**UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships (FLF)**

**Newcastle University Guidance**

**NB: Detail is subject to change following the full announcement due 3 February 2025.**

**The Future Leaders Fellowship Scheme:** is a flagship scheme for UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). It offers personal fellowship awards to support and enable early career researchers and innovators to transition to world-leading, independent research careers. The fellowships fund an ambitious programme of work for up to 4-years, followed by the option to apply for a further three years of funding to focus on a particular area and continue your career development. At the end of the fellowship, UKRI would like to see fellows having the skills and attributes to be or become a world-leader in their field. They will also have the offer of a permanent academic position at their host university. The scheme is in line with UK Government’s target to increase UK R&D spend from 1.7% to 2.4% of GDP by 2027 and build research capacity. UKRI has invested in almost 500 fellows across 6 rounds since 2018, several from Newcastle University ([Future Leaders Fellowships database of fellows – UKRI](https://www.ukri.org/publications/future-leaders-fellowships-database-of-fellows/)).

**Rationale:**

UKRI needs the scheme to deliver the following:

* Span the remit of all of its research councils – you can apply in any research area.
* To grow a strong supply of talented researchers still early in their career to ensure the UK continues to be world leading in research and innovation.
  + *You will not usually be able to apply if you are already deemed to be an independent researcher, for example holding funding or a fellowship aimed at the early career stage, unless you're changing disciplines or sectors.*
  + *The less early career you are, the stronger the track record you will need, if you want to be competitive.*
* To support the development of the careers of the next generation of researchers, technology entrepreneurs, business leaders and innovators.
* To encourage international mobility (applicants from overseas, or UK-based applicants undertaking short-term international activities (if possible) or hosting overseas visitors).
* This is the first Fellowship scheme opento business or academic applicants. Where appropriate, there is the aim to facilitate movement of researchers between sectors (e.g. business, industry, charitable, public). Note that this is not a requirement, but an aim for some of the fellowships;
* To foster new research and innovation career paths including at the academic/business and interdisciplinary boundaries. Again, this is not a requirement, but an aim for some of the fellowships.

**Therefore, UKRI is looking for applications that show:**

* The programme of work does not fit neatly into the usual funding schemes (i.e. a single council fellowship).
* Fellows tackling society’s biggest challenges with no barriers to multidisciplinary research or innovation.
* An ambitious and imaginative programme of research addressing significant and difficult research or innovation problems.
* Where relevant, fellows who want to work ‘in’ business not ‘with’ business.
* Cross-sector working (charities, business, government, museum etc.) and the creation of new disciplinesthat create new career paths.
* Private, public, charitable sectors being engaged in the conception of and throughout the Fellowship.
* Fellows involved with multiple sectors at the same time.

*Tip: UKRI clearly stated that many proposals in previous rounds would have easily been awarded under standard single council fellowship routes and so were not funded as deemed not of FLF remit.*

**UKRI is looking for applicants who can demonstrate with evidence their:**

* Outstanding potential to be a world leader.
* Track record of challenging, original and productive research.
* Skill base and aspiration that they can use to spring board from.
* Innovative ideas for leadership and ways of leading. It is one thing to say you want to be a leader but knowing and articulating how to achieve it in 7 years is very different.
* Consider the following:
* What do you want to be a leader in? E.g. Women in Science, LGBTQ+, a new discipline, working across disciplines or sectors.
* Why are you not a leader already?
* What training do you not yet have that has held you back?
* How will you support a team? How will you lead and develop your staff? How will you act as a leader outside of your immediate team?

*Tip: Answering these questions soundly in proposals marked out the great from the outstanding.*

*Tip: Candidates could ask themselves, am I outstanding? Could I be? Do my peers think I am a future leader?*

*Tip: When questioned on leadership at the interview stage it was clear which applicants hadn’t thought this through and they were unsuccessful.*

*Tip: Strongest applicants considered leadership and career development of themselves and**their new team.*

*Tip: Some successful candidates proposed discipline hopping. These included collaborating with the right world leading collaborators/mentors with strong pilot data and a gradual and stepwise plan as to how they would achieve this and be at the forefront of this new discipline after the 7 years.*

**The full application must:**

* Be a coherent plan of research that is written for a generalist audience.
* Give a clear training and leadership plan that is costed.
* Ensure that all parts of the proposal fit together and are of exceptional quality.
* Clearly articulate the potential academic and/or socioeconomic impact of the research and how this will be achieved. Must also clearly plan and articulate the impact on the fellow, their career and that of their staff, and how this will be achieved.
* Clearly evidence and justify applicant’s status as an early career researcher.
* Remember that applications must have multiple world leading mentors and collaborators must be world-leading.
* Address why this will take applicant from an early career researcher to an established researcher. Applicants need to be very clear on what they will gain from a long-term, flexible, fellowship i.e. Why this particular fellowship scheme?
* Give a solid justification of why 7 years are needed and what the career step change will be.
* Create a clearly labelled section explaining why this Future Leader Fellowship will be transformational to your career (especially if you are on the margins of being an early career researcher).
* Not rely on links your institution has with stakeholders – make your own personal links and detail specific plans to engage with them.
* Demonstrate quality/excellence and added value across the assessment criteria below

1. Research and innovation excellence.
2. Applicant and their development.
3. Impact and strategic relevance.
4. Research and innovation environment and costs.

*Tip: The panel and reviewers want to read applications that clearly state what would happen to your career over 10 years that could not be achieved without an FLF.*

*Tip: You don’t have to be an expert in every aspect of your proposal – you can include Co-Is to plug small gaps, alongside a training programme.*

*Tip: Successful applications had strong pilot data and a stepwise plan as to how you they would achieve their aims and be at the forefront of this new discipline after the 7 years.*

*Tip: There is very little you can’t ask for in FLF as long as it is justified. There is no upper or lower limit on the amount of funding you can ask for (if justified). There is the budget to do anything across any discipline, location and sector. Be imaginative….think outside of the usual box.*

**Further information:** [Future Leaders Fellowships – UKRI](https://www.ukri.org/what-we-offer/developing-people-and-skills/future-leaders-fellowships/)│