

UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships: Frequently Asked Questions

This document will be regularly updated to reflect those questions most frequently raised with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Potential applicants, and their Host Organisations, must review this document before contacting UKRI for advice.

Where questions are primarily relevant to either business or academic applicants this has been clearly highlighted with either '*business-hosted*' or '*academic-hosted*' at the beginning of the question. However, information in these answers may have relevance to all applicants.

To allow us to effectively monitor the type and number of queries received and to update this document to reflect them, we would encourage all queries to be e-mailed to Fellows@ukri.org.

Updated September 2020. New/edited questions include an asterisk * against them.

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Introduction - General

What is the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF) scheme?

This is a UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) wide fellowship scheme aimed at recruiting and retaining the rising stars of research and innovation, attracting the brightest and best from the UK and across the world. These prestigious awards will offer four or seven years of funding for early career researchers and innovators, addressing a known pinch-point in research/innovation career paths.

These awards can support the movement of talented researchers and innovators between business and academia, we welcome and encourage proposals with strong links across the two. With applications co-ordinated across UKRI we will enable candidates to take crosscutting, interdisciplinary and inter-sector approaches, ensuring the development of future research and innovation excellence in the UK.

What is a fellowship?

A fellowship grant is a monetary award made through a fellowship competition, providing a contribution to the support of a named individual to conduct a program of research/innovation and enhance their career.

It covers the cost of time dedicated by the fellow to their personal research/innovation programme and their personal development including; receiving mentoring and training, enhancing their opportunities and developing their leadership.

Is it new funding or is funding being reallocated from council budgets?

The funding for the FLF scheme is provided through the National Productivity Investment Fund announced at the Autumn Statement 2016, which provided an additional £4.7 billion R&D funding by 2020-21.

This scheme is in addition to existing schemes and will not change the baseline commitments in Councils to talent and skills activities.

How is this different to existing Fellowship schemes?

The Future Leaders Fellowships scheme provides long-term support, for four to seven years, in order to enable fellows to tackle ambitious programmes or multidisciplinary questions, and new or emerging research and innovation areas and partnerships. It is the first UKRI-wide investment and will provide assessment and support across UKRI's remit, with no barriers to multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research/innovation.

In order to support excellent research and innovation wherever it arises and to facilitate movement of people and projects between sectors, Future Leaders Fellows can be based in Universities, businesses, or other eligible independent research organisations. To ensure the successful development of the fellow, Future Leaders Fellowships come with a requirement for the host Organisation to commit significant support. For fellows in academia, this includes the commitment to providing an open-ended UK based independent research/innovation position, to be taken up during or upon the completion of the fellowship (in line with organisational employment policies and practices).

Does the FLF programme of research/innovation have to comprise a single defined project or can it involve a number of smaller projects?

The fellowship may be made up of a single programme of work, or multiple consecutive/concurrent interlinked projects, led by the fellow (a 'Portfolio Fellowship'). There is flexibility to alter the program once a project is underway to ensure fellows can react to the changing research landscape, capitalise on advances in understanding or react to changing business needs.

In all cases the work must allow the fellow to fully develop their leadership potential and result in high quality research and/or innovation.

Introduction – Academic

Academic-hosted: Do proposals have to be multidisciplinary or with business?

No. However, given the flexibility and aims of the scheme, applicants should consider the approach which will deliver the best research/innovation outputs, the best impact and ensure they develop to their full potential over the course of the fellowship. The FLF scheme has increased capacity to bring in additional methodologies, disciplines and partners than other fellowship schemes and applicants should consider how they can maximise their fellowship to take full advantage of the opportunities for developing themselves as a research/innovation leader.

Introduction – Business

Business-hosted: Do business hosted proposals have to have an academic project partner or collaborator?

No. However, given the flexibility and aims of the scheme, applicants should consider the approach which will deliver the best research/innovation outputs, the best impact and ensure they develop to their full potential over the course of the fellowship. For example, collaboration may introduce new opportunities to develop the organisation's supply chain, bring new knowledge and skills in-house, develop new routes to markets and/ or build the applicant's professional network.

Business-hosted: What is the benefit to a business in supporting an applicant?

Skilled researchers and innovators can improve the productivity of businesses - helping to develop new products and services that grow the business, drive competitive advantage and help to upskill the company and build absorptive capacity. The fellowship will develop a research/innovation capability and person that is nationally or internationally leading edge, and goes beyond what other, smaller grants could support.

Fellows can undertake business-related research and innovation; for example, helping the company to develop and embed new sector or technology expertise, a new business model, take the business in a new direction or to open up new markets. Projects might involve the validation of concepts, systems or components in an appropriate research or market environment; development or refinement of a system model or prototyping.

In order to benefit from the award of public funding, the fellowship should comprise a self-contained project or series of projects, above and beyond the normal activity of the Host Organisation, with a higher than normal level of technical and/or commercial risk.

Business-hosted: How does this scheme differ from a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) for business hosted applicants?

KTPs are shorter; from 1 to 3 years in length, and require the involvement of a UK based business, academic or research organisation, and recent graduate or post-graduate. Unlike FLFs, KTP projects are designed in partnership with the academic or research organisations and are not built around a named individual. Typically, we would expect applications to the FLF scheme to come from applicants who can demonstrate sufficient experience in a research/ innovation environment to take on a fellowship grant with the scale and flexibility of the FLF award.

Focus of the fellowships

Do proposals have to be aligned to the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF)?

No. The ambition of the FLF scheme is to develop the leaders of research and innovation required to deliver long term growth for the UK, but proposals are not limited to specific published challenge themes. One of the four assessment criteria for the scheme is Impact & Strategic Relevance. Where a fellowship will have relevance to the Industrial Strategy, applicants should make this relevance clear to enable reviewers and panel members to establish the strategic relevance of an application.

Can I use a Future Leaders Fellowship to move into a new research and/or innovation area?

Yes. You will need to clearly articulate the benefits of doing so and how this will enhance your career trajectory.

Can I use a Future Leaders Fellowship to move between sectors?

Yes. In addition, we would welcome innovative approaches to intersectoral mobility which might include secondments, placements, rotational appointments, reverse mentoring and mentors from a variety of backgrounds along with opportunities for professional experience that would complement more generic approaches to training and development. Any training and support required to enable this must be clearly articulated in the application, and associated training costs can be claimed.

Can you define the difference between a Collaborator and a Project Partner?

A **Collaborator** is anyone who the fellow is working with and who is directly involved in the project. A **Project Partner** is a collaborating organisation who will have an integral role in the proposed research and/or innovation. This may include in-kind or cash contributions such as expertise, staff time or use of facilities.

- **Collaborators** can receive indirect costs if the fellow will be based with them, as set out in the 'Estates and Indirect costs at additional Organisations' section of the Guidance for Applicants on [the funding opportunity webpage](#). Where a Collaborator is from industry and the applicant will be spending

significant time working with and on projects for that Collaborator, you should seek legal advice to ensure that the funding requested is in line with state aid regulations.

- **Project Partners** cannot receive funding directly from the grant; the only exception to this is where a Project Partner is providing services or equipment that will go through a formal procurement process audited by the Host Organisation. The Project Partner cannot receive any other funds from the grant, such as travel and subsistence.

Can an organisation apply to the scheme with a proposed project and identify an individual to hold the fellowship after application?

No. This scheme aims to support excellent and high potential future research and innovation leaders. The potential fellow must develop the application. The individual who will hold the fellowship will need to create the application in Je-S. Je-S accounts should not be created on behalf of applicants. The contact information in the Je-S account will be used throughout the application process, and it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all information that is included (for example, email addresses and phone numbers) is accurate.

How flexible is the research and innovation programme once awarded?

A fellow can change the direction of their fellowship or alter aspects of work packages once an award has been made. The FLF is a flexible scheme designed to provide intellectual freedom to undertake explorative research and innovation, developing and changing direction and partnerships over the funded period. A fellow may choose to alter their planned programme of research/innovation in response to new discoveries or techniques, to build on their own changing experience, or to reflect changing business requirements and market opportunities.

Fellowships are awarded after a rigorous review process. Major changes are not permitted immediately after funding. Substantive changes must be approved by UKRI in advance. If you propose to make significant changes, UKRI may require revised proposals for its approval, and additional peer review input may be requested. UKRI reserves the right to make a new award in place of the existing award, or to revise, retain or terminate the existing award. UKRI will consider programme change requests on a case-by-case basis.

Business-hosted: Can an FLF spend time on core business during their fellowship?

It is possible for business-hosted FLFs to apply for a Reduced Hours Fellowship to allow for time on other activities which are essential to the career of the fellow (for example, business as usual activities). The minimum amount of time to be spent on FLF activities is 60% of full-time. Only the costs associated with the FLF project will be funded by the FLF grant, and the FLF will only fund the proportion of salary spent on FLF funded activities.

Where a Reduced Hours Fellowship is requested for business-related reasons this should be justified and the benefit to the fellow should be clearly stated. An example would be if the fellow is increasing their knowledge and experience by continuing core business responsibilities.

This rule applies to business-hosted fellowships **only**.

Eligibility - General

Can UKRI confirm my eligibility before I apply?

No, applicants must demonstrate how they meet the person specification as part of their application. Applicants should use the Person Specification within the Overview of the Scheme to assess and justify their suitability for the scheme. This can be found on [the funding opportunity webpage](#).

What is the definition of an Early Career researcher/innovator?

These fellowships support individuals who are in the early stages of establishing themselves as leaders in their field or sector. Further information about applicant eligibility can be found in section 2.1 of the Overview of the Scheme.

Can fellowships be hosted by Research Council Institutes, Centres or Laboratories?

Yes, fellows can apply to be based in Research Council Institutes, Centres, Laboratories and Catapults Centres. Please see section 3, Host Organisation eligibility, in the Overview of the Scheme.

Can fellowships be hosted by overseas institutes (such as CERN)?

No, applications must be submitted from UK institutions eligible for Research Council funding or organisations eligible to apply to IUK. However, as long as they are hosted by an eligible UK-based organisation, fellows can spend extended periods overseas if it can be clearly justified in terms of their programme of work and if their time overseas meets the overarching aims of the scheme.

In addition, we encourage applicants to consider spending time in other internationally leading research/innovation organisations – either in the UK or abroad – for the purpose of training, collaboration and/or access to data or other resources not available at the applicant's Host Organisation.

Can non-UK nationals apply for Future Leaders Fellowships?

Yes. All successful Future Leaders Fellowship applicants who require a visa to work in the UK will be eligible to be considered under the fast-track [Global Talent Visa](#) route. This visa route is designed for researchers/ innovators and gives the holder flexibility to pursue their research and collaborations.

The grant of any visa is always subject to the standard Home Office general grounds for refusal of a visa. Please contact fellowtier1info@rcuk.ac.uk for further details.

Can I claim visa costs for myself and my family?

Yes, visa costs can be claimed for both you and your family. These funds can be costed into the proposal or, under the TRAC methodology, some institutions provide this support by covering visa costs under the Estates and Indirect headings.

Can I claim for the costs associated with gaining UK citizenship?

No, UKRI will not support costs associated with gaining UK citizenship, Indefinite Leave to Remain or Permanent Residency.

Can I apply to the Future Leaders Fellowships and also to an individual Research Council Fellowship scheme?

Applicants cannot submit concurrent applications to Research Council Fellowship competitions running in parallel to FLF calls unless explicitly permitted within the Research Council's Fellowship call information. Please contact the relevant Research Council for further guidance in the first instance.

For more detailed information please refer to section 1.7: Multiple Submissions in the Guidance for Applicants.

Am I eligible to apply if I have completed an equivalent fellowship?

Applicants who have already received support to establish themselves as a researcher/innovator in the area of their application (for example, by securing funding aimed at this career stage) are unlikely to be considered competitive, but ultimately the decision to submit an application rests with the applicant and Host Organisation. The applicant would need to demonstrate how the FLF will allow them to conduct a transformational programme of work, both in terms of their research and their career development, in a way that previous funding has not.

Applicants should refer to the Person Specification in Section 2.2 of the Overview of the Scheme document in order to assess and justify their eligibility.

Can I submit the same proposal to the Future Leaders Fellowships scheme and to another non-UKRI scheme (Royal Society, for example)?

Yes. However, if you are successful in your application and you choose to accept the FLF, you should withdraw any parallel applications to other schemes.

Can I submit multiple applications to the same Future Leaders Fellowships call if they're through different host Organisations?

No, you may only submit one application per call and you cannot re-apply until the outcome of any earlier application is known.

Do I need to have a PhD to apply?

No. Applicants need to demonstrate suitable research/innovation skills, knowledge and experience to undertake the programme of work in the fellowship proposal, but do not necessarily need to hold formal qualifications.

Can I apply for a fellowship to be held on a part-time basis?

Yes, Future Leaders Fellowships can be held on a part-time basis down to 50% FTE in order to combine the fellowship with personal responsibilities. In all cases, the length of the fellowship must be extended accordingly on a pro-rata basis. For example, a four-year fellowship on a full-time basis would equate to an 8-year fellowship with the fellow working 0.5 FTE, but the value of the award would remain the same.

To assist academic applicants and organisations with the tapered salary calculation, Academic Salary Templates have been provided for both full-time and part-time applicants. See the Academic Salary Template document [on the funding opportunity webpage](#) for more information.

Can I have other professional time commitments and hold an FLF?

Academic-hosted applicants may spend up to 6 hours per week of their time on non FLF activities and still claim for the full 100% of a fellow's time. This allows for existing teaching, managerial and administrative responsibilities an applicant may have.

Academic-hosted clinically-active fellows may spend 20% of their time commitment on clinical duties (clinically active fellows include allied health professionals (including veterinarians). Exceptions are made for fellows undertaking patient-oriented research as part of their fellowship, who may undertake up to 40% of their time on these duties.

Business-hosted applicants may not request costs for time spent on other activities outside the fellowship but may instead apply for a Reduced Hours Fellowship. Please see "[Business hosted: Can an FLF spend time on core business during their fellowship?](#)" FAQ, above.

Fellows should highlight in their Cover Letter where less than 100% of their time will be allocated to the FLF. Applications of this type should justify how the fellow will fully develop their skills and experience in the time allocated.

I am planning to return to my research/innovation career following a break – am I eligible to apply?

Yes, applications are welcome from those returning to a research/innovation role from a career break or following time in non-research roles. We also encourage applications from those wishing to work part-time in order to combine the fellowship with personal or domestic responsibilities.

Please see the guidance on Career Breaks and Flexible Working on [the funding opportunity webpage](#).

Can I hold the Future Leaders Fellowship as part of a job-share?

Yes, job-share applications are allowed. For full details please see the Job Share FAQs on [the funding opportunity webpage](#).

Can you apply if you currently hold University fixed-term support (for example an Edinburgh Chancellor's Fellowship)?

Yes, as long as there is not an overlap between the two awards and they are not held at the same time. However, if already holding other fixed-term support applicants would need to demonstrate how the FLF would allow them to establish independence as a researcher/innovator in a way that previous support has not.

Eligibility – academic

Academic-hosted: Can I apply if I hold a permanent academic or research/innovation position, or an award that supports my salary?

Yes. However, if you are successfully awarded the FLF you should relinquish the role(s) associated with that position for the duration of the fellowship. Applicants cannot continue to hold an existing position and a full-time fellowship at the same time although up to 6 hours per week may be used for other duties.

All applicants must fully articulate why an FLF is the best way to achieve their research/innovation goals.

Individuals who currently hold a permanent position are eligible to apply if they can:

- show that their current position does not in itself demonstrate that they have achieved research/innovation independence and thought leadership
- provide a clear rationale why a Future Leaders Fellowship would be different to their current role. As part of this expectation, applicants may be planning to move away from their current department or can describe clear pathways by which they will differentiate the fellowship position from their current role.
- clearly state that all their working time costed to the fellowship would be dedicated to the fellowship to focus on research/innovation, shielded from other professional commitments.
- demonstrate that a Future Leaders Fellowship would be the best way to support their long-term career goals and chosen career route.

Eligibility – business

Business-hosted: Are individuals in senior positions (for example, a managing director or Chief Executive Officer) of an organisation (including a one-person company) eligible to apply for an FLF?

Yes. However, any core business duties not relevant to the award would need to be completed outside of the time spent working on the grant. It is possible to apply for a Reduced Hours Fellowship award, to a minimum of 60% time on the FLF, to allow for this.

If these duties cannot be carried out within the Reduced Hours model, then the applicant would need to relinquish the role in order to take up the fellowship (if for example more than 40% of time on non-FLF activities was needed). This may mean that the applicant's post within the Organisation would need to be backfilled to ensure that business as usual could continue. Applicants to the FLF scheme must be at an appropriate early career stage and therefore the value that a fellowship would bring to the applicant's career must be clearly justified if they are already at a senior level.

Business-hosted: Is a business-hosted fellow allowed to be a shareholder in the company?

Yes, the fellow can be a shareholder of the business host.

Business hosted: Does the innovation or project have to be in the same sector as the business?

No, the fellowship can be used to support projects which take an Organisation in a new and innovative direction. This may involve moving into a different sector.

Business-hosted: Is there an upper or lower limit for how large the host Organisation can be?

All business host Organisations must be eligible to receive state aid. There is no upper limit on size, and a one person/ micro company may wish to backfill the applicant's role to ensure the business can continue as usual whilst the fellowship is underway. Backfilled roles cannot be costed on the fellowship. All fellowships will have to pass financial due diligence to confirm that they are eligible for state aid and this includes checks to ensure that the fellowship will not be used to support an Undertaking in Difficulty. Applicants should fully justify why the host Organisation is the best place for them to carry out the fellowship.

Business-hosted: Can a fellow hold an Innovate UK grant alongside the FLF?

Yes, if utilising the Reduced Hours Fellowship, and where it can be shown that continuing to participate in the Innovate UK grant is essential to the career of the fellow. It must also be demonstrated that there is clear distinction between the work being carried out under the two separate grant awards. The benefit to the fellow of this working arrangement should be clearly detailed in the application. Only costs associated with the FLF should be included in the application.

Funding and resources - General

Is there a maximum amount I can apply for?

No, but applications exceeding £1.5m cost to UKRI should disclose this in a Proposal Cover Letter when submitting both the Outline Proposal and the Full Application. All costs should be fully justified.

What costs can the fellowship cover?

Costs for all equipment, materials, travel, overheads and any other programme related costs may be claimed, where these are project specific. In addition to the fellow's salary, those salaries of any research/innovation staff working on the fellowship can be included. Costs can be claimed to undertake training and development activities that will support a fellow's establishment as a research/innovation leader. All costs must be appropriate for the programme of activities and should be fully justified. Costs will be met according to the fEC model (80%) for research council eligible organisations and at state aid guided level for business based, IUK eligible organisations.

How is Intellectual Property (IP) managed in an FLF, in particular in collaborative projects?

Intellectual property agreements should be made between the fellow, their Host Organisation and any collaborators, and included within a formal collaboration agreement that must be in place and signed by all parties before the start of the award. All IP will sit within the consortium, and no IP will be held by UKRI.

Can I apply for fewer than four years of funding?

All applications to the FLF scheme should be for four years, or the equivalent pro rata duration for part-time applicants. This is to provide the fellow with time to fully develop themselves as a researcher/innovator and maximise their potential. All applicants should consider what activities can be undertaken in this time period, either as a single program of research/innovation, or as a portfolio of interlinked projects. In both cases, the programme as a whole should be of an ambition and scale commensurate with this substantial and prestigious fellowship.

Do I have to apply for the full seven years?

No, there is no need to apply for a further three years of funding if this is not required. The additional extension period will be allocated based on review of the project and proposed additional work program in the fourth year of the initial project.

Funding and resources – academic

Academic-hosted: Is the £1.5m at 80% or 100% fEC?

Applications exceeding £1.5m cost to UKRI should contact the UKRI office before submitting and disclose this in a Cover Letter when submitting both the Outline Proposal and the Full application. For academic-hosted applicants this will be £1.875m total project cost for the first four years, of which UKRI will pay 80% fEC (so £1.5m). This covers the costings for the initially funded period of the fellowship (four years unless part-time).

Academic-hosted: How does the commitment to the funded fellows from academic institutions fit with the employer's current policies - for example for open recruitment processes?

UKRI recognises that research/innovation employers differ in their employment policies and practices. An effective commitment to and support for fellows can therefore be achieved by several different means. For example, the path to an open-ended role may involve open advertisement – which is acceptable provided that this is for a position in the right subject area, at a suitable level, at the appropriate time and it would be expected that the fellow would be in a good position to attain the role.

We also recognise that employers' assessments of an individual's suitability for an open-ended contract will be broad and will take into account factors other than their research/innovation progress. Fellows will still be subject to standard organisational policies which may include probation periods on appointment and performance review practices throughout the lifetime of the fellowship and beyond.

Academic-hosted: Can you provide more information on Salary Tapering?

Academic host Organisations are required to commit to funding an increasing percentage of the applicant's salary, which is not to be derived from the Full Economic Cost (fEC) of the award.

The FTE remains the same for the duration of the fellowship, with the host Organisation increasing its contribution gradually over the four (or seven) year period and offering an

open-ended contract after this time (please see previous question). Tapering of the UKRI contribution to salary for the fellow **does not mean** tapering of the time spent on the research/innovation related to the fellowship. It reflects the partnership the Organisation forms with UKRI to maximise the potential of the individual.

To assist applicants and Host Organisations with the calculation, please see the Academic Salary Template for full-time and part-time applicants.

Academic-hosted: How should equipment be costed?

For Host Organisations applying under fEC the following applies:

- Any equipment up to £10k (inc. VAT) is described as consumables and will be funded at 80% of fEC.
- Any single item of equipment over £10k (inclusive of VAT) will be funded at 50% of the overall cost with the other 50% contribution offered by the Host Organisation or another partner.
- Any single item of equipment over £138k (inclusive of VAT) needs a two-page business case and three written quotes. The 50% contribution rule above still applies.
- For Instrument Development, 100% costs can be claimed for constituent parts of the developed instrument, where the total cost of the final instrument exceeds £10k. However, these must be approved prior to submission of the application. Applicants intending to request funds for Instrument Development should highlight and justify these costs in a Cover Letter attached to both the Outline and Full bid applications.

Funding and resources – business

Business-hosted: How do businesses calculate the financial contribution they must make to the fellowship?

The financial contribution a business makes to the fellowship is dependent on the size of the business and the nature of work to be undertaken. Full guidance on how to calculate the level of financial contribution can be found in Annex 1 (state aid- funding for businesses) of the Guidance for Applicants. UKRI provides information on state aid but this should not be seen as a substitute for taking proper legal advice, which remains the responsibility of the Host Organisation.

Business-hosted: Can UKRI confirm the percentage contribution a business should provide to the fellowship?

No, businesses must calculate their state aid eligibility using the guidance provided in Annex 1 of the Guidance for Applicants. UKRI provides information on state aid but this should not be seen as a substitute for taking proper legal advice, which remains the responsibility of the Host Organisation.

Business-hosted: Can a business apply for Instrument Development costs?*

The cost category Instrument Development is not applicable to applicants from business. Business applicants wishing to request costs for development of new instruments and/or equipment should include these costs in either the 'materials' or 'capital usage' sections on the Finance form for Business Applicants. Business applicants should include all costs on this form, and so do not need to tick the Instrument Development box on Je-S.

Application process

If this is a UKRI scheme, why do I have to apply through the MRC?

The FLF is UKRI-wide scheme and applications will be accepted from, and processed across, the entire UKRI remit. However, to meet current system capabilities, the MRC was selected as the host funder for this specific UKRI FLF funding opportunity.

How do I create an account on Je-S?*

We have produced a guidance document that will take you through the process of self-registering your organisation (where applicable) and creating your own account on Je-S. This is available on the 'How to apply' webpage.

Business-hosted: Do I need to complete the IRO application form to apply?*

No, you do not need to complete the IRO application form. You will need to register your business, **and** create an individual account, on Je-S prior to applying.

Do I need to submit an Outline Proposal?

Yes, this is mandatory. The Outline stage is in place to ensure UKRI have early sight of application numbers and areas of research and innovation to prepare for processing the large number of applications. This stage is not competitive and Outline applications will not be rejected. No feedback is provided at this stage.

Are there restrictions on the number of Outline Proposals that an Organisation can submit?

UKRI has not set a limit on the number of Outline proposals that can be submitted by a single Organisation. However, as this scheme will fund only the highest quality applications, we would encourage organisations to focus their efforts on an appropriate, relatively small number of high-quality applications in order to improve their success rates. To this end, we expect organisations to employ fair and transparent processes to select and support proposals for application.

Organisations should consider the diversity of applicants they put forward and that all processes for selecting applicants are in line with best practice.

I am applying through a Host Organisation that is different from my current organisation. Should I update my details to the new organisation?

No, you do not need to change the contact details on your Je-S account in order to submit the Outline or Full Proposal. Please ensure that you pick the correct submitting

organisation and department from the drop-down list in the project details section. This should be the Organisation that will be hosting your fellowship.

Note: Your existing organisation will not be made aware of any application through another organisation and your Outline Proposal and Full application will only be seen by the Host Organisation that you have selected.

Is it possible to start the project during the application process ‘at risk’?

No, UKRI will not fund any activities that have taken place before the formal start date of the fellowship, which will be confirmed in a formal grant Offer Letter. Costs are only eligible if they are incurred after the start date and before the end date of the fellowship.

Assessment process

How will successful fellows be selected?

Future Leaders Fellowship applicants will be assessed by a three-stage review process consisting of (stage 1) written peer review by sector/discipline experts, (stage 2) shortlisting by a Sift panel of senior decision makers and (stage 3) interview by a panel of senior decision makers. Not all applicants will progress from stage two to three. All Research Councils and IUK will be involved in the delivery of peer review, including collaborating on reviewer selection for multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary proposals.

Please see the How we will assess your application section on the FLF opportunity on the [Funding Finder](#) page on the UKRI website for further information.

If I am selected for interview, what can I expect?

Should you be selected for interview, we will contact you to inform you of this along with details of the time and date of interview. At this point you will also be given further information on the interview process.

Will each research council within UKRI be allocated a proportion of the budget to support fellows within their remit?

There will be no ring-fencing for specific areas. However, UKRI will monitor the overall portfolio balance in the longer term with the potential for light-touch targeting to strengthen a few broad priority areas of the portfolio in the future.

How important is the impact of the research and/or innovation that will form the basis of a Future Leaders Fellowship?

We expect that any researcher/innovator applying to this scheme should be able to explain the potential impact of their proposed research/innovation. For example, how the project will contribute to, or help to maintain, the health of other research disciplines. How the project will contribute to addressing key UK societal challenges or current/future UK economic success, and/or enable future development of key emerging business relative to other, similar, research/innovation in the field.

With the removal of the Pathways to Impact and Impact Summary, am I still required to consider impact in my application?

Impact remains a key FLF assessment factor as part of the *Impact and Strategic Relevance* assessment criteria. A separate Pathways to Impact statement is no longer required, but applicants must still consider how they will or might achieve impact throughout their projects, and this should be detailed as part of the Case for Support. Information on achieving impact should also be referred to on the Je-S form wherever else appropriate.

Can I still request funding for impact-related activities?

Yes, costs can still be requested. Activities to realise impact do not have to be cost-incurring, but relevant costs can be included and must be fully justified within the Justification of Resources statement.

What are the assessment criteria?

Applications will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Research and innovation excellence
- Applicant and their development
- Impact and strategic relevance
- Research and innovation environment and costs

For further information, please see the Assessment Criteria on [the funding opportunity webpage](#).

Business-hosted: Will there be separate assessment criteria for fellows based in business?

No, the criteria for applications based in business and academia will be the same, but the evidence assessors would expect to see would vary as appropriate for the proposed programme of activities.

How is confidential information handled in the peer review process of this scheme?

UK Research and Innovation understands the importance of protecting personal information and is committed to complying with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR).

All assessors (reviewers and panel members) must sign a legally binding confidentiality agreement before they have sight of application information. UKRI also has mechanisms to review highly sensitive information and applicants should contact fellows@ukri.org prior to submission if they believe their applications contain highly sensitive information.

Applicants can also request that their proposal is not seen by specific individuals or organisations in their Cover Letter. **The Cover Letter is not sent to reviewers but will be seen by UKRI and panel members.**

Re-applying to the FLF scheme

If I'm unsuccessful, can I apply to future rounds?

Unsuccessful applicants can apply to subsequent FLF calls and their proposal will be assessed alongside all other applications to that call without bias.

If I withdraw my proposal during or after peer review, but ahead of the panel meetings, can I reapply to the next round?*

No. If an application is withdrawn during or following peer review, applicants may not resubmit to the next funding round. For example, an application withdrawn during or after peer review in R5 cannot be submitted to R6. Applicants must wait for one funding round to pass before applying to the scheme again.

Can I apply to future rounds with the same proposal?

No, resubmission of an unchanged proposal to the FLF scheme is not permitted. Applicants reapplying to the scheme must address feedback from reviewers and the Interview panel (if applicable). A summary of these amendments and how the feedback has been addressed must be detailed in a Cover Letter attached to the application.

The Cover Letter will not be shared with reviewers but will be available to panel members at both the sift and interview stages.

UKRI reserve the right to reject applications that have not adequately addressed previously received feedback.

What is the UKRI advice for candidates awaiting application decisions while the next round is open?

Applicants may only have one Future Leaders Fellowship application under consideration by UKRI at any time and must wait until the outcome of an application is known before submitting a further application. All future rounds will have a similar overlap, so candidates should be aware of this in advance and decide on the timing of their applications.

Post award

How will UKRI monitor and evaluate the fellowships?

UKRI is currently developing detailed plans on how these awards will be monitored and evaluated and these will be published in due course. Primary reporting will use the Researchfish© system.

We are keen to ensure that we support cohorts of fellows, with whom we'll continue to engage beyond the end of their funding.

Are there plans to bring the fellows together?

Yes. This aspect of the scheme is currently being developed. We are keen to ensure that fellows have the opportunity to come together face-to-face to exchange learning points, develop networks and a broader professional community as well as learn about the research and innovation underway across the cohorts and sectors.

Documents/Attachments

What should I do if I am unable to provide a Letter of Support due to COVID-19 disruption?*

We encourage all applicants to liaise with potential Project Partners and/or Collaborators as early as possible to secure Letters of Support. Should you encounter any issues then please contact the team at fellows@ukri.org.

What should I include in my proposal Cover Letter?

A Cover Letter is not mandatory but should be included with both Outline and Full proposals in certain circumstances.

Please see section 2.1 of the Guidance for Applicants for more information about the requirements for the Cover Letter at the Outline stage.

At the Full bid stage, a Cover Letter containing further information must be included if:

- the applicant has submitted a previous application to the scheme,
- the applicant has requested funding over £1.5m,
- the proposal includes individual items of equipment over £138k (applicants from academic Host Organisations only),
- the proposal is requesting funding for instrument development (applicants from academic Host Organisations only),
- for any proposals intended to be held on a Reduced Hours basis (applicants from business Host Organisations only),
- formal Collaborators and mentors are part of the project. The Cover Letter should list their names and organisation,
- the application is likely to fall within state aid regulations. Where this is the case, please include the calculations and assumptions used to ascertain the percentage funding levels applied for,
- the applicant wishes to include any specific information on conflicts of interest, for example by listing any conflicted experts or organisations who should not be approached for review.

Please see section 3.2.14 of Guidance for Applicants for more information about the requirements for the Cover Letter at the Full Bid stage.

The Cover Letter must not be used to submit any additional information that should otherwise be included in the Proposal Form, the Case for Support or any other required attachments. Cover Letters are made available to the Panel and UKRI but are not and cannot be seen by reviewers.

Is there a required format for supporting documents?

All attachments must be completed in 11-point Arial typeface, including character spaces. Applications will not be accepted where smaller typefaces or narrow versions of the typeface have been used. Minimum margins of 2cm in all directions must be used. Please note that on submission to Je-S ALL non-PDF documents are converted to PDF. The use

of non-standard fonts may result in errors or font conversion which could affect the overall length of the document. We recommend that documents are converted to PDF ahead of upload to Je-S, which can prevent this happening.

What is the page length for the supporting documents?

For a summary of mandatory documents and their page lengths, please see Section 3 of the Guidance for Applicants document.

Updates for Round 6*

What is new for Round 6?*

We have made minor changes to the call text to improve clarity for applicants. Please see the summary of changes in the Guidance for Applicants for further detail. Please ensure that you read all the updated guidance if you plan to apply to Round 6 of the scheme.

COVID-19

COVID-19 will affect some of my research/innovation plans. Should I write about this in my application?*

We acknowledge that it is difficult for anyone to determine the future impacts of COVID-19 while the pandemic continues to evolve. Your application should be based on the information available at the point of submission. If applicable, the known application specific impacts of COVID-19 should be accounted for. Where known impacts have occurred, these should be highlighted in the application, including the assumptions/information at the point of submission.

You are asked NOT to include contingency plans for the potential impacts of COVID-19. Reviewers will receive instructions to assume that changes that arise from the COVID-19 pandemic, post-submission, will be resolved and complications related to COVID-19 should not affect their scores.

Can I still include plans for travel within my application?*

You can still include requests for travel both domestically and internationally in accordance to the relevant scheme guidelines, noting the above advice.

If I am awarded the FLF, can I make any changes that I didn't foresee as a result of COVID-19?*

Where an application is successful, any changes in circumstances that affect the proposal will be managed as a post-award issue.