

UKRI policy fellowships 2026

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

DESNZ innovations in policy evaluation fellowship

Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowship

Host organisation:

[Department for Energy Security and Net Zero](#)

Host team:

The fellow will be hosted by the DESNZ In-house evaluation team. This is a cross-Department function which supports and delivers policy and programme evaluation. As a cross-Department function it serves policy teams across the Department, covering topics from across energy security and net zero. The In-house evaluation team is part of team delivering strategic behaviour science, research, monitoring and evaluation across DESNZ. It is one of the core Analysis Directorate teams supporting the Chief Analyst.

This post offers opportunities for working with teams and stakeholders across DESNZ.

Academic discipline/s:

Social science, evaluation methods, artificial intelligence (expertise or interest/aptitude in developing further skills), statistics and quantitative research methods

Summary:

Opportunity to support evidence-informed decision making to support the Government's Make Energy a Clean Energy Superpower by testing and integrating the use of AI-assisted tools into the delivery of energy security and climate policy evaluations.

Policy topic:

The policy fellow will work on priority projects supporting the Government's mission to Make Britain a Clean Energy Superpower. As part of a team that works cross-Department supporting the most pressing and high priority, the fellow will get to work on a range of climate and energy security policy challenges.

The DESNZ Clean Energy Superpower Areas of Research interest are available online here: [Clean Energy Superpower Mission areas of research interest - GOV.UK](#)

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:

DESNZ operates a hybrid working. The role can be based in Salford or London. There will be some requirement to travel to meet other team members, but this would be approximately three times within a year.

Hybrid working:

DESNZ operates a hybrid working model, with staff expected to spend 40-60% of their working hours in the office. For this placement we can offer flexibility on this requirement to encourage applicants from a range of locations and circumstances. We would be content with 2-4 days per month minimum office working requirement, at any location listed above, during the main placement phase. A laptop will be provided enabling work from home or other sites, providing access to host systems. It would be useful to budget to visit team members in other DESNZ office locations up to three times during the main placement.

The fellow should budget for travel to London/Salford two times during the inception phase and once during the knowledge exchange phase.

Security clearance and nationality eligibility criteria:

Basic Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) is required, which usually takes around six weeks. We would expect the successful applicant to start the security clearance application process, with support from the host team, as soon as their fellowship has been confirmed by UKRI. Inception phase can begin before the security clearance process is completed but will be required for the main placement phase. Please see [National security vetting: clearance levels - GOV.UK](#) for more information.

Fellowship position description

This is an exciting opportunity to work at the heart of evidence-informed policy making across DESNZ. The DESNZ in-house evaluation function undertakes and supports projects to evaluate policies and programmes across DESNZ. Undertaking evaluation in-house (rather than commissioned external) enables analysts to work closely with decision-makers, ensuring that evidence is fed into policy development in a timely fashion and maximises the impact of our evaluation activity.

The safe and robust use of AI tools offers the opportunity to undertake new types of analysis and evaluation in-house, and to do so more efficiently. This role holder will work to ensure that we can make the most of these opportunities, without compromising on research quality, ethics, data security.

The fellow will play a critical role in integrating AI into the department's monitoring and evaluation delivery. Working at the interface between emerging developments in AI and government evaluation practice, it is anticipated that the fellow's work could centre across three core areas:

- delivery of evaluations: Supporting the delivery of a small number of targeted policy evaluations to inform policy and programme decisions
- AI: Identifying, piloting, and assessing the impact of AI applications in improving the efficiency, quality and impact of evaluations

- capability building: Building capability within DESNZ (and across government) to use AI in support of evaluation delivery, with particular emphasis on robust quality assurance

The specific project(s) and remit for the fellow will be agreed during the inception phase, with a clear aim to balance departmental priorities with the fellow's research interests and expertise. The scope of the fellowship is highly flexible, with DESNZ and the fellow jointly co-designing the scope and focus of the work to ensure it meets departmental policy and evaluation needs while drawing on the fellow's areas of interest and specialism. It is anticipated (but not guaranteed) that outputs from the fellowship will be published (including, where appropriate, on GOV.UK and in academic journals), subject to security and sensitivity considerations, and with publication plans agreed in advance with DESNZ.

There will also be an opportunity to negotiate on the split of time and focus between the three broad areas listed above. Example projects could include things like the design and implementation of data collection tools to monitor and evaluate training schemes designed to help people transition into green jobs; evaluating the implementation of grant funding schemes designed to support the development of new renewable energy infrastructure; or the evaluation of the impact of green tech innovation schemes. DESNZ schemes might involve working with business, local authorities, local communities and the public or might involve regulation or intervention in complex markets and systems, so there is opportunity to deploy a range of data and analytical approaches. To note, these projects are illustrative suggestions, and the final projects will be decided with the fellow. By undertaking evaluation projects the fellow will have the opportunity to deliver evidence to inform DESNZ policy and programmes. Through the delivery of this evidence the policy fellow will have the ability to directly support and shape DESNZ policy development and delivery.

The fellow will learn and develop a wide range of new skills, build a strong understanding of DESNZ policy and build extensive networks, whilst also having the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy and impact on how DESNZ uses evidence to shape policy development and delivery. The fellowship provides a unique opportunity for a policy fellow to work within one of the central analytical teams within the department that focuses on supporting the highest priority and cross-cutting areas of evaluation. This will give the fellow a strong understanding of how the department operates and provide ample opportunity to understand and deliver key evidence. It is anticipated the fellowship would deliver a small number of targeted evaluation related outputs, potentially alongside clear identification of which AI tools are most (and least) effective in supporting the in-house evaluation delivery. It would also leave a legacy of enhanced tools, guidance, and capability for DESNZ to utilise AI more effectively across its evaluation activities (if/where appropriate to do so).

Working in a central function that provides support across DESNZ gives unprecedented ability to shape the work, subject to department need, to the fellow's interests. It will also offer the fellow to gain an overview of the policy making process in different parts of the Department, as well as exposure to central governance processes which support the production and use of high-quality and timely monitoring and evaluation evidence.

The fellow would be embedded as a core member of the in-house evaluation team. The team is spread across London and Salford. The fellow would have a line manager based in the team, they would have regular check-ins, attend team meetings and have exposure to the day-to-day workings of the department. Being based in a central function means there will be substantial scope to build relationships and networks with a range of colleagues. The fellow will also have the opportunity to join DESNZ analytical networks, such as the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Community.

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:

- knowledge and experience of policy evaluation and social research methods
- strong analytical skills, including experience of statistics and/or quantitative research design
- knowledge and experience of, or a strong desire to quickly get up to speed on, suitable AI tools for supporting robust and evaluation policy evaluation

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 of using AI tools in research and/or evaluation
- strong communication, interpersonal and networking skills
- knowledge of climate science or energy security policy in the UK

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.