

NERC KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FELLOWSHIPS

Further Guidance.

This document describes the background to the Call, the criteria sought in proposals and the criteria by which proposals will be assessed.

The closing date for proposals for this call is 3 November 2011 by sending the application to keschemes@nerc.ac.uk.

Interviews will be held on 26 and 31 January 2012.

1. AIMS OF THE SCHEME

The NERC Knowledge Exchange Fellows are intended to be a scheme to facilitate the sharing and flow of knowledge and expertise between NERC-funded researchers in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and Research and Collaborative Centres and their user communities. This flow of expertise should be two way and not just science push. The focus of the fellowship can be on government policy, NGOs, and business.

Broadly, the KE Fellows can be a focus for KE activity arising from NERC-funded research. It is understood that, in some cases, a mix of funding will lead to a business or policy influencing opportunity but it is essential that NERC funding has played a key role.

The KE Fellow must have the committed support of their Head of Department or School, or their Research Centre Director, or another appropriate senior member of staff, and an obvious enthusiasm for KE activities.

2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

NERC KE Fellows may be hosted at approved UK HEIs, Research Centres and Collaborative Centres that are currently in receipt of NERC research funding, or at approved Independent Research Organisations. It is anticipated that the Fellows will already be employed by the host institution and that NERC will, in effect, contract with the organisation to buy their time to develop KE opportunities arising from NERC-funded research.

The fellowship covers the KE Fellow's salary only. The KE Fellow can be employed for one to three years, for a minimum of 20% and a maximum of 80% of their time. It is envisaged that, typically, KE Fellows will be employed on KE activities for 40% - 60% of their time. It is for the KE Fellow to apportion their time effectively over the duration of the contract. Applicants must cost out their time as appropriate and obtain the necessary approvals from their Head of Department or School and Registrar, or the Research Centre Director.

Knowledge exchange to international project partners and user organizations is an eligible activity.

Applications are welcome from the NERC community at all stages of their careers. It is possible that some mentoring may be provided for those relatively new to knowledge exchange.

3. KEY DATES

Closing Date 3 November 2011. Interviews will be held on 26 and 31 January 2012.

4. EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES THAT MAY BE SUPPORTED

The following examples illustrate some types of activity that might be undertaken by a KE Fellow. This is not intended to be an exclusive list and applicants should not feel restricted to these activities; they should focus on the activities they need to carry out in order to achieve and demonstrate economic impact through knowledge exchange. Please note that this scheme supports UK and international knowledge exchange.

Developing partnerships with business

This type of activity should aim to develop an exchange of resources, which may be non-cash based. Expertise and information should be a two way exchange. The panel will ascertain that it is not just “science-push”.

Data development

Data generated from research may be published in a form that is not easily available or understood by potential users. KE Fellows could help identify potential users, jointly identify their needs and process data into products that are a resource for business.

Networks

KE Fellows could scope and form novel networks of researchers and business users to support knowledge exchange. Such Networks should focus on NERC science and may provide a mechanism for NERC to engage with new market sectors. They need not be restricted to HEIs and may involve NERC Research and Collaborative Centres. They may use mechanisms such as workshops and seminars to bring researchers and users together to exchange information, skills and techniques. They can also serve as a means of market research and act as a springboard for future dialogue. Workshops must include users.

Science into Policy

Working with policymakers and regulators to ensure that policies and frameworks develop with a sound evidence base.

Working with NGOs

This is using NERC science to work with NGOs to improve quality of life and economic benefits for vulnerable communities/wildlife etc.

Technologies

Commercialisation activities remain the responsibility of the host institution. KE Fellows are not expected to commercialise products, however, they may assist in identifying and championing ideas, services and/or products with commercial potential.

Supporting a KE culture in their Host institution KE Fellows provide an opportunity to create and embed a culture of KE within their host institution. However, KE Fellows should primarily focus upon KE delivery from their own area of activity throughout the majority of their time. As such KE Fellows can provide support to colleagues to shape their KE activity but should not spend dedicated significant time to developing pathway to impact plans or running KE activities for other academic groups unless these can be shown to directly support KE Fellow activities.

The selection panel are expecting to see a wide variety of proposals. The panel will organise the funding budget to support a mix of KE Fellowships that they consider most likely to achieve demonstrable economic impact.

5. INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

KE Fellows may not undertake activities in support of:

- knowledge exchange between different sections of the academic research base
- public understanding of science
- developing training courses for users

6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS FOR A KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FELLOW

KE Fellows will operate as part of a UK-wide network to source and share information and good practice. Networking and communication will be supported by a dedicated web portal. They will be expected to participate in monitoring, training and networking activities including:

- regular (quarterly) progress monitoring
- attending network meetings with their equivalent in NERC Research and Collaborative Centres at 6 month intervals,

- providing examples or case studies of knowledge exchange arising from NERC-funded research in their host organisation for NERC purposes (commercial confidentiality will be respected),
- working with other KE Fellows to develop joint knowledge exchange activities as required.

7. FUNDING FOR KE FELLOWS TRAVEL AND ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF THEIR PROJECT

NERC has some resources to support KE Fellows' activities where these are demonstrably essential to knowledge exchange. These could include but are not limited to:

- travel and subsistence
- establishing clubs, networks or similar
- events such as workshops, seminars, open days or user training.

A maximum of £40k for support during the lifetime of the Fellowship can be requested via the application. Higher amounts than this should be requested through the KE Call in the first instance. However there is flexibility to request additional funding for activities as the Fellowship develops.

8. APPLICATION PROCESS

Please use the application form on our web site.

9. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Proposals will be assessed on their potential economic impact **and** the suitability of the KE Fellow put forward by the School or Department.

It is essential to give detailed project accounts in the application so that the panel can clearly visualise how the time will be used. As far as possible, applicants should provide milestones and deliverables in their project outline. Give the names of the users that are known at the time and future possibilities. It is very important that the panel determine that the Fellowship will have an impact on end-users and they will ask what interaction the applicant has had with the users to date.

Applications should include measures of success. If not all is known, it is helpful to indicate where further groundwork is required.

Do not use generic terms when the specifics are known.

The Research Councils UK definition of economic impact is:

“The demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy: economic and societal impacts embraces all the extremely diverse ways in which research-related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations by:

- Fostering global economic performance, and specifically the economic competitiveness of the United Kingdom
- Increasing the effectiveness of public services and policy
- Enhancing quality of life, health and creative output. “

<http://impacts.rcuk.ac.uk/content/impactmeans.htm>

The following points are considered when making an assessment.

(Check whether these points are clear in your application.)

Outcomes and benefits

What expertise and knowledge does the user have at the end of the project that they did not have at the start?

How will the user requirements have informed the approach of the academics by the end of the project?

What benefits accrue to the users and the academic?

What are the measures of success?

Is the impact sustainable?

End-user involvement

Has the application got letters of support or resource commitment from the users?

How have the requirements of the users influenced the development of the project?

What is the balance of end-users and researchers / academics involved?

Are the appropriate end-users involved? If some apparently key ones are not, is there a satisfactory explanation?

The extent to which this interaction may lead to new links between end-users and academics;

Generally it is preferred if more than one user group benefits from the project.

Is the project sustainable?

Long-term updating of data, and stewardship of databases, models or specific data management tools;

Consideration of end-user demand for the knowledge; is this likely to increase, decrease or remain constant;

Due consideration should have been given, where appropriate, to achieving self-sufficiency when NERC support ends (for example subscription to a network or payment for training courses).

How appropriate is the workplan?

Can the work proposed be achieved within the time-frame, and with the resources requested?

Range and scope of methods that will effectively engage end-users and translate the value of NERC science;

Omission of more effective methods for dissemination, or introduction of new approaches;

Appropriate management in place to ensure best possible success (including relevant staff and systems)

Competency and enthusiasm of KE Fellow

enthusiasm and aptitude for knowledge exchange

demonstrable, in-depth awareness and understanding of at least one area of NERC science

and a grasp of the opportunities for KE
the ability to establish a dialogue to support knowledge exchange between NERC
researchers, and other stakeholders
the ability to build momentum through developing consensus and areas of agreement,
recognise and articulating barriers to progress, and contribute to overcoming these barriers
tactful, with high quality communication skills enabling them to work at
board and office/lab level.

10. MONITORING AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

KE Fellows will be expected to provide a plan of how they will meet their objectives within an acceptable time following their appointment. Fellows will be required to provide a quarterly report of progress against the plan, a detailed annual review and a final report at the end of the award.

11. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

These awards do not affect the ownership of intellectual property.

12. RESIGNATIONS

Should a KE Fellow resign before the end of their fellowship, the fellowship is deemed to have finished. Institutions can only seek a replacement by going through the usual competitive application process.

13 EMPLOYMENT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The Fellow has to be employed by the host institution and there has to be a guarantee that the Fellow will be employed for the duration of their fellowship. The Fellow's salary, maternity leave, paternity leave etc follows the terms and conditions of the host institution.

14. CONFIDENTIALITY

NERC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the KE Fellowship applications are treated as confidential.

If the KE Fellow is expected to work with organisations on commercially sensitive topics and those topics are referred to in the application form, applicants must obtain the necessary clearances from the organisations concerned.

Applicants must ensure that the summary of the KE opportunity is worded in a way that protects commercially confidential or sensitive areas. It is likely that the following information about funded projects will be placed on a public database:

- institution
- name(s) of applicant(s)
- the value of the award
- start and end dates and duration of the Fellowship.

15. FURTHER INFORMATION

Applicants should refer to the KE Fellowships Guidance for Applicants accompanying this call for further details on completing the application form. Any queries about the KE Fellowships should be addressed to lyn@nerc.ac.uk.