



UK Research
and Innovation

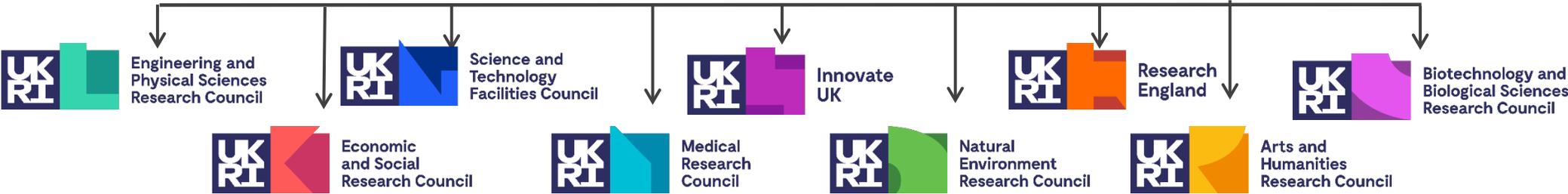
UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships

Birmingham City University
19th November 2025

Steve Meader
Director – Future Leaders Fellowships



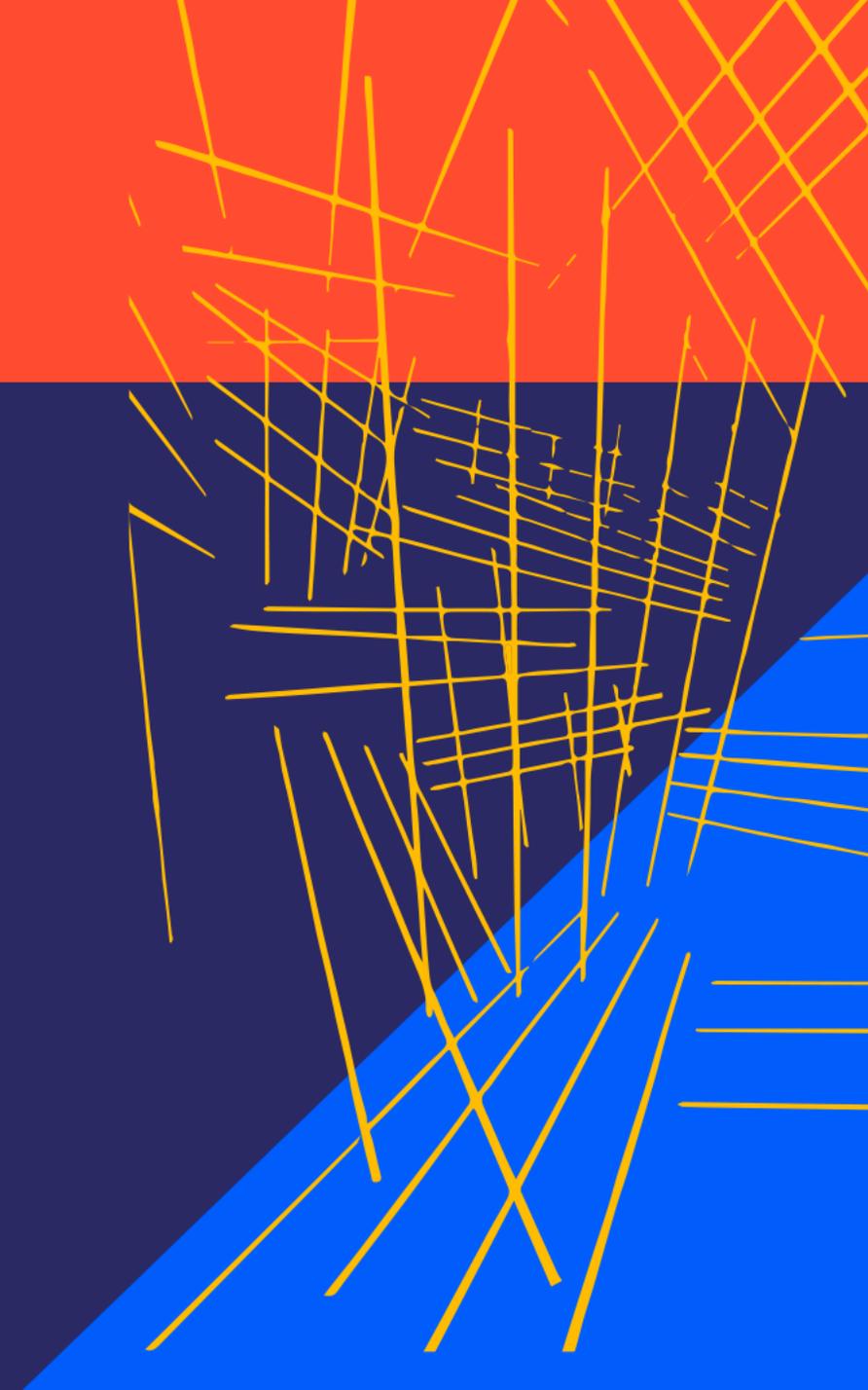
UKRI Research Funding





UK Research
and Innovation

UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships



UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships - Scheme Overview

- Originally funded as part of the UK Government's National Productivity Investment Fund – scheme launched in 2018 as the Flagship Fellowship Programme, as part of the launch of UKRI.
- FLF Rounds Seven onwards have been funded through the core UKRI budget.
- Over 650 Fellowships awarded in Rounds 1-9 including 60 in commercial hosts. Round 10 of FLF is currently under peer review.
- Round 11 will open for applications in early 2026, to support ~80 individuals per round.

New fellowship framework to strengthen UK research and innovation



14 October 2025

A new approach to fellowships will make funding opportunities clearer, simpler and more effective for researchers and innovators at different career stages.

Supporting talent through collective funding

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has today announced the launch of a new [fellowship investment framework](#).

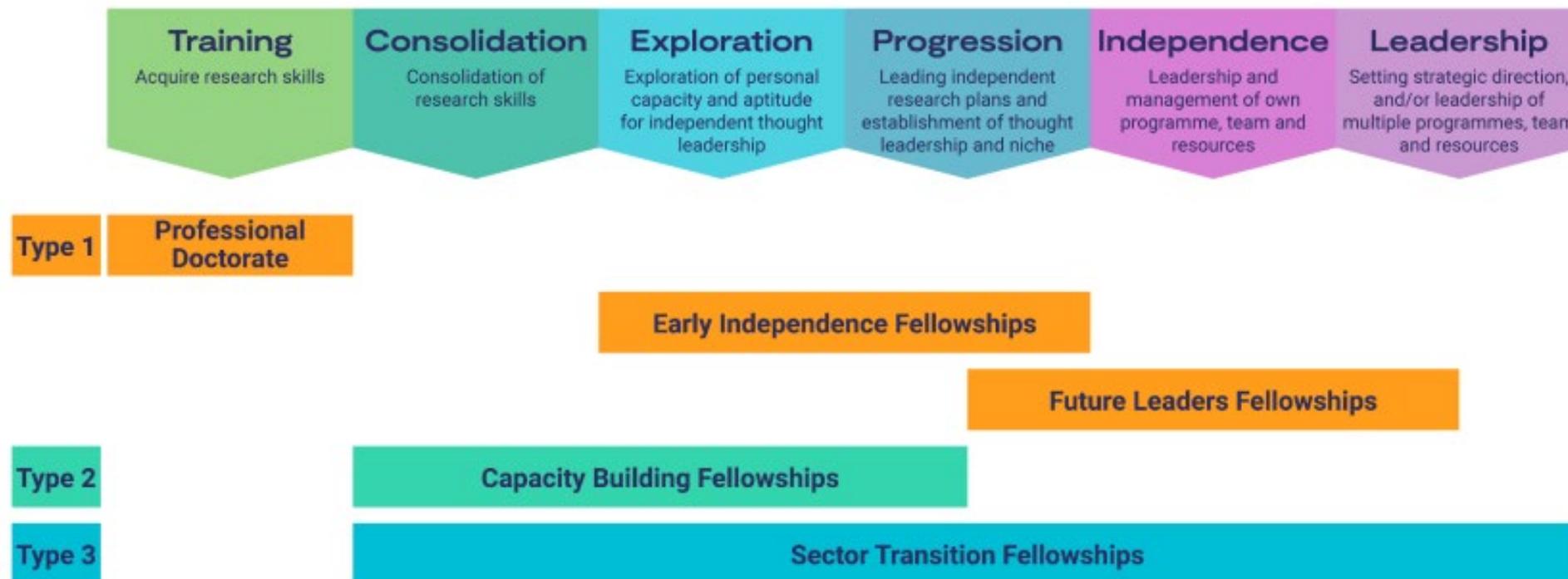
This marks the next step in UKRI's transition to collective talent funding, first announced in May 2022.

The framework will simplify and align fellowship schemes, improving efficiency for applicants, research organisations and UKRI.

It will also support delivery of the UKRI strategy by:

- helping people and organisations to make the best use of their time and resources
- strengthening support for individuals and teams across disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas
- improving the flow of talent across disciplines and sectors in research and innovation

Fellowship investment framework diagram



Future Leaders Fellowships – Scheme Aims

- Supporting **early career** researchers and innovators with **outstanding potential** across the whole of UKRI remit.
- To facilitate and encourage
 - **Equality and diversity**
 - **Interdisciplinary** research & innovation
 - **International** mobility
 - Part-time and **flexible** working
 - **Cross-sector** working
 - Research and innovation with and in **businesses**
 - Enhanced **host support** for long term career development





FLFs - The Fellowship:

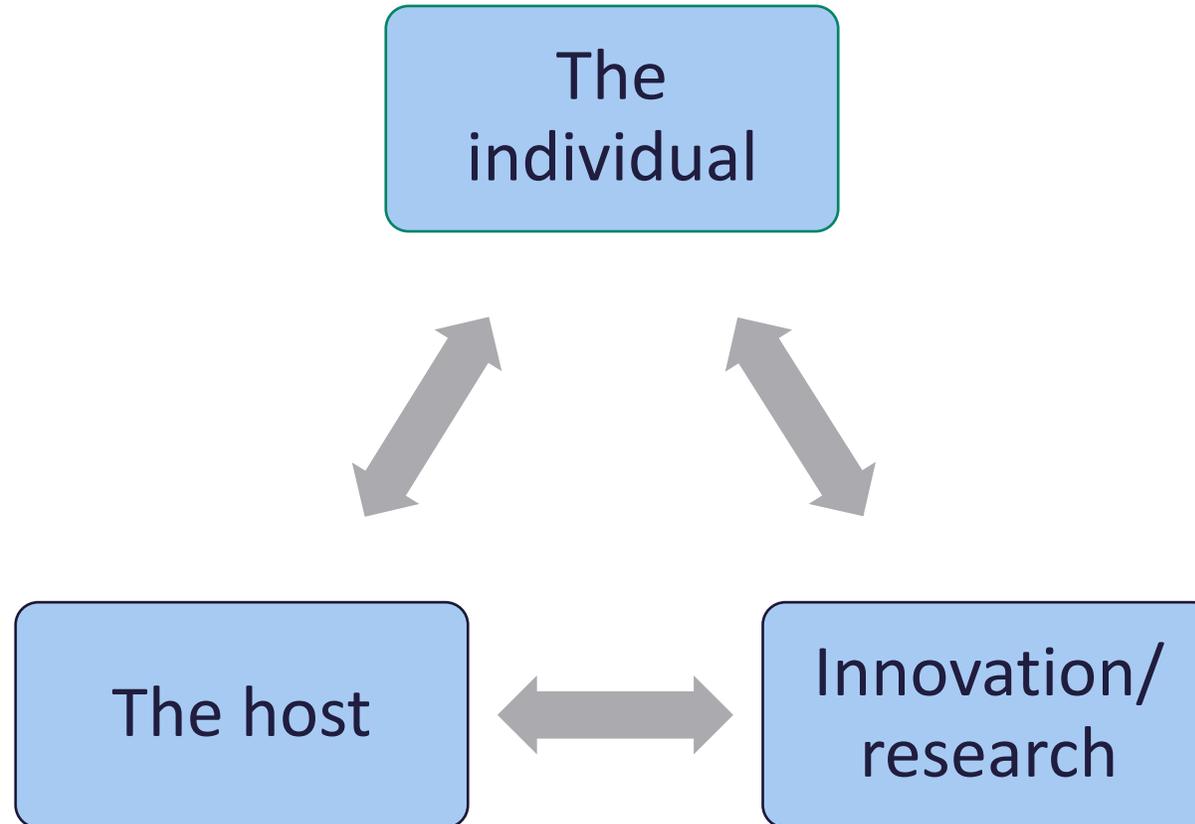
- Monetary award to conduct a specific programme of research or innovation and significantly enhance an individual's early career
- Protected time to focus on research/innovation, receiving mentoring and enhanced training opportunities
- An award for someone who has already gained a doctorate or has *equivalent experience* but is still early in their career, **with the potential to be an outstanding leader in their field.**
- **4+3 years** – 7 year fellowship with a midpoint review

Apply for funding over 4 years to fund ambitious innovation or research

- Flexible award sizes, from £300,00 to £3,000,000
- Salaries for fellow and team
- Project/portfolio costs
- Funding for leadership and career development activities
- Flexible and part-time working options



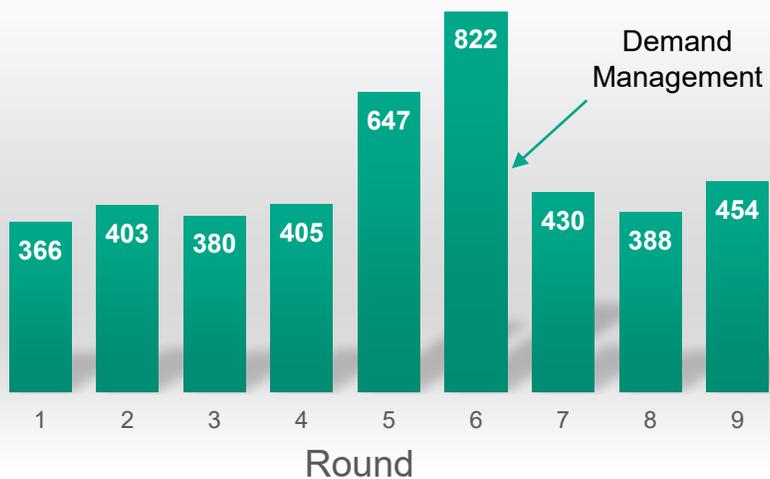
The nature of a fellowship award



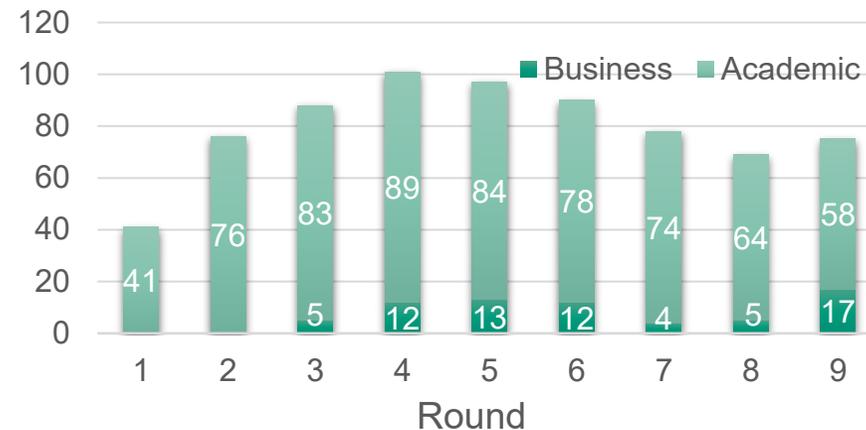
What is Early Career?

- No 'standard' definition as we encourage applications from a broad spectrum of backgrounds, career pathways, and disciplines e.g. business and academia, changing disciplines, career breaks, time in other roles
- There is no tick box set of rules - justify in application
- Transitioning to independence
- Applicants who have already achieved research/innovation independence, for e.g. evidenced by a portfolio of grants as lead PI will not be competitive
- For more detail, please see the applicant information section in our guidance

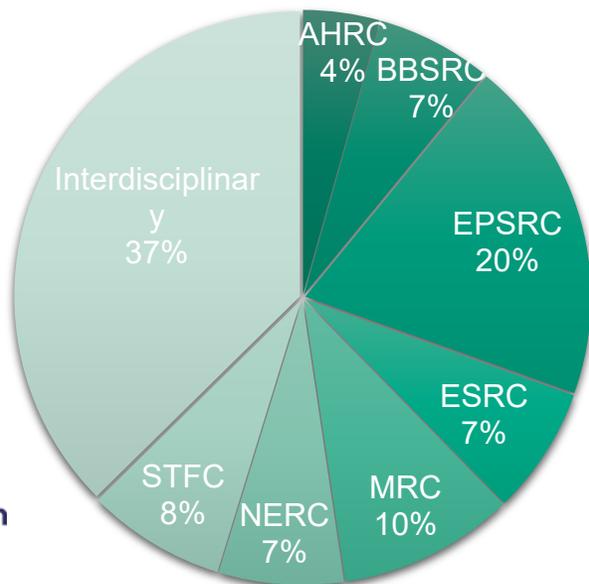
Scheme Interest (#applications)



FLF Awards



FLFs R1-8: Council Remits

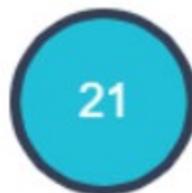
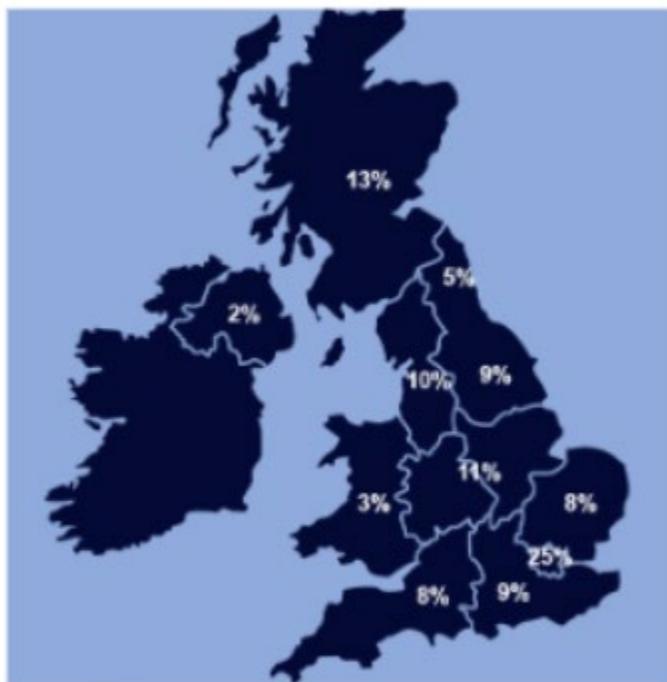


Alignment to Critical Technologies and Government Missions/IS-8



Supporting diversity, inclusivity and porosity

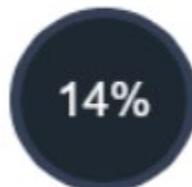
UKRI has funded and supported fellows across all regions in the UK.



of the funded fellows (5%) have moved to the UK for their FLF award. 44% of the fellows are non-UK nationals.



of the funded fellows are female.



of the funded fellows that reported their ethnicity were from an ethnic minority group.



of the funded fellows reported that they were aged 30-39 at the application stage.



of the funded fellows (5%) are part-time. The scheme supports flexible and part-time working.

FLF Round 11 to launch February 2026
£110 million available



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Key messages from the latest rounds



Messages from previous rounds

- Success rate c. 18%
- Strong applicants fully consider leadership and career development
- Personalised support for applicant and project expected from host
- Candidates who are further towards being established and independent have become less competitive as the scheme has progressed
- Applicants should articulate the clear added value of the fellowship mechanism of support

Messages from previous rounds

- EDI and Research Culture are not always well understood by interviewees
- Male applicants typically have a lower success rate than female applicants – we're investigating why this may be
- Increase in amount requested per application over recent rounds. Increased emphasis on value for money.

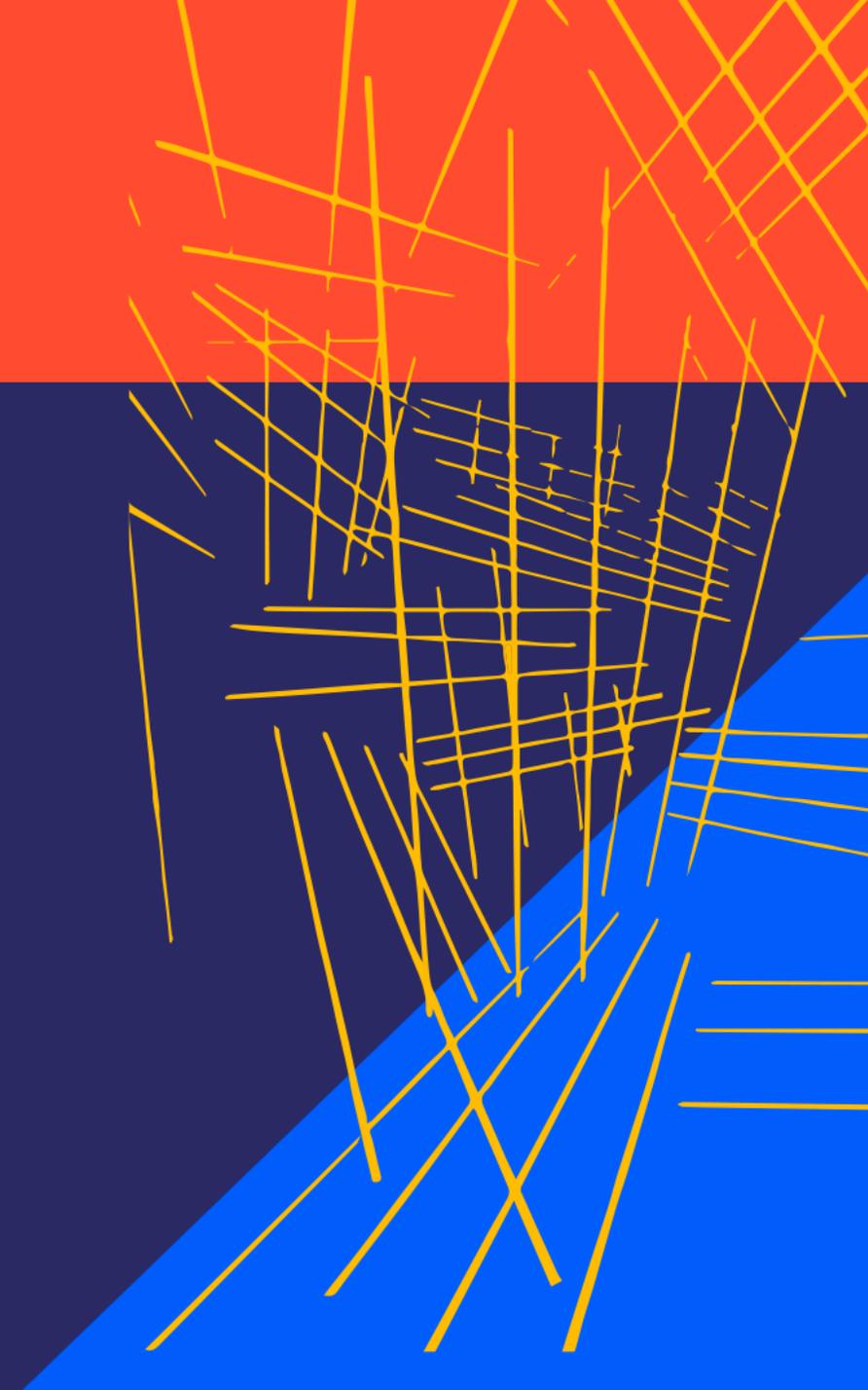
Updates for future rounds

- The number of applications which can be submitted by each academic host organisation is capped – full details published in guidance. Statement on inclusive selection process is required.
- New restrictions on Co-Investigators on awards.
- Increased emphasis on value for money at the review points.
- Increased emphasis on Trusted Research and Innovation.



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Applying



Applying - Scheme assessment criteria

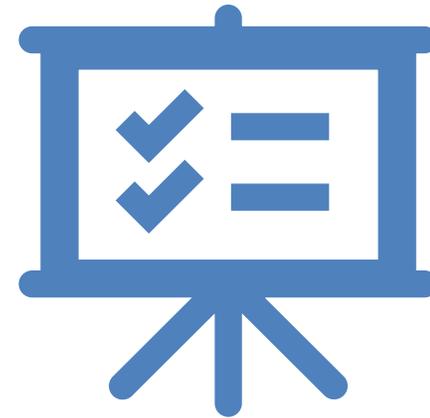
- **Research and Innovation Excellence**
 - Importance, novelty, feasibility, methodology
- **Applicant and Their Development**
 - Track record, route to independence, training plans
- **Impact and Strategic Relevance**
 - Significance of short and long-term impacts, routes to impact, alignment to strategic priorities
- **Research and Innovation Environment and Costs**
 - Commitment from host (route to open-ended contract), support for fellow, value for money

The **added value of the fellowship** mechanism of support is key

Applying - The application process

Four stages:

1. Full proposal
2. Peer review
3. Sift panels
4. Interview panels



Applying - Full proposal

Outline vision for full period (e.g. 4+3 years), providing detailed plans and costings for first four years (as applied for) and broader plans for the second period, if applicable.

Proposal Form

Vision and Approach (case for support)

Justification for Resources

Host organisation support

Project Partners (letters of support)

R4RI CV- this is a narrative CV

Workplan

Applying - Writing a proposal

- Clear articulation of research and/or innovation objectives
- What should be planned to ensure these are delivered to the highest standard? Including consideration of risks and how you plan on mitigating against these
- What activities will ensure that the applicant can maximise their potential?
- What can applicants do to ensure the fellowship has the greatest impact?
- Carefully consider the team involved to maximise outputs and ensure the achievement of proposal objectives
- Consider resource and costs requirements to ensure this is achieving value for money alongside maximum impact and strategic relevance

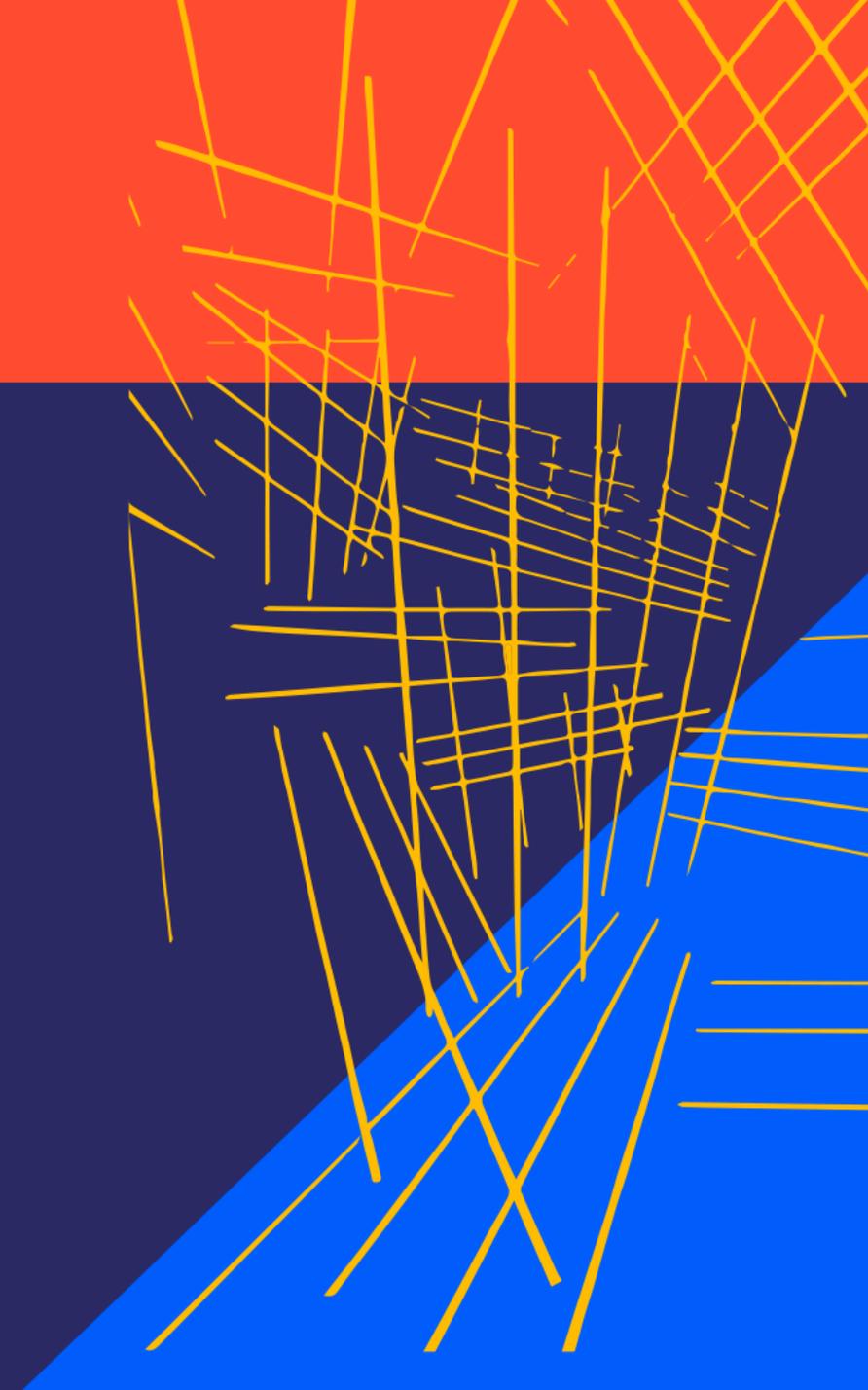
Applying - Final thoughts

- Read guidance carefully! Email fellows@ukri.org with any questions once you have read this thoroughly
- UKRI scheme – likely to differ to individual councils you may have applied to before
- Guidance revised prior to each round opening
- Important to address all criteria for the scheme and clearly identify why this applicant is the best possible fit
- How will the fellowship enable the applicant to progress past their current career trajectory successfully? What will the outputs and outcomes be? Is this likely to be step-change and internationally leading?



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Career development support



FLF Development Network

Tailored career
development
support for
Fellows

Leadership
training

Access to
networks and
mentors

UKRI Funded,
Fellow led

“Participating in the Leadership Mentoring Programme was an excellent investment into my career and professional development.

I was matched with an industry-based mentor who aligned strongly with my personal and professional values. I had the opportunity to discuss the things that mattered to me.”

FLF Development Network

All FLFs can access the **Future Leaders Fellows Development Network**, which delivers bespoke development opportunities across three themes:

Research and Innovation (R&I) Environment	Training and Development	Community and Cohort Experience
Specialist advice on Innovation, Knowledge Exchange, Policy Engagement	Leadership development workshops and retreats	Four-strand mentoring programme
'Under the Hood' sessions with UKRI and BEIs	Asynchronous resources, toolkits	Themed, fellow-led coffee mornings
Direct access to cross-sectoral leaders	One-to-one professional coaching	Internal funding scheme, 'Plus Funds'
Interdisciplinary, collaborative 'Crucible' events	Bespoke 360 Feedback and Coaching	Access to Community Manager to form development pathways

Additional Support from UK Research and Innovation

- Cohort events:
 - Starting meetings per cohort
 - Annual events for all
- UKRI-wide activities
 - Networking meetings etc. run by UKRI councils
- Innovate UK:
 - Business specific support for applications based in business or collaborating with business
 - Email Cherish.Vines@iuk.ukri.org for more detail

Future Leaders Fellowships – Business Applicants

Funding the **Top Ten** Future Leaders of Research and Innovation in Business



£1.5m

over
4 years
average award

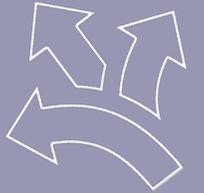


UK Businesses
of any size
and
sector



Flexibility

- Supporting diverse career paths
- Career break
- Reduced hours or part time



- Single programme
- Portfolio of projects
- Concurrent interlinked projects



Networking

across cohort and investment for training and professional development

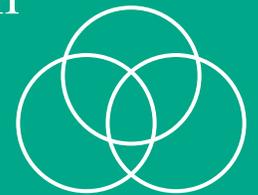


Collaboration

Option to collaborate with other organisations



Interdisciplinary and cross-sector research



FLF continues to grow

FLF is unique in its broad reach and flexibility

We've listened to previous applicants and fellows working in business and non-academic organisations

- The application is now on Innovate UK's Innovation Funding Service
- Assessment by Innovate UK assessors with a stronger business background
- We are specifically targeting a higher number of business successes

Contact us

- Where to find more information:
[UKRI Future leaders fellowships](#)
- Contact us:
fellows@ukri.org



Useful links

- [Resume for research and innovation guidance](#)
- [UKRI new funding service](#)
- [UKRI opportunities](#)



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Questions?





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Thank you



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