



UKRI Policy Fellowships 2026

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

DCMS youth engagement and participation in culture fellowship

Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowship

Host organisation:

[Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#)

Host team:

The fellowship will be based in the Culture Analysis team, which is embedded within DCMS's Culture directorate. The Culture Analysis team's mission is to ensure that high-quality evidence and analysis inform all stages of the policy cycle across the Culture Directorate.

Academic discipline/s:

Economics, cultural studies, data science, sociology, behavioural science-youth studies

Summary:

Opportunity to build the evidence base to enhance the understanding of the drivers of youth engagement in culture, identifying barriers and enablers to young people engaging in culture, as part of the government's ambition to break down barriers to opportunity.

Policy topic:

This fellowship will support the department's work on breaking down barriers to enable people to live richer lives, with a focus on young people's access to culture. It will also address evidence gaps highlighted in DCMS' Areas of Research Interest, under the themes of culture, participation and visitor number.

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 can work from DCMS's London or Manchester offices. There will be some requirement to travel to meet other team members, this would be approximately four times within a year.

Hybrid working:

During the inception phase when the fellow is based with their home institution, the fellow will work remotely. Whilst DCMS has a 60% minimum office working requirement in line with the rest of the UK Civil Service, we would be content for a minimum one day a week office attendance, at either the London or Manchester office, during the main placement phase. The Analysis team participates in quarterly team days across the Manchester and London offices, and we envisage the fellow would attend these during the placement phase. Eligible Travel and Subsistence costs can be supported in the main UKRI grant.

Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:

A Fellow working from the DCMS London Office, is required to obtain Counter Terrorism Clearance (CTC). For CTC, we recommend allowing for a minimum of three months processing time. Security clearance required for the Manchester Office is Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS), we recommend allowing a minimum of two months processing time. Please note that vetting may take longer for applicants who have resided outside of the United Kingdom. Please see [National security vetting: clearance levels](#) for more information.

This job is broadly open to the following 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 on nationality requirements see [Nationality rules](#).

Fellowship position description

The fellow will work on the analytical and policy challenge of enhancing the department's understanding of the drivers and barriers for young people participating in and engaging with culture. This is an exciting opportunity for a fellow to work on a cross-cutting policy issue that offers exposure to teams across the Culture Directorate.

The fellow will undertake quantitative data analysis and a literature review about the drivers of youth participation in culture, with a focus on the arts, museums and libraries sectors. The fellow will have the opportunity to co-design quantitative research using existing datasets, such as the [ACE Creative Young Lives survey](#) and the [#BeeWell wellbeing study](#), to identify barriers and enablers to young people engaging in culture. Outputs will be agreed jointly during the inception phase, but it is envisaged that a key output of this research would include the production of a framework to enhance how we understand the effectiveness of interventions for increasing engagement among groups of young people, who tend to be less likely to engage. We envisage the research output will help inform the design and evaluation of DCMS interventions.

DCMS is committed to the government's mission of breaking down barriers to opportunity and to help achieve this, we aim to increase participation across culture. Although there is a significant body of research on participation, DCMS is interested in research that moves beyond headline participation

numbers to explore the barriers to engagement, across geographic, demographic and socio-economic factors. For instance, we are keen to understand what are the most effective strategies for cultural and heritage institutions, including museums and public libraries, to increase engagement among young audiences. Also, what is the role of digital tools in helping young people to access culture? Other areas of interest include exploring how the needs and values of young people are changing and whether the metrics used to assess engagement with cultural programmes are still fit for purpose.

The fellow will build on previous works, to explore what works to increase engagement. Specifically, we seek to understand non-participation and how specific interventions can effectively broaden participation in culture, among young people.

The fellow's work will entail:

- secondary analysis of existing quantitative datasets to understand the drivers of participation and barriers to participation
- evidence reviews of academic and grey literature to assess and understand the most effective interventions for engaging young people in culture
- engagement with leading experts to gather and build on the evidence base

The fellowship's research topics will be determined by DCMS priorities in this area, shaped by the fellow's interests and expertise, the exact scope to be agreed as part of the inception phase.

DCMS has a record of successfully hosting UKRI Policy Fellowships that have enabled fellows to enhance their knowledge and capacity to inform policy and analysis through their research. DCMS is committed to offering fellows access to a range of professional development during their placement, that include:

- contact with a range of government professions (policy, science, strategy, analysis) and key stakeholders across government
- the opportunity to influence policy thinking and analysis in a government priority area
- experience of government ways of working
- building a network of contacts with officials, as well as building visibility as an academic expert in government
- Access to internally run professional development training sessions
- Subject to agreement and internal clearance processes, there would be an opportunity to publish research on GOV.UK

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:

- demonstrable expertise in quantitative secondary data analysis and research design, including the ability to work with large, existing datasets
- experience in developing robust evaluation frameworks or methodologies for assessing the impact of programs or interventions.
- proven ability to synthesize findings from extensive literature reviews and translate complex analytical insights for a non-specialist, policy audience.

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:

- experience in research exploring non-participation in culture across geographic, demographic or socio-economic factors
- familiarity with existing public sector datasets relevant to culture, youth, and participation

- strong stakeholder engagement skills, including working with experts to gather evidence and research dissemination

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 Hosts' [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.