

Announcement of opportunity for Directed Knowledge Exchange (KE) Fellowships



1. Introduction

The purpose of these fellowships is to generate impact from NERC funded research. Knowledge Exchange Fellows aim to accelerate and amplify economic impact and improvements in quality of life by working with business, civil society organisations or government bodies. They do this by sharing and flow of knowledge and expertise between NERC funded researchers and user communities. They can work in the UK or overseas.

Applicants can be at any career stage. Past KE Fellows have included Heads of Departments as well as early post-doctoral researchers. Applicants may also move from a non-academic environment to a research centre or university for the duration of their KE Fellowship.

2. Information for the applicant

As a Directed KE Fellow you could be a focus for NERC engagement with non-academic organisations across a sector such as infrastructure, satellites, aviation or you could be working with a NERC science programme. The aim will be to generate impact from NERC funded research and to feedback the needs of users into the development of new programmes of research.

Usually, even with Directed KE Fellowships, we will be asking you to suggest an appropriate programme of work in your proposal. You are likely to have several strands of activity in your proposal depending on the percentage of time you are applying for. The panel will anticipate that within each fellowship proposal some activities may be riskier than others. It is usual for some parts of a KE Fellowship programme to succeed and others to achieve much less. As a candidate you should demonstrate an awareness of risk and the need to manage it. If successful, you will need to make choices between activities to focus resources on where you are most likely to generate impact.

Your proposal should fit the specification. Some may say that your work may be based in the UK or overseas. You must be employed by an eligible UK Research organisation for the duration of your KE Fellowship.

We expect that you will have the committed support of the Head of Department, Research Directorate, or School. If you are selected for interview we will invite a senior supporter from your proposed place of work to attend or phone in.

3. Information for the host institution and applicants

NERC KE Fellows may be hosted at approved UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Research Centres that are in receipt of NERC research funding. There is no restriction on the number of Fellows an eligible organisation may host or apply

for.

KE Fellows are part-time. The principle is that they should be embedded in their research community. The minimum time for a KE Fellow is 20% and the maximum 80%. Applicants should cost out the time required as appropriate and seek the necessary approvals from their Head of Department and Registrar. There is no upper budget limit on these applications as they are intended for applicants at all career stages. Awards can be between one and three years in duration. Most applicants are already employed by the host institution. We effectively buy their time to work on knowledge exchange opportunities arising from NERC funded research. However applicants can come in from another organisation and be employed by a university for the duration of their KE Fellowship if it suits both parties. For those institutions in receipt of small amounts of NERC funding or with a very specific business opportunity, it is possible to submit an application for institutions to share a KE Fellow if they are closely co-located.

4. What Activities can you include?

You should not feel restricted to just these examples.

- **Developing partnerships with business:** these should be developed with the aim of developing an exchange of resources – these can be non-cash based.
- **Data development:** substantial amounts of data are generated from research and often published in ways that are not easily available or meaningful to potential users. The KE Fellows could work with users to develop data as a resource
- **Round table meetings:** room hire if necessary can be costed in and focused meetings can often be more effective than workshops
- **KE translators/facilitators:** employing a facilitator to move between the research base and the business community to act as a focal point for a range of activities to improve knowledge exchange. In some cases it may be essential for this translator to help businesses define the questions that they want to ask academics
- **Workshops:** for researchers and users to come together to exchange skills and techniques that are vital for their activities
- **Technologies, Commercialisation:** KE Fellows may assist in championing potential commercial products and undertake some limited product development
- **Working in Government Departments** – see below.

5. What can't you do as a KE Fellow?

The KE Fellowships should **not** be used to support

- Knowledge exchange between different sections of the academic research base

- Public Engagement
- Consultancy
- Training

Please also be aware that we generally prefer KE Fellows to work with existing networks and websites rather than establishing their own as part of their programme of work. This is often the case with Directed KE Fellowships where they may engage with professional networks that already exist in their sector. Occasionally it is necessary to set up a new web site or network and this is supported if a reasonable case is put forward.

6. NERC Knowledge Exchange Network (KEN), training and other support

KEN meets every six months for KE Fellows and KE practitioners working within science NERC science programmes and research centres. These meetings enable the sharing of best practice and networking.

New KE Fellows are offered one day induction training in the autumn nearest to their start date.

Two days training in January is offered to all NERC Knowledge Exchange Fellows and NERC Research Fellows. It covers generic topics such as leadership, activities leading to impact, and communication for example.

KE Fellows can also contact NERC at any time to ask if they can receive a supplement to their award to enable them to attend other training that will be beneficial to their work.

KE Fellows may be contacted and asked if they wish to attend events where NERC has a need for representatives of the environmental science community to engage with business, policymakers or civil society organisations.

NERC may ask KE Fellows to participate in assessment panels appropriate to their career stage. Early career KE Fellows may, for example, be asked to sit on panels considering internship proposals and be offered suitable experience which may then enable them to apply to join more formal assessment and peer review networks.

7. What should you include in your proposal?

Please try to cover the points below when you are describing your programme of work. You do not need to frame your proposal around these headings.

Purpose of the Fellowship

- What do you understand by the term “knowledge exchange”?

Programme Design and Management

- How have the users/partners/beneficiaries been involved in the design of your proposal?
- How will they continue to be involved?
- Which objectives do you think are the most likely to be achieved?

- Where are the risks in your proposal and how will you manage these?

Outcomes and Impact

- What outcomes will you expect during your KE fellowship programme? (you may not achieve an impact until after your KE Fellowship has finished)
- How would you define “impact” in the context of your programme?
- What will happen at the end of your proposed programme of work?

Personal Motivation

- Why have you applied for a Knowledge Exchange Fellowship?
- What qualities and experience makes you suitable for the work you have proposed?

Context

- What resources will you be able to access?
- Are there any strengths in your host organization that will facilitate your work

8. Assessment

Proposals will be assessed on potential impact and the suitability of the Knowledge Exchange Fellow. **The** RCUK definition of economic and societal impact is:

“The demonstrable contribution that excellent research makes to society and the economy. Economic and societal impacts embrace 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.”

An action or activity has an economic impact when it affects the welfare of consumers, the profits of firms and/or the revenue of government. Economic impacts range from those that are readily quantifiable, in terms of greater wealth, cheaper prices and more revenue, to those less easily quantifiable, such as effects on the environment, public health and quality of life.

Applications will go through a two-stage process:

- A paper sift by a panel to shortlist those for interview
- Interview by the panel of the prospective KE Fellow and a department/university representative. The latter may phone in or attend in person. The interview lasts 45 minutes with a 10 minute presentation by the candidate followed by 35 minutes of questions.

If successful, how soon can you start?

Successful applicants can start between 1 August 2017 and 1 April 2018.

9. Contacts

If you have other queries please do not hesitate to contact Lynne Porter or Katie Hart at innovation@nerc.ac.uk. We are always happy to help.