

UKRI policy fellowships 2026

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

Cabinet Office local government evaluation capability building fellowship

Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowship

Host organisation:

[Cabinet Office](#)

Host team:

[Evaluation Task Force](#)

Academic discipline/s:

Social research methods, specialist evaluation skills, impact evaluation, behavioural science, knowledge translation.

Summary:

Opportunity to support the Evaluation Task Force to deliver on our strategic aim of building capability and capacity in local government; ensuring local areas can understand, generate and use evidence and evaluation to inform spending and commissioning decisions.

Policy topic:

Local government, growth mission, local economic growth.

Research career stage:

Open to early and mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

The fellowship is estimated to begin in May 2027. The exact date will be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements. The fellowship will have three phases:

- inception: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE
- main placement: duration is 12 months at 0.6-1 FTE
- knowledge exchange: duration is 3 months at 0.4 FTE

Work arrangements

Location requirements:

The fellow will need to regularly work at Cabinet Office locations in Canary Wharf and Westminster.

Hybrid working:

During the main placement phase, fellows will be expected to attend Cabinet Office buildings in person at (primarily) 10 South Colonnade, Canary Wharf or (occasionally) 1 Horse Guards Road, Westminster on average two days per week. During the inception phase, fellows should budget for attending up to six face-to-face meetings in London. Eligible Travel and Subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details.

Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:

The level of security clearance needed is Counter-Terrorist Check (CTC), please see [national security vetting: clearance levels](#) for more information. CTC clearance can take up to two months to complete. The inception phase can commence (without access to Cabinet Office systems) before clearance is granted.

This job is broadly open to the following nationality groups:

- UK nationals
- nationals of the Republic of Ireland
- nationals of Commonwealth countries who have the right to work in the UK
- nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities with settled or pre-settled status under the [European Union Settlement Scheme \(EUSS\)](#)
- nationals of the EU, Switzerland, Norway, Iceland or Liechtenstein and family members of those nationalities who have made a valid application for settled or pre-settled status under the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS)
- individuals with limited leave to remain or indefinite leave to remain who were eligible to apply for EUSS on or before 31 December 2020
- Turkish nationals, and certain family members of Turkish nationals, who have accrued the right to work in the Civil Service

Further information can be found at [Civil Service recruitment: nationality rules - GOV.UK](#).

Fellowship position description

The work:

The Evaluation Task Force (ETF) is a joint Cabinet Office and HM Treasury (HMT) team working to ensure robust evidence on the effectiveness of policies and programmes sits at the heart of spending decisions.

The successful fellow will work with the Evaluation Task Force and relevant government departments to help build the capacity of local government to understand, use and generate robust evidence and evaluation. Evaluation capability and capacity varies across local government, while the move to integrated settlements puts an additional onus on local areas to deliver robust evaluation to evidence the impact of local innovation. The successful fellow will work with the ETF to develop a strong understanding of local government capability in Mayoral Combined Authorities, Mayoral Strategic Authorities, and Foundation

Strategic Authorities. The fellow will develop tailored interventions to build capacity with local partners to help inform local spending decisions.

The fellow will add value by supporting assessments of capability and capacity across local government, helping to identify and prioritise key gaps in local knowledge and barriers to the delivery of impactful evaluation and evidence generation. Building on this assessment, the fellow will help develop, design and deliver tailored and targeted interventions in local areas aimed at supporting the generation and use of robust evidence to inform spending and commissioning decisions.

While this opportunity is focussed on understanding and supporting local government capability, there may be opportunities for the successful candidate to work on a broader range of activities linked to the ETF strategy, including exploring how we apply 'test and learn' approaches to evaluation in local areas and tackle challenging cross-government evaluation challenges. Fellows will work with the ETF to codesign potential research projects, including impact, process and value-for-money evaluations during the fellowship inception phase.

Key activities:

The successful fellow will have to opportunity to:

- work on a dynamic mix of short-term activities tackling emerging issues, and longer-term projects directly engaging with policy or analytical specialists in departments and local areas
- work to ensure our understanding of the local government capability and capacity is informed by the best available evidence, and that data and research evidence is used to support local commissioning through robust impact evaluation
- contribute academic expertise to the understanding and developing local capability and capacity through both technical evaluation skills and their specialist policy knowledge of local government.
- Support development and implementation of robust evaluation of programmes by providing technical advice to departments and local areas on complex evaluations, and through review of evaluation plans
- engage academic networks to collate and share relevant learning between academic and government communities to support capability building
- undertake original research and analysis to support delivery and evaluation of the ETF activity to build local evaluation capability and capacity.

Benefits to the fellow:

- gaining an understanding of policymaking from the heart of government, as well as the analysis, data and funding decisions that support this
- the opportunity to build their network of policy and analytical professionals within government, from key central departments and local government
- peer mentoring from ETF Evaluation Leads and the opportunity to apply academic knowledge and research expertise in the development and implementation of policy
- opportunity to publish academic outputs (where data and security requirements allow)

Example activities and outputs:

- rapid reviews of policy documents or research evidence to feed into delivery and evaluation planning
- researching and communicating 'what works' evidence to policy and delivery teams
- analysis and interrogation of data to support problem identification and policy development
- rapid scrutiny of evaluation plans attached to business cases submitted to HMT spending teams
- advising and supporting departments and local areas on the design and delivery of robust, proportionate evaluation of in-flight initiatives

- communicating research and evaluation findings to ensuring they are fed back into decisions made by departments, local areas, and spending teams

Person specification

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

Essential criteria:

- experience of design and delivery of experimental or quasi-experimental impact evaluation, complex theory-based or contribution analysis evaluation
- subject matter expertise in social research methodology, impact evaluation and process evaluation
- experience of working with policy or practice stakeholders to develop and refine research, monitoring or evaluation plans

Applicants shortlisted from the panel assessment will be invited to a host led interview. At this stage the host will also take into account the following desirable fellowship-specific requirements.

Desirable criteria:

- ability to synthesise existing evidence and make recommendations about policy development and implementation
- background in or awareness of value for money evaluation or assessment
- experience in other social science disciplines such as behavioural science or economics

Processing personal data

If applicants are shortlisted by the UKRI assessment panel UKRI will need to share the application and any personal information that it contains with the host for the host led interview selection process.

Your personal data will be handled in line with UK data protection legislation and managed securely. If you would like to know more, including how to exercise your Rights, please see the UKRI [privacy notice](#).

Please see the [Host's privacy notice](#) and they will delete your data at the end of the selection process unless you are successful, in which case we will retain your data as an independent data controller.