UKRI policy fellowships 2027

Fellowship position

Fellowship title:

Liverpool City Region (LCR) enhancing innovation diffusion and adoption within the devolution context policy fellowship

Fellowship type:

Place policy fellowship

Host organisation:

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

Host team:

Policy & Strategy and Investment & Delivery Directorates

Academic discipline/s:

Economics, R&D, business development

Summary:

An opportunity to directly inform new measures to drive enhanced innovation diffusion and adoption across a City Region at the forefront of UK place-based innovation and prospective public R&D funding devolution.

Policy topic:

The policy challenge is to affect a significant increase in innovation diffusion and adoption across the LCR ecosystem as a key means to drive enhanced economic growth and productivity, as the core mission of the LCR Growth Plan, and within the UK devolution context.

Research career stage:

Open to early and mid-career researchers

Fellowship structure

The fellowship is scheduled to begin on 1 October 2027 subject to 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:

Role can be based anywhere in the UK but will require travel to Liverpool office during the course of the fellowship.

Hybrid working:

Some flexibility and negotiation is possible regarding days spent in the office at 1 Mann Island Liverpool, depending on the policy fellow's home location and circumstances. We would recommend 1-2 days working with us in person per fortnight at a minimum across all phases, with more frequent travel required depending on the phase of the work. This would include engagement with the partner network/innovation ecosystem across the City Region and beyond. A laptop will be provided enabling work from home or other sites, providing access to host systems. 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:

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. The civil service also has nationality requirements that candidates would need to meet in order to take up the post. Please see civil service recruitment nationality rules for further information. Candidates should check these requirements before applying to ensure they meet the eligibility criteria.

Fellowship position description

This is a unique opportunity to support the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) in developing policy and designing interventions to improve the adoption and diffusion of innovation across the city region's business base.

The Liverpool City Region (LCR) is a UK-leader in place-based innovation having set up the UK's first regional Innovation Board in 2013, and continuously evolved associated approaches ever since founded on evidence, smart specialisation, and partnership. NB. Our definition of place-based innovation is: "Maximising world-leading capabilities and other distinctive science, technology, people, and place assets to solve societal challenges and drive economic growth – locally, regionally, nationally, globally".

This was in turn enshrined in the LCR Growth Plan (LCRGP), published by the LCRCA in 2025, with a central mission to improve regional productivity, and innovation running through as a golden thread.

As part of driving productivity and achieving the desired levels of innovation-led growth, the LCRGP highlighted the need to harness and build on the LCR's longstanding place-based innovation approach. The aim is to translate more innovation into commercial and investable activity across the business base, leading to increased development of new products, processes and services, alongside greater levels of private sector investment, and in tandem scaling up distinctive established and emerging sub-sectoral innovation clusters. In particular, the LCRGP identified the need to strengthen the transition points linking Frontier R&D, Commercialisation, and Adoption & Diffusion.

Innovation Adoption & Diffusion across the city's business base is a known challenge having been highlighted in several reports, notably our recent Business Demography Study and Innovation Inflection Point Study. This fellowship will seek to provide analysis and solutions to address these challenges, build on these reports, the LCRGP, and support the delivery of the forthcoming LCR Innovation Strategy (expected publication June 2027), also taking into account opportunities related to English Devolution as highlighted in the Rewiring the State paper.

The Fellow will have the opportunity to undertake original research and analysis, generating new evidence to inform policy development and intervention design. The fellow will bring their expertise in-house to support the development of evidence-based policy and interventions. Research could be undertaken across a range of themes relating to innovation adoption and diffusion. The full scope of work will be agreed during the inception phase, drawing on both host priorities and the fellow's interests and expertise.

Potential areas of interest may include, but are not limited to, understanding the barriers and enablers of innovation adoption and diffusion across the Liverpool City Region economy. We are particularly interested in strengthening the evidence base for understanding and measuring innovation adoption and diffusion at the local level, including opportunities for primary data collection where feasible and appropriate.

The Combined Authority will provide line management, office accommodation and appropriate IT equipment throughout the fellowship.

We anticipate that this fellowship will provide the fellow with the following benefits:

- the opportunity to codesign, produce and publish original research, ensuring that findings contribute to wider scientific and policy discussions
- being embedded across the LCRCA's Policy & Strategy and Investment & Delivery directorates, with access to internal systems and processes, gaining in-depth understanding of the policy process
- the opportunity to inform and influence LCRCA on its approach to place-based innovation and business support
- access to a wider network of policy, analysis, other experts and opportunities to engage with government departments, other Mayoral Strategic Authorities and aligned organisations
- 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:

- subject matter expertise in a topic/s related to innovation, innovation diffusion, commercialisation, productivity, or related topics
- a demonstrated academic interest in research & innovation, commercialisation, and/or business support
- a track record of collecting and synthesising complex evidence into meaningful outputs for research users beyond academia, such as policy, industry, and public audiences

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:

- a track record of applied or policy-facing experience in research & innovation, commercialisation, and/or business support
- experience in communicating to range of audiences including non-technical audiences
- experience of working with regional, local, or national policymakers, or other stakeholders involved in economic development and innovation

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 Liverpool City Region Combined Authority'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.