Creative Economy portfolios, ensure these remain strategically aligned and outcome focussed throughout, feeding into AHRC's overall Strategic Delivery Plans and operational business plans and monitoring processes to ensure the integrity and value of investments remains and can be clearly articulated to a wide range of stakeholders.

Programme Director (25%)

- Undertake SRO responsibilities for one or more of our major infrastructure investment programmes.
- Set the Programme direction for Major AHRC investments within these portfolios realising the successful delivery and outcomes of these investments and leveraging optimum co-investment through their respective Programme Managers and delivery teams.

Key Accountabilities (cont.)

- Ensure AHRC's strategic approach to the delivery of these investments optimises opportunities to coordinate joint work across UKRI and leverage additional investment (both public and private) to maximise impact and deliver demonstrable metrics of success.

Strategic Stakeholder engagement (25%)

- Lead the strategic relationship management and engagement with AHRC's strategic partner universities, research organisations and other delivery partners. Develop new and existing co-investment opportunities.
- Create new and innovative external partnerships to increase co-funding opportunities, meet sector needs and align with government strategy
- Senior Executive lead for all matters relating to AHRC's strategic approach to broader stakeholder management (covering research organisations, government, business, the public).
- To lead on refreshing and implementing a discipline-Council specific stakeholder engagement strategy, working with senior leaders across AHRC to convene and collaborate with a range of partners to understand and resolve sector specific strategic issues and promote the wider health of the Arts and Humanities research community.

Policy (5%)

- Lead on the progression of AHRC policy and practice to support better partnering and engagement and increased leverage of AHRC investments.
- The above lists are not exhaustive, and the post holder may be required to carry out additional duties within the scope and grade of the role as reasonably required.

About you

We are looking for a collaborative leader with strong communication skills, experienced in delivering complex programmes, building partnerships, supporting major investments, and leading diverse, inclusive teams in fast-changing environments.

Candidates will be assessed against the following criteria throughout the recruitment process:

- Demonstrable experience of influencing and managing relationships at senior levels, including cross-sector stakeholders, co-investor partnerships, government bodies, and international partners. Able to build and sustain strategic partnerships and represent AHRC effectively in national and international settings. (Lead criteria)
- Proven track record of shaping and delivering organisational strategy and major investments in the arts and humanities or a related sector, including responsibility for strategic planning, policy development, and programme delivery in partnership with co-investors and external stakeholders.
- A consultative and adaptable leadership style, working flexibly and visibly across teams, sectors, UKRI landscape to achieve shared strategic outcomes.
- Extensive experience providing advice and assurance on the design and delivery of complex programmes, including alignment with Green Book standards, risk management, financial oversight, and acting as (or advising) Senior Responsible Owners.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills, conveying complex ideas with clarity and purpose to diverse audiences and to advocate persuasively for AHRC's vision and priorities.

About you (cont.)



- Experience of building, motivating and developing high-performing and diverse teams, promoting wellbeing, equality, and inclusion, and providing positive role modelling in a dynamic and evolving organisational context.
- Strong ability to manage and deliver outcomes under pressure and at pace, demonstrating resilience, flexibility, and a commitment to delivery integrity and impact in shifting landscapes.
- Highly developed analytical skills, including the ability to evaluate business cases and make evidence-based decisions, with strong understanding of governance, public sector frameworks, and the research funding landscape.

Qualifications

- Essential: Educated to degree level in a relevant field.
- Desirable: Postgraduate qualification in arts and humanities or a related field.

Please note, applicants must be willing and able to travel regularly within the UK and occasionally overseas to maintain and enhance our strong partnership networks.

Terms of Appointment

Band: UKRI Band X (SCS1)

Salary: £91,943 - £99,000 per annum (depending on skills and experience)

Hours: Full time (37 hours)

Contract Type: Open Ended; Secondment arrangements are welcome (minimum 3-year term)

Location: Swindon - Please note, applicants must be willing and able to travel regularly within the UK and occasionally overseas to maintain and enhance our strong partnership networks.

Timescales and selection

The selection process will include a panel interview, presentation and staff panel. In addition, there may be additional fireside discussions. Interviews will be held in person. *Please note, dates and details are subject to change.*

Process

Closing date

Shortlist panel meeting

Panel interviews

Date

Sunday 5 October 2025

w/c 13th October 2025

30th / 31st October 2025

How to apply

Please submit your application via our **Careers Site** by **Sunday 5th October 2025**.

You will need to supply:

- A curriculum vitae (up to two pages)
- A supporting statement/ cover letter (up to two pages pages)

Your Statement of Suitability should provide specific information about why you believe you would be suitable for appointment for this role. Think about your knowledge, skills, experience, personal attributes, and vision for the organisation, and take full advantage of the space available. Use practical examples where possible and ensure you refer to which of the essential criteria your application is aligned to. Again, please aim for no more than 2 A4 pages.

Please note, failure to provide a supporting statement/cover letter or failure to address the above points may result in your application not being considered further.

If you experience any issues, please contact seniorrecruitment@ukri.org, so we can ensure your application has been received.

General information

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

UKRI believes that everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect, and to be provided with equal opportunities to flourish and succeed within an ethical and trusted working environment that is attractive and accessible to everyone who is interested in developing their career with us.

We are committed to increasing the diversity of our board and executive positions and bringing in talent, regardless of its origins. We encourage applications from all candidates regardless of ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or gender identity. We also value diversity of thought and experience and are committed to creating systems that value difference so that everyone can feel welcomed, included and nurtured throughout their time with us.

We know actions speak louder than words. For further information, please visit the UKRI web page: [‘How we support EDI in the workforce’](#)

Pre-employment screening

To enable us to hire the very best people and to safeguard our people, our assets and our important role we will conduct a comprehensive pre-employment check on successful applicants as part of the recruitment process.

UKRI supports research in areas that include animal health, agriculture and food security, and bioscience for health which includes research on animals, genetic modification, and stem cell research. Whilst you may not have direct involvement in this type of research, you should consider how this aligns with your personal values or beliefs. Our pre-employment requirements include a security check and an extreme organisation’s affiliation check.

The role holder will be required to have the appropriate level of security screening/ vetting required for the role. UKRI reserves the right to run or re-run security clearance as required during the course of employment.

General information

Standards

In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way.

Consistent with the Commissioner's Code of Practice, applicants will be assessed on merit, and all candidates will need to uphold the standards of the UKRI Code of Conduct and conduct set out in the Seven Principles of Public Life, which are:

Selflessness

Holders of Public Office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or other friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

Carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

General information

Complaints Procedure

If you feel you have reason to complain, you should direct your concerns in the first instance to the Senior Appointments team (SeniorRecruitment@ukri.org) who will make every effort to deal with this and respond to you within 48 hours.

If your complaint is not dealt with satisfactorily, you can find information about the steps you can take under [UKRI Complaints Procedure](#).