



UK Research
and Innovation

UK Research and Innovation Deputy Chief People Officer

Candidate Prospectus
July 2026

About UKRI

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is an independent, non-departmental public body that invests £8 billion per year in research and innovation.

We bring together nine executive council partners (the seven research councils plus Innovate UK and Research England) with a shared mission to advance knowledge, improve lives and drive growth.

We employ more than 8,500 members of staff who support some of the world's most exciting and challenging research projects. We develop and operate some of the most remarkable scientific facilities in the world and work collaboratively with industry, academia and government in exciting partnerships.

We are pushing the frontiers of human knowledge through blue skies research and delivering benefits for UK society and the economy through world-class research and business-led innovation.

Our values

We have four new organisational values that set out who we are, what we stand for and how we work together every day. They unite us as one organisation.

■ Spark curiosity

Together we're guided by curiosity, creativity and collaboration. We work as one team to explore new approaches, take calculated risks and share what we learn.

■ Play our part

We take ownership of our work as individuals. We act with integrity and do what we say we'll do. And whatever our role, we know our contribution matters.

■ Lift people up

We listen to, respect and take care of each other. We value our differences and communicate with clarity and kindness, so everyone can thrive.

■ Make it count

We put our energy where it can have the biggest impact. We're bold and decisive. We always focus on making a difference to people's lives and livelihoods.

Delivering our people strategy

Our people strategy is central to delivering UKRI's mission. It sets out how we will build a high-performing, inclusive and engaged organisation. We have the skills, leadership and culture needed to deliver for the UK research and innovation system, now and in the future.

We are transforming how we attract, develop and support our people in response to a rapidly changing environment including:

- evolving skills requirements
- advances in digital technology
- increasing expectations of modern public service organisations

Through strategic workforce planning, leadership development, organisational effectiveness and a strong focus on inclusion and wellbeing, we are creating a more agile, capable and resilient organisation.

Our ambition is to ensure that the right skills and capabilities are in the right place at the right time, enabling UKRI to respond to changing priorities while continuing to deliver excellence for researchers, innovators and the public.

The Deputy Chief People Officer will play a pivotal role in delivering this ambition. Working closely with the Chief People Officer and senior leaders across UKRI, the postholder will:

- help shape the future organisation
- lead significant transformation programmes
- ensure our people services and professional expertise enable UKRI to achieve its strategic goals

The People Strategy and Delivery Plan has four themes:

Strengthening our Foundations

Protecting the integrity, reputation and resilience of our organisation through robust governance and workforce practices.

Employment policies and processes that set clear expectations and provide a framework that supports a positive culture, compliance and operational needs.

Strengthening organisational resilience by equipping our people with the skills to deliver UKRI's mission.

Improving organisational efficiency by ensuring we have effective operating structures and decision-making models.

Delivering our people strategy



Our Environment

Creating an inclusive, diverse and collaborative workplace that reflects our values and supports innovation.

Investing in workforce resilience and wellbeing through direct and indirect colleague support, working arrangements and inclusive leadership development to maintain a resilient and healthy workforce.

Build and nurture an organisational culture that supports a sense of community, which is diverse, inclusive and equitable. People will respect and support one another, and there will be a sense of belonging with colleagues proud to work for UKRI.

Ensure our people have meaningful opportunities to contribute and that their voices are listened to and reflected in decision-making. They are supported by fair and equitable people policies, processes and engagement with trade unions and staff networks.

Our Journey

Creating an agile and skilled workforce supported by continuous development.

Uphold fair, transparent and inclusive recruitment and reward practices that encourage diversity in recruitment and attract talent aligned with our values.

Improve the extent to which our people identify with and advocate for UKRI.

Ensure equity and transparency in pay and reward mechanisms.

Help UKRI to provide clear expectations to new colleagues, including access to policies and early engagement with organisational culture to foster belonging and productivity.

Experts in Delivery

Ensuring HR is efficient, expert-led, and aligned with UKRI missions.

Our clear and consistent policy framework will support our people and ensure our compliance and alignment with UKRI's objectives.

We will live our 'One HR' approach, standardising HR operations procedures for our people and strengthening support across the employee career cycle.

We foster a culture of dignity and respect, tackling bullying, harassment and discrimination through robust policies, action plans and collaborative employee relations.

We will constantly develop our capacity and capability to support UKRI as HR professionals.

CPO senior leadership team

Our HR function is organised to provide both strategic leadership and specialist expertise across the full employee lifecycle.

Below we show the breadth of the function and the collaborative leadership team that the Deputy Chief People Officer will join. The successful candidate will work with this team to deliver an ambitious programme of organisational transformation.

Chief People Officer

Private Secretary to CPO

Exec Assistant to Deputy CPO and Deputy Directors

Deputy Chief People Officer - Vacancy

Strategic HR Business Partnering

Organisational Design & Development

Organisational Change

Trade Union Relations

Deputy Director Talent Management

Recruitment & Immigration

Public & Senior Appointments

Workforce Planning & Talent Development

Learning & Development

Deputy Director Culture & Inclusion

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Employee Wellbeing

Employee Engagement

Deputy Director HR Delivery

HR Operations

Employee Relations

Policy

Reward & Pensions

HR Management Information

Global Staff Mobility

People Transformation Team (interim)

People Transformation Consultant

Programme Director

Transformation Director

About the role



We are seeking an exceptional senior HR leader to join UKRI as Deputy Chief People Officer. Reporting to the Chief People Officer, this role will play a pivotal part in leading the HR function, delivering our new people strategy and supporting the organisation through an ambitious programme of organisational transformation.

Operating with a high degree of autonomy, the Deputy Chief People Officer will provide strategic leadership across the full people agenda, acting as a trusted adviser to senior leaders and leading on complex organisational and workforce matters.

The postholder will deputise for the Chief People Officer as required, representing the function at Executive Committee and other senior governance forums, leading UKRI's engagement with our recognised trade unions and playing a key role in shaping organisational strategy and major transformation programmes.

The role has strategic accountability for the HR Business Partnering function across UKRI, ensuring it enables organisational performance and delivers high-quality, commercially focused people solutions.

A key priority will be to strengthen partnership working between the HR Business Partnering function and our specialist Centres of Expertise. You will help create an integrated, collaborative and customer-focused HR operating model that delivers seamless support to leaders across UKRI.

As a member of the HR leadership team, you will lead and develop a high-performing team of HR Business Partners, enabling them to anticipate, influence and respond to organisational priorities across UKRI.

You will ensure the delivery of effective strategic business partnering to UKRI's councils, centres, institutes and units (CIU) and corporate functions, while working closely with the Deputy Directors who lead our centres of expertise to deliver joined-up, high-quality people services.

You will also drive organisational design, development and change initiatives, co-ordinating the people aspects of major transformation programmes across the organisation.

Key accountabilities

UKRI HR leadership

Provide strategic leadership across the full people agenda and act as Deputy Chief People Officer, exercising delegated authority and deputising for the Chief People Officer as required.

Support the Chief People Officer in setting the strategic direction, priorities, performance and reputation of the HR function, acting as a visible executive leader across UKRI.

Be an active member of the HR senior leadership team, shaping and delivering UKRI's people strategy and delivery plan and wider workforce priorities.

Lead the continued transformation of the HR function, embedding a modern, integrated and customer-focused operating model that strengthens collaboration across the HR Business Partnering function and centres of expertise and delivers high-quality, strategically aligned people services.

Serve as a full member of the People and Workforce planning committee and the Joint Negotiating and Consultative committee. Deputise for the Chief People Officer at Executive Committee and other executive-level governance forums and committees, as required. Represent the organisation on strategic people, workforce and organisational matters.

Build trusted relationships with senior leaders across UKRI, including the Operational Leadership Team, Executive Chairs, Chief Operating Officers and Centres, Institutes and Units leadership teams, providing strategic advice, coaching and constructive challenge on organisational performance, leadership, workforce and culture.

Champion innovation and continuous improvement across the HR function, ensuring HR systems, governance, processes and ways of working remain fit for the future and support organisational transformation.

Drive the performance, capability and professional development of the HR function, fostering an inclusive, collaborative and customer focused 'One HR' culture that reflects UKRI's values.

Key accountabilities

Strategic HR business partnering

Provide strategic leadership for the HR Business Partnering function, ensuring it delivers high-quality, commercially focused support that enables organisational performance and successful delivery of UKRI's strategic priorities.

Lead, develop and inspire a high-performing team of HR Business Partners, building capability in strategic workforce planning, change leadership and strategic business partnering.

Ensure the effective delivery of UKRI's people strategy and delivery plan through strong partnerships with business leaders, translating organisational priorities into local people strategies, workforce plans and change initiatives.

Working closely with the Deputy Director for Talent Management, strengthen strategic workforce planning capability across UKRI, ensuring workforce decisions are informed by robust evidence, future skills requirements and organisational priorities.

Assess and develop the capability, capacity and effectiveness of the HR Business Partnering function to meet current and future organisational needs.

Foster strong partnership working between the HR Business Partnering function and the centres of expertise, embedding an integrated 'one HR' approach that delivers consistent, customer-focused and evidence-based people solutions.

Use people insight, workforce data and organisational intelligence to inform strategic decision-making, identify emerging risks and opportunities and shape people interventions across UKRI.

Ensure consistent approaches across CIUs and professional functions, promoting shared learning, continuous improvement and greater harmonisation of people practices.

Establish high standards of professional practice, performance and accountability across the HR Business Partnering function, ensuring the delivery of high-quality, value-adding services.

Enable senior leaders to improve organisational performance through effective organisation design, workforce planning, leadership development, organisational development and culture change. Ensure that people strategies drive sustainable organisational performance and successful transformation across UKRI.

Lead the strategic planning and management of the HR Business Partnering budget and resources, ensuring effective deployment of people and financial resources to deliver organisational priorities and value for money.

Key accountabilities

Organisation development, design and change

Provide leadership on organisational development and design, and the people aspects of transformation, ensuring UKRI has the capability, structures and culture required to deliver its strategic ambitions.

Lead the people elements of major organisational change and transformation programmes, providing expert advice on organisation design, workforce transition, change management and implementation planning.

Shape long-term organisational capability and workforce strategies, ensuring organisational design, leadership and workforce planning are aligned to future business requirements.

Work with programme leaders, the Programme Management Office and senior stakeholders to ensure people implications are fully considered within business cases, programme design and transformation delivery.

Champion evidence-based approaches to organisational effectiveness, leadership and culture, embedding best practice across UKRI.

Trade union relations

Lead UKRI's strategic engagement with recognised trade unions, working closely with Deputy HR Directors and their teams to build constructive relationships that support organisational change and positive employee relations.

Chair the Trade Union Change sub-committee and serve as a full member of the Joint Negotiating and Consultative committee, deputising for the Chief People Officer as required.

Act as the senior escalation point for complex, high-risk and sensitive employee relations matters, working closely with the Deputy Director for HR Delivery as appropriate.

Governance, risk and corporate leadership

Ensure effective governance, assurance, risk management and compliance across the HR Business Partnering function and contribute to organisation-wide people governance.

Represent UKRI internally and externally, influencing policy, sharing best practice and building effective relationships across government and the wider HR profession.

Champion UKRI's values, equality, diversity and inclusion, wellbeing and leadership expectations, acting as a visible role model for the organisation.

Your skills and experience



This role requires an accomplished senior HR leader with broad experience across the HR profession. While the postholder will have strategic accountability for the HR Business Partnering team, this is first and foremost a Deputy Chief People Officer role. The successful candidate will provide organisation-wide leadership across the people agenda, shape the future direction of the HR function and work in close partnership with the deputy directors of HR leading the centres of expertise to deliver an integrated, high-performing HR function.

The successful candidate will be an experienced, collaborative and authentic leader who thrives in a complex environment and enjoys working as part of a high-performing, close-knit leadership team with a shared commitment to delivering significant organisational transformation.

They will be equally comfortable shaping strategy, leading change and supporting colleagues to deliver outstanding outcomes for the organisation, while acting as a trusted deputy to the Chief People Officer.

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

Qualifications

Degree-level qualification or equivalent senior professional experience, and Chartered Member (MCIPD) or Fellow (FCIPD) of the CIPD, or able to demonstrate an equivalent level of professional expertise.

Assessment stage: Shortlisting

Experience

Proven senior HR leadership experience within a large, complex, matrixed and regulated organisation. Leading organisation-wide people strategy across multiple business areas and diverse stakeholder groups with strategic accountability across the full HR agenda, including HR Business Partnering, to deliver organisational objectives and performance

Assessment stage: Shortlisting

Your skills and experience

Significant experience of leading and developing high-performing HR functions including:

- transforming HR operating models
- delivering integrated customer-focused HR services
- leading large-scale organisational transformation encompassing organisational design, workforce change, cultural change and business transformation

Assessment stage: Shortlisting and Interview

Experience of operating as a trusted adviser to executive teams, boards and senior leaders, influencing strategic decisions on workforce, leadership and organisational matters.

Assessment stage: Interview

Experience of developing constructive relationships with recognised trade unions and leading complex employee relations within a unionised environment.

Assessment stage: Interview

Experience of operating within robust governance frameworks and exercising sound commercial, financial and organisational judgement.

Assessment stage: Interview

Leadership, knowledge and personal attributes

Outstanding strategic HR leadership capability, with the credibility, presence and judgement to influence executive committees, boards and senior stakeholders.

Assessment stage: Shortlisting and Interview

Excellent commercial, financial and organisational awareness, using workforce insight, data and evidence to inform strategic decision making, balance organisational priorities and manage organisational risk.

Assessment stage: Shortlisting and Interview

Exceptional communication, influencing and relationship-building skills, with the ability to provide constructive challenge, negotiate effectively and build trust with a wide range of stakeholders.

Assessment stage: Interview

Your skills and experience

A collaborative and inclusive leadership style, with the resilience, integrity and authenticity to:

- lead through complexity and sustained organisational transformation
- build high-performing teams and a strong 'one HR' culture
- champion UKRI's values, equality, diversity and inclusion, wellbeing, coaching and continuous improvement.

Assessment stage: Interview

Terms of appointment

Appointment term:

Due to the nature of the role, we can accommodate several flexible options based around the successful candidate's preferences and current professional commitments, including fixed-term, secondment and permanent contract as well as hybrid working arrangements.

Contract Type:

Permanent

Hours:

Full Time (37 hours). Hybrid working with two-three days a week on average at a UKRI site is available.

Remuneration:

£94,931 – 117,800 per annum (depending on skills and experience)

Location:

Swindon or Oxford (Didcot) based

Regular travel to London and occasional travel to UK wide UKRI locations will be required.

Timescales and Selection

The selection process will consist of a panel interview including a presentation. There may also be additional fireside discussions and psychometric assessments as part of the process.

Interviews will be held in person at UKRI's London head office.

Please note: dates and details are subject to change.

Process	Date
Closing date	10 August 2026
Shortlisting date	w/c 17 August 2026
Panel interviews	w/c 31 August 2026

How to apply

Please submit your application via the UKRI Careers Portal by 23:55 on XXXX. We reserve the right to close the advert early if required.

You will need to supply:

- a curriculum vitae (CV)
- a supporting statement demonstrating how you meet the essential criteria

Your CV and supporting statement must each be no longer than two A4 pages in length.

Your statement of suitability should provide specific information about why you believe you would be suitable for appointment into 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 the essential criteria your application is aligned to. Again, please aim for no more than two A4 pages.

Please note, you will only be assessed on the content of your CV and supporting statement, and not the 'experience' section of the application.

Should you have any problems with submitting your application via the UKRI Careers Portal, please do send an email to seniorrecruitment@ukri.org and a member of our team will be in touch.

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
- sexual orientation
- religion or belief
- age
- gender
- 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.

As a Disability Confident leader, UKRI will offer interviews to disabled candidates who meet the published minimum requirements for a job or role. Whether you choose to apply under the Disability Confident scheme or not, you can still ask us to make particular adjustments for you when attending an interview.

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 and our assets, we will conduct comprehensive pre-employment screening 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 employment.

In addition, and as part of the overall recruitment process, the successful candidate will also be required to register their [declarations of Interest](#).

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.

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.

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](#).