

Application advice pack for UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships

This has been compiled by Alison Garden with the assistance of multiple FLFs who have kindly agreed to allow their comments and/or resources to be made public. Please feel free to download it but please also ensure to credit anyone whose comments and/or resources you use.

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Advice from UKRI Future Leaders Fellows to future applicants

'I think the best advice I can give is working with your host institute, they have a vested interest in your success. This means asking for feedback on your proposal from your to-be colleagues, and help from the uni's research & innovation (or whatever branch deals with grant money), and so on and so on. Don't be shy about it. And try to have two practice interviews, at least, and try to have a varied panel in each.

I'd maybe say that you're not pitching a project, you're pitching yourself. This is your opportunity to show that you understand your field of work, and that you're going to lead it one day. Put the light on yourself, not just your science'.

Asaf Karagila, University of East Anglia

'Advice: address the assessment criteria directly and thoroughly, because the assessment (including the interview) follows the criteria very closely. I recommend trying to have very different panels for each practice interview (ask colleagues, ask "Research Services" at host). You get a broader perspective that I found extremely valuable in terms of feedback on the presentation and interview'.

Neil Oxtoby, University College London

'The practice interviews were really great, and were actually arranged by my institution as part of the support they gave. I also contacted fellows in my field of study who were successful in previous rounds and chatted with them about what their interviews were like and what their experiences had been like so far as FLFs. That was also enormously helpful.

But honestly if there's *one* piece of advice I'd give, it would be: shoot your shot. We are all so used to a scarcity of grant/council resources that we spend a lot of time with other grants trying to craft proposals that fit whatever the shape of the call is, and it's easy to think "what's the proposal I could write that's most likely to be funded?" instead of "what is the project I really want to do because I think it's the most important?" So as one piece of advice I'd remind people that the FLF is an excellent opportunity to do the latter'.

Brooke Simmons, Lancaster University

'I had three practice interviews actually (as highly interdisciplinary so wanted to cover my bases), and it was really useful. A 'mantra' that had been really helpful for me came from someone who had been on FLF panels previously ... he was emphasising to us not be afraid to propose really ambitious & important projects. I think the exact words were that

[in contrast to most other grants] *if you know exactly what you will do month-to-month in year 3 for your FLF, you're not thinking big enough (and likely will be rejected as iterative / fundable by other source)*'.

Petr Slovak, King's College London

'I think main difference between other schemes & #UKRIFLF that fit in a tweet are: emphasise interdisciplinarity (i.e. why UKRI rather than AHRC), ambition (why do you need 4-7 years?) & 'leadership' *potential* (but you should not be there yet-how will FLF help you?).'

Victoria Bates, University of Bristol

- 'Have a big enough vision
- Seek out mentors and advisors

- Summarise, summarise, summarise - so that it's an elevator pitch in your pocket
- Be specific in what you will do...
- ...But not so specific that it isn't translatable
- Adapt for Covid
- Practice your presentation'

Fay Bound Alberti, University of York

'It's about leadership and you, not just the science/research, and the panel want to see why the FLF is the right scheme for you and your ideas'.

Adrian Healy, Cardiff University

'As Albert Einstein said: "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." Thus, the best advice I can give to the applicants is: talk about your project idea with as many people you can. This must include not only colleagues but also people with no background related to your FLF topic (e.g., your friends, granny, taxi driver etc....). Occasional conversation will help you to shape the main research.'

Clara Manno, NERC British Antarctic Survey

'The advice that I would share with applicants is to 1) have a goal *for advancing your field* (not just for personal career progression or deliverables), and 2) have a very clear training and development plan that highlights how the opportunity of a fellowship will uniquely support you to achieve this goal. Deliverables are important, but they should be a means to achieving a broader goal, not the goal itself.'

Jasmine Fledderjohann, Lancaster University

'I don't have too much unique (I imagine) to add but one tip that I found really valuable for the interview stage – I took into the room with me a sheet listing the key messages that I wanted to get across in the interview. These were one sentence each and there was probably 8 of them, in order of importance. I glanced at them during the questions but they were most helpful at the end, as inspiration for the 'closing statement' that I made when the chair asked if there was anything that I wanted to add.'

Ellie Brooks, University of Edinburgh

'1. In describing impact, be specific and purposeful. Do not refer to 'general public' or public engagement without measurable purposes (go beyond just communicating research). Impact is a major factor of the UKRI FLF and should be directed to outcomes beyond the generic public or academic interests.

2. The fellowship is intended to recognise potential and kickstart the futures of early career researchers. I created a separate section in my application to describe how the interdisciplinary nature and great openness to novel ideas of the UKRI FLF would enable me to reach as yet untapped potential, to create impact across disciplines, to experience freedom in creativity, and develop a career path in stable circumstances (unlike many postdoc schemes).

3. This is an excellent fellowship for interdisciplinary researchers with projects that may fall through the gaps in other funding schemes. Emphasize interdisciplinary aspects, networks, and relationships, and how other funders are not suitable to meet those ambitions.'

Erin Connelly, University of Warwick

My advice would be to make sure the draft is ready at least a month before submission deadline to get as many people as possible to read and comment on it, and discuss the proposal otherwise with as many people as possible to get feedback and improve, improve, improve.

I have thought about "advice" a bit more. I think it might be useful for people to hear brief stories rather than advice. Because the advice is always going to be very generic, and how actually the proposal was written and in which circumstances is a lot more useful information.

For example, I started writing the whole thing when I was 6 months pregnant. At least half of the proposal was written from scratch - not based on previous proposals. I submitted it when my new born son was 7 days old although, of course, I was planning to submit it earlier. It would be a lot more inspiring for me last year to hear that that writing and submitting successful proposal is possible in such circumstances - all information that I had at that point was something like it takes at least a year to put proposal together...

Anya Skatova, University of Bristol

'This is based on my experience: I was a Marie Curie Fellow at the time of application, without a permanent contract and a background in literary/cultural studies. I'd advise applicants to think carefully about feasibility, and what you want to achieve with the project compared to where you are in your career. Those working in the hard or soft sciences often use the award to build a group and so recruit multiple postdocs with the award monies; but they often have much more experience working in groups and supervising others, as their MA, PhD and postdoctoral work often involves mentoring or supervising junior colleagues or students. If you're an ECR without a permanent contract in the Arts and Humanities, you might not have had any supervisory experience of even postgraduate students. This means it would likely look unfeasible if you pitched a project involving 3 PDRAs when you've not had responsibility for another person's career or research trajectory before. The UKRI have funded FLF projects, especially in the humanities, where there are no PDRAs.

I designed a collaborative project involving 1 PDRA as this seemed reasonable for me based on my experience. I had some experience supervising MA students, informally mentoring PhDs and a good track record of success assisting postdocs with their applications. I also had quite extensive experience designing and managing my own projects, in addition to managing strategic partnerships and organising multi-disciplinary teams.

On the matter of feasibility, I think it's really important that you develop a project that tallies with that you've managed to do in the past. If you don't have a track record of engaged or interdisciplinary research, then claims to be proficient, or suddenly gain proficiency, in these areas aren't likely to hold weight with reviewers. That said, you still need to demonstrate ambition: my own research has been moving in an interdisciplinary direction, and I've led multi-disciplinary projects, but the FLF is still a significant step-change.

I think the onus on scholars in AHSS is to demonstrate the big thinking and put together a project that will have demonstrable impact on society and/or multiple fields of knowledge. I think this is why the medical humanities have been so successful; there's a significant interdisciplinary rigour to it (with a proven track record) and tangible "real world" impact.'

Alison Garden, Queen's University Belfast

Dr Izzy Jayasinghe, 'How I got my UKRI Future Leader Fellowship: lessons I learned from being a new PI'	https://medium.com/@i.jayasinghe/how-i-got-my-ukri-future-leader-fellowship-lessons-i-learned-from-being-a-new-pi-22cff0e60c60
Dr Franciska de Vries, 'How I got my fellowship – and how you might get yours'	https://franciskadevries.wordpress.com/2014/12/02/how-i-got-my-fellowship-and-how-you-might-get-yours/
Dr Sarah Lewthwaite	https://threader.app/thread/1173527511776583680
Research Professional have a series of 4 blog posts on 'My winning proposal: Becoming a future leader'. See one (and links to the others) here:	https://www.researchprofessional.com/0/rr/funding/insight/2019/9/My-winning-proposal--Becoming-a-future-leader--3-.html#sthash.Y6xpTaxH.dpuf

Useful resources on Fellowship (UKRI and others) interviews

From the Institute of Academic Develop at the University of Edinburgh	https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/t/1_zra5tyrj
The Inclusion Group for Equity in Research in STEMM website, guest post by Kirsty Grainger Director of the UKRI Future Leaders Fellowships scheme	https://www.tigerinstemm.org/blog/fellowships-the-interviews



Future
Leaders
Fellowships

...and how I got one

...eventually

You have plenty

To write your Case for Support

To write your Workplan (1)

To get your costings done

To write your CV and Out

To write your Justification

To get/write your Mentor

To get/write your Collabo

To get/write your Project Letters of Support (I had 1)



Statement (2 pages)

Management Plan (3 pages)

Cost Assessments (I had 1)

My Cover Letter (I had 2)

To complete the Je-S form:

Objectives

Summary

Beneficiaries

My Support

...USE IT!

Example Detailed Submission Planner

Task	Week																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Register with Je-S	█																		
Training sessions/workshops	█	█		█	█														
Prepare Case for Support		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█								
Prepare CV/track record and plan for development						█	█	█	█										
Pathways to Impact					█	█	█	█											
Set up application on Je-S and write form text sections													█						
Data Management Plan								█	█										
Costing with FRIO & write Justification of Resources			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█								
Help prepare HoS letter of support			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█								
Act on peer review advice, final draft, HoS letter signed											█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Upload documents to Je-S											█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Seek peer review from colleagues	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█								
Institutional sign-off														█	█	█	█		

Carve Out Time

March 2019

	Mon 4	Tue 5	Wed 6	Thu 7	Fri 8
all-day	Jon bday	Shrove Tuesday	Ash Wednesday		
05:00					
06:00					
07:00	07:00 Fellowship prep	07:00 Fellowshi p prep Paolo C...	07:00 Fellowship prep	07:00 Fellowship prep	07:00 Fellowship prep
08:00					EGA upload
09:00				08:45 Muna sample cons...	
10:00		09:30 Research in progre...			
11:00		11:00 Chase the designer			
12:00					
13:00		12:30 Lunch and Committee of Ass...			
14:00	14:00 Skype with Huda				14:00 Muna meeting SKY...
15:00					
16:00					





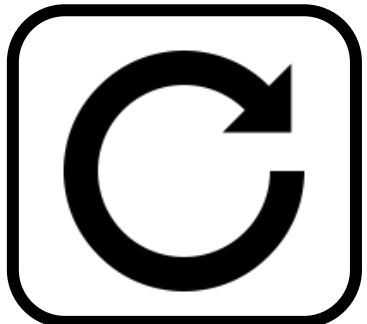
Think.



Write.



Review.



Repeat.



Think.

- You need a proposal that **FITS** this scheme
 - F** – Flexible
 - I** – Inter (discipline, RC, academic-industry)
 - T** – Training
 - S** - Scale
- Plan like a project manager
 - ✓ Deliverables
 - ✓ Training
 - ✓ Quality
 - ✓ Risks
 - ✓ Schedules (Gantt chart – not just for the science – with critical path)
 - ✓ Budgets (value for money/cost to benefit)
 - ✓ Stakeholders (RACI – Responsible Accountable Consulted Informed)



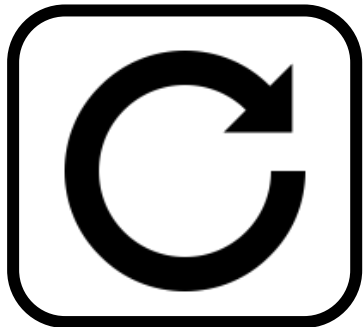
Write.

- Plan your writing (time and space)
 - ★ TOP TIP: Your science isn't the only thing that matters
 - ★ TOP TIP: Less is more (and preprint servers are your friend)
- Write like a project manager
 - ✓ Deliverables
 - ✓ Training
 - ✓ Quality
 - ✓ Risks
 - ✓ Schedules (Gantt chart – not just for the science – with critical path)
 - ✓ Budgets (value for money/cost to benefit)
 - ✓ Stakeholders (RACI – Responsible Accountable Consulted Informed)



Review.

- Your idea – 2 people in your area (peers/competitors)
- Your science – 2 people in your industry/field (colleagues in your discipline)
- Your communication – 2 people outside of your area (colleagues in different disciplines)
- Your impact – 2 stake holders
- Your career development – 2 people in RIS or that have sat on fellowship boards
- Your host – 2 external advisors



Repeat.

2-3 times right through



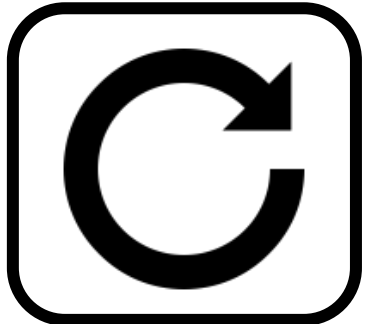
Think.



Write.



Review.



Repeat.

*Same goes
for your
rebuttal*

Questions?

Applying for a FLF

Reflections on why, what, how...

Joseph Lindley

24th September 2020

Caveats and Intro

- My fellowship hasn't started quite yet.
- I worry 'they might find out' (it's **probably** just imposter syndrome)...
PS, "Hi Joanna"
- *But* my Fellowship – the Design Research Works – will start up in November, and through it I aim to help lead a transformation in what my field can achieve.
- I'm happy to give my perspective... but remember you are unique, you are the expert, and you need to play to your strengths – choose which advice to follow accordingly 😊

Putting together the application

- Read the call, the guidance, and the guidance for reviewers – how would you review your own application? **Go for the criteria head on.**
- Give it the time it deserves; I treated it as a **fulltime job for ~6 weeks** – a luxury, but *it worked*.
- Get as much feedback as possible from people with experience (e.g. from UKRI interview/review panels).
- Look at successful applications, what can you learn from them?

Why FLF?

- There are many reasons why you might apply.
- For an ECR looking to carve out a career, who fits the criteria and has a viable project (i.e., my case) – **why not?!**
- But remember you need to show how **you**, your **project**, and your chosen **institution** align to the **research and leadership** aspects.
- I created a proposal **specifically** for the FLF (which grew from the ashes of a rejected AHRC proposal... but became highly targetted).
- If you can't make your idea/project align to the criteria, it's probably the wrong scheme.

Host Institution

- I was already working with my host institution, but that was **only okay because it is a world-leader** in the field.
- Is your institution the **best possible** place to do this work?
- The **answer must be yes**, and you need to **explain why**.
- Demonstrate commitment from the institution, e.g. **cash, PhD funding, long term commitment**. Enclose a **genuine** letter of support.

Development

- FLFs must be **transformational** for your area but also **for you**.
- How will you transform yourself, to transform and lead a field?
- Leadership coaching, any relevant training (e.g. RA management, financial management, project management), academic upskilling (e.g. I will adopt ethnomethodology for the first time, and I brought a Co-I in to help me do that).
- The scheme **will support (and encourages) development** which allows you to meet your project's aims.
- A clear and well-resourced development plan is a strength.

Post Review PI Response

- Get **advice** (from Co-Is, mentors, colleagues, research support).
- Answer R3's negatives with R1's positives if you can.
- Be **kind** but carefully **argue your case**.
- Remember you're not replying to the reviewers but speaking to a different panel who can make their own judgement.
- Use it as an extra opportunity to show why **you are the perfect candidate** who meets the criteria.

My Fellowship so far...

- A long time ago, in proposal far away..
- Project plans, schedules, partnerships and methodologies were prepared...
- They did not take account of any global pandemics.
- I've delayed my start until November 2020... I'm refiguring my project significantly so that it can achieve its aims notwithstanding Covid-19.
- And.... **The project will prevail, supported by the flexibility of FLF.**

Thanks and good luck!

<http://designresearch.works/>

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