



UKRI policy fellowships 2026

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

Strategic Investment Board NI AI adoption and net zero fellowship

Fellowship type:

Core policy fellowships

Host organisation:

[Strategic Investment Board NI](#)

Host team:

Innovation Team, with broader working across teams in other relevant Departments

Academic discipline/s:

Artificial intelligence, digital economy, green economics and complex systems

Summary:

Opportunity to advise on policy and governance design to ensure AI adoption and associated data centre and load growth accelerates, rather than undermines, Net Zero.

Policy topic:

UK Government Missions: Net Zero, Energy Security, AI Adoption & Governance

IS-8 sectors: Energy, Net Zero, Digital & Data, Advanced Technologies

Devolved administration priorities: Economic growth, Infrastructure pipeline development, Green Growth

Host priorities: Green growth, AI-enabled policy capability, Systems-level infrastructure planning

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 role will be based in Belfast, with potential travel to Dublin.

Hybrid working:

There is significant flexibility and we would be content for a minimum one day a month office attendance during the main placement phase. A laptop will be provided enabling work from home or other sites, providing access to host systems. In addition to office attendance, it would be useful to budget for travel to Dublin around three times in the placement year and once in the inception phase. 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:

There is no security clearance needed for Strategic Investment Board.

Fellowship position description

AI has the potential to accelerate net zero through supporting grid optimisation, forecasting, load-shifting and renewable integration, but is also driving electricity demand which may impact the ability to achieve renewable electricity and net zero targets. Simultaneously, renewable electricity growth is required in order to meet decarbonisation targets across the wider economy in Northern Ireland and there is a need to look beyond existing investment models to accelerate deployment. This may include revenue-stacking for large-scale renewable projects and coupling of renewable electricity development with other economic activity such as data centre load growth.

There is an all-island electricity market on the island of Ireland with significant growth in renewable electricity generation in both NI and the Republic of Ireland (ROI). However, while there has been significant growth in data centres in ROI with approximately 2300 MVA of demand capacity contracted to data centres and other new technology loads (primarily at transmission level) there is a much smaller number of data centres in Northern Ireland. There is a target of 80% renewable electricity generation by 2030.

To support and facilitate planning and governance for AI growth and renewable electricity generation in Northern Ireland, with potential learning for other jurisdictions we are looking for a fellow to work on one of areas noted below with the choice of the area made by the fellow based on their interests and expertise:

- Alternative market models for large-scale renewable electricity generation investment within a whole-system approach to the economy, including AI-driven demand and its role in balancing demand, grid decoupling and heating grids
- AI capability to support net zero targets with regard to energy including constraints, flexibility, generation, storage, integration and management and potential locational aspects, and the most effective tools, regulatory approach and applications to facilitate this
- Resource allocation and dynamic workflow management and to optimise AI data processing to balance demand and energy consumption efficiently

We envisage that the fellow will carry out research in of the above areas of interest, with the scope to be agreed based on their interests and expertise. Exact topics will be determined by host priorities during the inception phase, shaped by the fellow's interests and input.

This work is likely to involve original research into small market economies' ability to plan for a net zero future with anticipated load demand, alternative investment models for large-scale renewable generation,

as well as analysis of AI applications and tools and its real-world potential to accelerate the achievement of net-zero targets in a secure, efficient and effective manner.

The fellow will benefit from the following:

- the opportunity to codesign, produce and publish original research, ensuring that findings contribute to wider policy discussions while adhering to necessary security protocols
- have the opportunity to inform and influence wider government policy on important policy areas such as net zero, energy system and AI integration
- have access to related datasets such as transmission system management and planning
- have access to relevant policy and regulatory systems and processes, gaining in-depth understanding of the policy process
- knowledge exchange opportunities, including policy roundtables, cross-government workshops and wider networks

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:

The essential criteria are:

- a proven academic track record in engineering and technology, artificial intelligence, green economics or data science
- subject matter expertise in specific topics related to the fellowship (such as smart grids and productivity)
- strong analytical skills, including the ability to synthesise a range of quantitative and qualitative data using statistical and data science methods

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 and communicate complex data and issues to a range of audiences

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.