

UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships – Round 10

Friday, 31st January 2025



Schedule for the session

Professor Seb Oliver Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research	FLF Overview
Professor Louise Serpell School of Life Sciences	What are reviewers looking for?
Professor Alan Garnham School of Psychology	
Dr. Charlotte Rae , FLF Fellow – Round 7 School of Psychology	Advice for preparing a successful application
Dr. Simon Mitchell , FLF Fellow – Round 4 BSMS	

Why apply to the FLF?

- Is an award going to address a step change in your career?
- Are you proposing a multifaceted programme which needs the scale, flexibility and duration of an FLF award?
- Can Sussex provide the right support for you?

Timeline

UKRI call opens	Monday 3 February 2025
Internal deadline Bids to be submitted to research.initiatives@sussex.ac.uk	Noon Monday 17 February 2025
Faculty panels meet	By 7 March 2024
Central moderating panel meets	By 14 March 2025
Outcomes & feedback communicated to all applicants	w/c 17 March 2025
UKRI deadline	Wednesday 18 June 2025

What support is available?

- Faculty & School-based peer review → selection of 4 candidates
- Matched with a 'Sussex expert'
- Contact your Research Development Officer
www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/people
- Resources for specific areas of your application, e.g. data management, training & development, equality and diversity considerations, host letter of support
- Mock interviews

Useful links and webinars

- ❖ UKRI FLF call: <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/future-leaders-fellowships-round-10/>
- ❖ Recording of Sussex information webinar for round 6: [FLF webinar for Sussex applicants & mentors - Zoom](#)
- ❖ Webinar information for UKRI FLF Round 8, watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y27vi3sjzM8>
- ❖ AHRC Future Leaders Fellowship (FLF) Information Webinar Round 9: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LM-9yuAio4>

FLF in a nutshell



- For **early career researchers** and innovators who are transitioning to or establishing independence, within any research topic across the UKRI remit. Can be used to move into a new research area or between sectors.
- A clear programme of **skills development** is an essential component of this fellowship.
- The fellowship may be made up of a single programme of work, **or** multiple consecutive or concurrent interlinked projects, led by the fellow.
- No eligibility restrictions based on years since PhD, years of experience, or current position. Must be able to show that you **haven't yet** achieved research independence.
- Project can last up to **4 years**, with an option to **renew for further 3 years**. No formal limit but the last round suggested a maximum of £2m.
- Sussex (and all institutions) **have a limit set by UKRI** for how many applications we can submit in each round.
- Very competitive, internal institutional selection (4 candidates)
- Once a year, next deadline 18 June 2025 at 4pm.
- Further info [here](#).

FLF Round 10

Key updates from Round 9

- UKRI have appointed a third-party supplier to provide application support, in the form of reasonable adjustments, for people who have a disability or a long-term condition and face barriers applying to us. Applicants who wish to access this initiative should email fellows@ukri.org for more information, before preparing your application.
- The wording on Co-Leads has been updated and these can now only be added to an application in exceptional circumstances, where they clearly bring essential, necessary skills to the project that could not be obtained in any other way, please see section 2.4 Core Team for more detail.
- The question set for the trusted research section has been updated on the funding service to request more information.
- All equipment costs over £10,000 (including VAT) other than instrument development are now funded at 80% FEC.

What the reviewers are
looking for

What are reviewers looking
for?

Or what are the committee, reviewers and the
interviewers looking for?

Prof. Louise Serpell

FLF college member for sift panel and interview panels.

FLF scheme

- World class science
- Independence transition
- Open to businesses as well as universities
- Build a team
 - To develop, retain, attract and sustain research and innovation talent in the UK. .
 - To foster new research and innovation career paths including those at the academic/business and interdisciplinary boundaries, and to facilitate the movement of people between sectors.
 - To provide sustained funding and resources for the best early-career researchers and innovators.
 - To provide long-term, flexible funding to tackle difficult and novel challenges, and support adventurous, ambitious programmes.

“These Fellowships support applicants from diverse career paths, including those returning from a career break or following time in other roles ”

The process:

>Submission

- Reviews - 3+ experts in your field
- Sift panel- 3 IMs
- Interviews – 5 panel members + Chair and UKRI members
- *University support : “The Fellowships are designed to be in partnership with a hosting institution, with significant host support expected to enable the Fellow to transition to or establish their research/innovation independence in any area supported by UKRI. It is expected the Fellowship proposals will include time for the applicant to improve their skills and to work on their professional development, to ensure they realise their potential over the course of their Fellowship’.*

Sift panel

- Why Sussex –Support (skills and professional development)
 - Plan for transition to independence
- Each members has ~11 applications to read
- Summaries are key
 - Why is your question important?
 - Why you?
 - Who else?
 - What else? What are the gaps?
- Costs
- Equality and diversity

Reviewers:

- Key questions
 - What is the state of the art
 - What will you do that is a step change?
 - Exciting techniques
 - Why you? And your team?
-
- Opportunity to respond to reviewers – very important

Interviews

- Why Sussex? Support, training
- Excellence in research/ innovation
- Leadership- independence and career development
- Team
- Equality and diversity + support for career development of others
- Questions raised by reviewers (Technical)
- Impact and UKRI Priorities

Future Leader Fellowship: Info Webinar

Sussex, 31st Jan 2025

Alan Garnham (Psychology)
(Past Panel Member: Sift, Interview, Renewal)

Your Team

- You must demonstrate independence from your PhD supervisor.
 - Particularly if you have just finished your PhD and/or a related postdoc with your supervisor
 - Easier if you are going somewhere else
 - Or proposing a completely different project
- Don't have a senior person that looks like a co-I
 - It's your project and you are leading it
- Ideally have well-established relationship with anyone named
 - Make sure they have a specific role (e.g head of lab where you will have a short visit to learn a particular skill)
- Map postdoc skills to work packages
- Make sure any doctoral student has a (semi-)independent thesis project

Your Science

- There should be an “Innovative science” component to the proposal
- Ideally there should be innovative methods
- You may need new skills and need training in them
 - But you should be building on existing skills and not extending too far.
 - Have a clear plan to train for a major new skill.

Your Fit to the FLF Scheme

- Do not raise the question in your audiences' minds: Would this work as a standard 3-year research grant?
 - Extended project
 - Needing a relatively large team
 - That you will (learn how to) manage
 - And an extended time scale
 - And career development/training opportunities
- At the end you should be much nearer Future Leader status
 - Propose major research group/research centre by end of fellowship
 - Give it a snappy name

Your Institution

- Why is the proposed institution is right one for the project?
 - Avoid the impression that it's easier to stay where you are.
- What value will it add?
 - Lab space
 - Academic support (but not too close, see previous)
 - Extra PhD student
 - Training opportunities
 - Future employment
- Letter of support with specific detail and clear knowledge of candidate's plus points

Your Career Development (and Your Team's)

- You need specific plans for your own career development
 - Ideally try to have something specific to the institution (but that's not always easy)
- And for your local postdocs and PhDs (the latter often neglected in first drafts).
 - Think where you are trying to get them to.

Your Impact

- UKRI is looking for impact, both academic and outside of academia
 - There is some (but only some) recognition that non-academic impact is more difficult for some types of project
- There is a notion that the renewal years (which, by the way, are more or less automatic, unless there is a major issue) will focus more on impact
 - The proposal can hint at what might happen here, but detailed plans are not needed for these years in the case for support

Your Grantspersonship

- Know your target audience(s)
- Write for them
- Get their attention right at the beginning
 - Why is this work innovative? Important? Interesting outside of its narrow academic sphere?
 - Set the details of your project in the context of broader questions
 - Get the main point of the study up front
 - Use the buzz-words (“innovative”, ”cutting-edge”, “legacy” etc.) but cautiously!
- Even in the parts directed mainly at specialist academic readers write as simply as is appropriate and always write clearly
- Make both written application and slides for interview visually attractive

Your Grantspersonship (Cont)

(borrowed from Jools Simner - J.Simner@sussex.ac.uk)

- Para 1
- 1) Statement of topic that intrigues reader [not scholarly minutiae]
- 2) Brief reference to 2 bodies of lit [2 sentences]
- 3) Gap in literature “*However , no one to date has discussed...* ”
 - But beware of the response: because it’s not interesting
- 4) Urgency “*Failure to adequately account for xxx will lead to [dire consequences]*”
- 5) Focus! “*In this project I will...*”
- 6) What, how, why? “*I will address xxx by doing xxx, in order to demonstrate xxx*”.
- 7) Legacy “*This project will expand the fields of xx by new perspectives on xx*”.

Advice for preparing a successful application – from FLF awardees

Advice for making a fantastic FLF application

Charlotte Rae (Round 7)
School of Psychology

c.rae@sussex.ac.uk



What I'll cover

Project

What makes a good FLF project?

Person

How to demonstrate leadership?

Place

What to ask for from Sussex?

Practicalities







What to prepare when?

My background

Career stage: 3 years into Lectureship

Subject: Psychology, clinical neuroscience

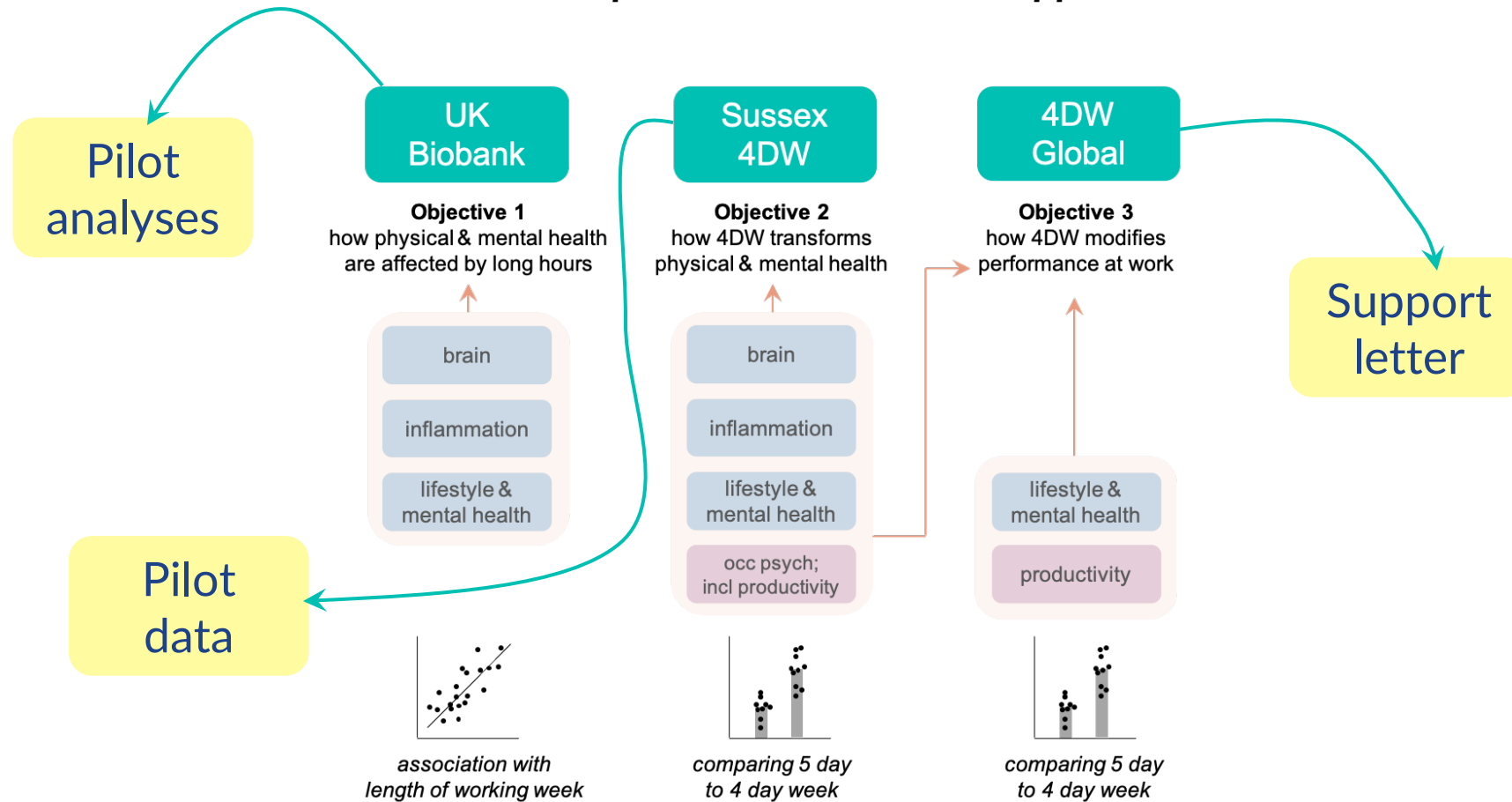
Previous grant applications:

-  2019 Wellcome Henry Dale Fellowship
-  2020 MRC Career Development Award Fellowship
-  2020 Academy Medical Sciences Springboard*
-  2021 Academy Medical Sciences resubmission*
-  2021 ESRC research grant*
-  2022 MRC sustainability call (£100k)
(awarded after internal FLF selection, prior to UKRI submission)

**4 day week proposal*

My FLF project

*How do healthy brains drive a healthy economy?
A novel occupational neuroscience approach*



What makes a good FLF project?

- **Unusual topic:** something that makes non-experts sit up
- **Timely:** feels like the future
- **Fellowship programme:** not a standard research grant - what can you achieve in a set of linked activities
- **Risky but feasible:** exciting and novel, but can do in 4 years with proven routes to delivery
- **Sets up your brand:** distinctive, what you will become known for ('The 4 Day Week woman')

Examples from Round 7

- **Sports scientist** pivoting to study impact of heat on physiology in menopause and climate change
 - Appealing to non-experts
 - Societally timely
 - Track record in methods, pivoted to new applications
 - Establishing independent brand
- **Social scientist** studying mental health in Africa, employing local Research Assistants for data collection
 - Considered research culture
- **Politics fellow** studying Gaza
 - Societally timely
- **Historian** studying how Irish residents feel now about archive material from the Troubles
 - Appealing to non-experts

How to demonstrate leadership?

Where you need to do so:

- Case for Support ('Applicant & Development')
- CV (now UKRI narrative format)
- University support letter
- Mentor support letter

How to demonstrate leadership?

How I did it (concrete examples):

- New research direction in sustainability of MRI, small MRC grant
- Organised & chaired several conference symposiums (easier during Covid!)
- Created new admin role in department of Faculty Green Officer & chaired new green committee
- Founded 2 new sustainability chapters for international and national neuroscience societies

'...shows I can inspire and lead others, influence multiple sectors, & assemble international teams across disciplines'

How to demonstrate leadership?

How you could do it (concrete examples):

- Internal: University
 - Department committee role
 - University event organization
 - Mentorship
- External: academic
 - Conference event organisation
 - Academic society role
- External: partners
 - Forged relationship with external partner (support letters!)
 - External event organisation
 - Voluntary role (e.g. charity)

...something you took it upon yourself to do

What to ask for from Sussex?

What I asked for in Sussex support letter / was offered:

- Already had permanent contract
 - If you don't, UKRI want to see a commitment to that from host organisation
- School-funded PhD student
 - UKRI don't fund PhD studentships
 - Significant added value for delivering grant, their activities shown in Work Plan
- Assumed promotion to Grade 9
 - Indicates they support your career progression
 - HoS gave permission for my salary to be costed accordingly
- Covered cost of training course for PDRA
 - Small amount of budget commitment, but shows they are committed to you
- Mentor
 - Already had School mentor, was good for support letter that they knew me
 - Application requires one, if you don't already have

What to prepare when?

When	What
Internal application ~4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decide project: pilot data & Gantt chart• Seeking feedback on idea in principle (not yet detailed writing)• Pinning down School support letter content
Selected to as Sussex candidate to UKRI 8 weeks to prepare submission 6 weeks in reality with approvals etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I set aside 1 full day a week over 8 weeks (a bit of emailing in between)• Identified what documents would need most feedback from colleagues (e.g. Case for Support) and worked on those first; what documents could be left until later while waiting for colleague feedback (e.g. Data Management Plan)• Allocated documents to days in calendar, and forced myself to do it (was excited about science and being time-limited helped)• Having the science already decided really helped; there were few decisions, just writing & budget costing
Reviews 2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• UKRI will tell you the calendar window that you'll receive reviews• Ask your Hos/workload allocator to remove as much as possible in that window (I asked for minor marking to be reallocated)
Interview 4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mock interviews• Can say more when get there



FLF advice from someone who got lucky!
(Simon Mitchell – Round 4)

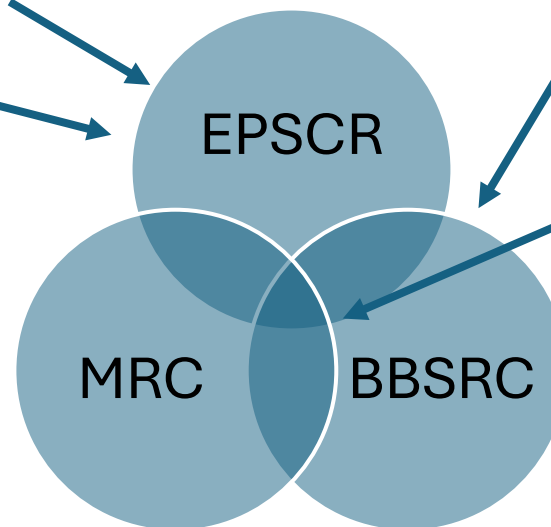


Tip 1: Design a project that is uniquely “you”

Therapeutic targeting of refractory/relapsed diffuse large B-cell lymphoma through systems biology



Tip 2: Span disciplines



If it could be funded another way the UKRI won't fund it.



Tip 1: Design a project that is uniquely “you”

Therapeutic targeting of refractory/relapsed diffuse large B-cell lymphoma through systems biology



Targeted sequencing in **DLBCL**, **molecular** subtypes, and outcomes: a Haematological Malignancy Research Network report

[SE Lacy](#), [SL Barrans](#), [PA Beer](#), [D Painter](#)... - Blood, The Journal ..., 2020 - ashpublications.org

... **DLBCL** independent of anatomic site of presentation, we included special site **DLBCL** in our primary **clustering**... were excluded and **clustering** restricted to **DLBCL** NOS (supplemental ...

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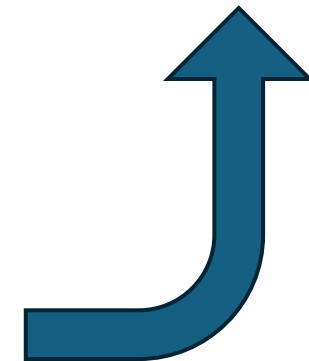
Molecular subtypes of diffuse large B cell lymphoma are associated with distinct pathogenic mechanisms and outcomes

[B Chapuy](#), [C Stewart](#), [AJ Dunford](#), [J Kim](#), [A Kamburov](#)... - Nature medicine, 2018 - nature.com

... drivers using consensus **clustering** and identified five robust **DLBCL** subsets, including a ... ABC-**DLBCLs** of extrafollicular/marginal zone origin; two distinct subsets of GCB-**DLBCLs** with ...

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Make it timely!



Conceptual Risk vs Feasibility

Paradigm-shifting idea

Evidence you can do it

You will develop new skills

You have identified how, and are well supported

Change in research direction

Leveraging your previous experience

Sussex is the ideal place to do it.

You have a “trust me” quotient, but use it wisely.



Tip 3: Write a draft early and share it

It takes longer than you think.

Be ready to re-write large sections.

Incorporate lots of feedback while maintaining your identity.

Every section should be logical and “easy” to follow, pay attention where reviewers struggle.

Tip 4: Get your host support letter ready early as you may need to negotiate.

Do finances early, to know your value.

Talk to people familiar with process outside your school. You will be competing across the university initially, your school may be hurting your chances.

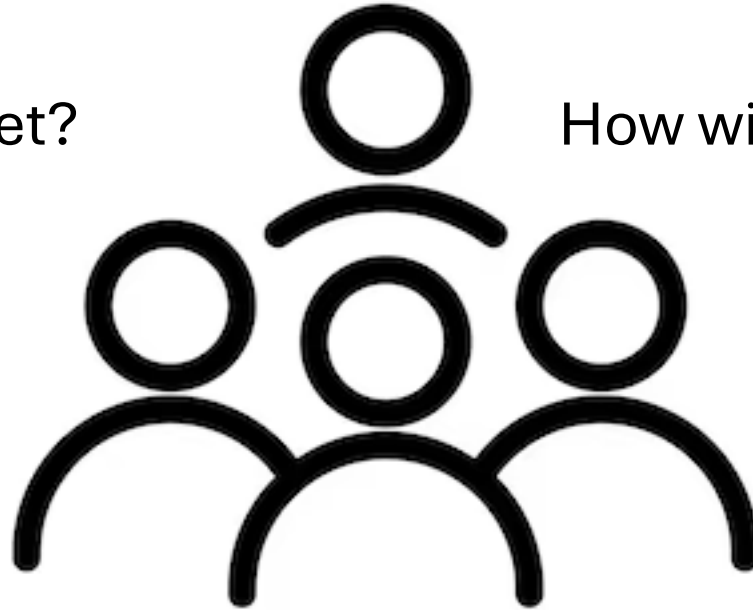
Be stubborn.

It's a fellowship but your team matters a lot.

How will your team benefit from the fellowship?

What training will they get?

How will you become a good leader?



How will you establish and support diversity and inclusion?

UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships – Round 10

Further information on the call



Who can apply

- **Eligibility:** for ECRs and innovators who are transitioning to or establishing independence. There are no eligibility rules based on whether you currently hold a permanent or open-ended position.
- **Who is not eligible to apply:**
 - you have already achieved research or innovation independence (for example, by securing funding aimed at this career stage, or by already managing your own significant programme of work within a business)
 - you are a senior academic or innovator
- UKRI cannot confirm eligibility prior to submission

Call details

- Applications are encouraged from the entirety of the UKRI remit, including arts, humanities, social sciences.
- Emphasis on leadership, innovation and impact
- Duration: 4 + 3 years
- Time commitment: the award allow fellows protected time to concentrate fully on their research, innovation, training and development. You can spend up to six hours a week on other activities. Clinically active applicants can work up to 20%, or 40% if patient-oriented research, on clinical duties
- Funding level: no set limit to amount of funding you can request, the scheme has funded from £300k- over £2 million. The fellowship provides salary for the fellow plus research expenses.

How to apply

- Apply via the UKRI Funding Service (there is no outline proposal required), which will become available when the call opens, on 3 February 2025.
- **Inclusion and accessibility:** UKRI have appointed a third-party supplier to provide application support, in the form of reasonable adjustments, for people who have a disability or a long-term condition and face barriers applying. Applicants who wish to access this initiative should email fellows@ukri.org for more information, before preparing your application.

Application questions: Vision and Approach

Vision

Max 5 sides of A4

Approach

- is of excellent quality and importance within or beyond the field(s) or area(s)
- has the potential to advance current understanding, or generate new knowledge, thinking or discovery within or beyond the field or area of its focus
- is timely, given current trends, context, and needs
- impacts world-leading research, society, the economy or the environment
- identify the potential direct or indirect benefits and who the beneficiaries might be

- is effective and appropriate to achieve your objectives
- is feasible, and comprehensively identifies any risks to delivery and how you will manage them
- uses a clearly written and transparent methodology (if applicable)
- summarises the previous work and describes how you will build on and progress this work (if applicable)
- will maximise translation of outputs into outcomes and impacts
- demonstrate access to the appropriate services, facilities, infrastructure, or equipment to deliver the proposed work

Application questions: Applicant capability to deliver

What the assessors are looking for in your response:

Evidence of how you have:

- the relevant experience (appropriate to career stage) to make best use of the benefits presented by this funding opportunity to develop your career
- the right balance of skills and aptitude to deliver the proposed work
- contributed to developing a positive research environment and wider community
- the appropriate team working or leadership skills (appropriate to career stage)
- The word count for this section is 1,650 words, 1,150 words to be used for R4RI modules (including references) and, if necessary, a further 500 words for Additions.
- Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI): further guidance [here](#).

Résumé for Research and Innovation

- Team composition: team member, initials, short role descriptor
- Module 1 – Contributions to the generation of new ideas, tools, methodologies or knowledge
- Module 2 – The development of others and maintenance of effective working relationships
- Module 3 – Contributions to the wider research and innovation community
- Module 4 – Contributions to broader research/innovation-users and audiences and towards wider societal benefit
- Additions (details of career breaks etc, this section does not count towards page limit)

Career development

What the assessors are looking for in your response:

Ensure that you have identified:

- career development goals appropriate to the fellowship funding opportunity
- how the fellowship will provide a feasible and appropriate trajectory for your personal development and to achieve your stated career development goals (as appropriate to your career stage and field)
- how you will instigate positive change in the wider research and innovation community, for example through Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), advocacy or advisory roles, stakeholder engagement, participation in peer review, influencing policy, public engagement, or outreach
- describe how to ensure CPD in your team, consider Concordat and Technician commitment.
- how the proposed work will provide a feasible and appropriate trajectory for you to acquire additional skills, like research, leadership, communication and management, and mentoring arrangements

Host organisation support

What the assessors are looking for in your response:

- provide evidence detailing how the host will support you, as appropriate for your career development and the vision and approach of the fellowship
- who you have engaged with in your host organisation (name and role)
- how your research environment will contribute to the success of the work, in terms of suitability of the host organisation and strategic relevance to the project
- how the host organisation will ensure your time commitment to the fellowship is protected
- what development and training opportunities will be provided and how they form a cohesive career development package tailored to your aims and aspirations
- what financial or practical support, such as access to the appropriate services, facilities, infrastructure, or equipment, is being provided and how this strengthens your application

Resources and cost justification

Justify the application's more costly resources, in particular:

- project staff
- significant travel for field work or collaboration (but not regular travel between collaborating organisations or to conferences)
- any equipment that will cost more than £10,000
- any consumables beyond typical requirements, or that are required in exceptional quantities
- all facilities and infrastructure costs
- training costs
- all resources that have been costed as 'Exceptions'

Other sections

- **Ethics and responsible research and innovation (RRI):** research involving the use of animals, conducting research with animals overseas, research involving human participation, human tissues or biological samples.
- Resubmissions; Instrument development; Years since PhD; Career breaks; Job Share
- Clinical Research using NHS resources (SoECAT)
- International collaborations
- **Project partners:** a collaborating organisation who will have an integral role in the proposed research. This may include direct (cash) or indirect (in-kind) contributions such as expertise, staff time or use of facilities.
- Project partners: letters (or emails) of support: upload a single PDF containing the letters or emails of support from each partner you named in the Project partner section. These should be on headed paper and signed and dated by project partners. They should be uploaded in English or Welsh only.
- Data management and sharing; facilities; trusted Research and Innovation

Assessment process

- Application checking
- **Peer review:** at least three independent experts. You will not be able to nominate reviewers in the application. You will be invited to respond to reviewer's comments and will have 10 working days to write your response. All applications will proceed to the shortlisting panel.
- **Shortlisting:** application is assessed against the four assessment criteria by members of the FLF panel college and other relevant experts. Roving panel members and UKRI observers move between panels to ensure consistency. The shortlisting panel will make a recommendation for progression to interview. Not all applicants will progress from shortlisting to an interview.
- **Interview:** an expert interview panel will conduct interviews with applicants after which the panel will make a funding recommendation. Interviews will last for up to an hour and will be conducted over Zoom. UKRI will make the final funding decision. You will be notified of the outcome of your interview within eight weeks.

Good luck!

