Strategic Priorities Fund: UK Climate Resilience Champion
Announcement of Opportunity

Issued on: 22 October 2018
Notification of Intent: Midday on 12 November 2018
Full Proposals deadline: 4pm on 4 December 2018

1. Summary

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Met Office are inviting applications for the role of UK Climate Resilience Champion. The UK Climate Resilience programme will be jointly delivered by Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) on behalf of UKRI, and the Met Office on behalf of BEIS.

The Champion will act as thought leader, flag bearer, and strategy owner for the UK Climate Resilience research programme. The successful candidate will be provided with 40 months’ worth of funding to consult with the wider research and user communities to further develop the UK Climate Resilience programme, and scope the subsequent funding calls and activities to address the research questions needed to achieve the programme objectives. They will then be responsible for working with the academic and Met Office community to drive integration of research across the programme. The Champion will provide leadership on the interaction of the programme with the user community as involvement with these stakeholders from the outset will be important to delivery of the programme.

2. Background

The Strategic Priorities Fund (SPF) has been set up to build upon the vision of a ‘common research fund’ set out in Sir Paul Nurse’s independent review of the Research Councils. The fund will drive an increase in high-quality multi- and interdisciplinary research and innovation, ensure that UKRI’s investment links up effectively with Government departments’ research priorities and opportunities, and ensure that the system is able to respond to strategic priorities and opportunities.

This UK Climate Resilience programme aims to draw together fragmented climate research and expertise to deliver robust, multi- and inter-disciplinary climate risk and adaptation solutions research ensuring the UK is resilient to climate variability and change and powerfully positioned to exploit the opportunities of adaptation and green growth.

How do we make our cities and regions resilient to climate change? What are the opportunities to manage adaptation to deliver improvements to society and economic growth? These are broad and urgent questions for decision makers from national to local scales, in Government, business and society. It is recognised that there is a need to utilise UK expertise and make this transferable to others while better understanding and assessing
the effectiveness of adaptation and climate resilience interventions. There are two major knowledge gaps:

1. **The robust characterisation and quantification of climate-related risks in decision-relevant terms.**
2. **The development of effective adaptation strategies and policies that deliver resilience, improve lives, and promote economic growth.**

There is a need and an urgency for building resilience. It is widely recognised that the impacts of extreme weather and climate change permeate throughout society affecting both lives and livelihoods. UK flooding events in 2007 affected 55,000 homes, killed 13 people and cost the UK economy £3.2 billion. Global impacts of extreme weather events also affect the UK, for example, the 2010-11 increase in wheat prices following crop failures in the Black Sea region. The situation is often exacerbated when events are compounded, for example the co-occurrence of hot and dry summers on water availability. As the climate warms, extreme events and the ensuing costs to society will increase.

We have the opportunity to deliver green growth through better understanding of how people, businesses and institutions can adapt under a changing climate. There is an opportunity during the transition to a low carbon future to exploit the co-benefits of climate resilient development. Alongside increasing climate resilience, we can design better environments that promote improved quality of life and that facilitate new economic opportunities. A particular opportunity is to stimulate the development of a new generation of ’Climate Services’ that will exploit novel understanding, technology innovations, engineering solutions, and community and commercial behaviours needed to build resilient futures across the UK and internationally.

The overarching objectives of the UK Climate Resilience programme seek to drive innovative multi- and inter-disciplinary research within the UKRI and Met Office communities to address the knowledge gaps identified above.

The central objectives of the programme are:

1) **The robust characterisation, quantification and communication of climate-related risks.**

Climate risk is an integration of weather and climate hazards, the impacts of these hazards across the natural environment and human populations, vulnerability and exposure. For example, the impacts that a heavy rainfall event has on livelihoods, flood defences, finances and homes, businesses and civil infrastructure built on a flood plain.

The aim is to develop robust approaches, including the software tools, needed to quantify current and future risk in decision relevant metrics. This involves fundamental research challenges, including: end-to-end understanding of key processes and uncertainties; understanding behavioural responses at individual, community, regional and (inter)governmental levels to climate risk; providing climate and impacts information at relevant spatial scales; different risk communications routes; improving and characterising climate predictions and projections across time-scales from the near-term out to several decades or more ahead; combining hazard-vulnerability-exposure information into risk metrics; and perception of risk by decision makers.
This objective will:
- Develop the component tools for use in risk assessment;
- Establish the requirements, architecture and implementation plan for a quantitative risk framework;
- Harness Earth Observation, combined with big data tools, to monitor evolution of risk;
- Strengthen understanding of risk perception, behaviour change and implications for communication and decision-making.

2) Develop risk-informed resilience and optimise the opportunities from a transition to a low carbon future.

Building a low carbon future presents opportunities to both increase national resilience and provide co-benefits including improvements to wellbeing and the economy. The fundamental research needed includes design of decision frameworks to balance between protection, co-benefits and costs; development of new adaptation approaches; promotion of behaviour changes; and monitoring of the effectiveness of adaptation.

This objective will:
- Co-produce risk informed adaptation options (working across social, technological, infrastructure, engineering and policy) taking better account of co-benefits and opportunities that arise;
- Understand barriers to adaptation and governance and policy frameworks needed to implement them;
- Develop a framework to assess the economic benefits and trade-offs of adaptation, and a process for monitoring effectiveness.

3) Co-produce pilot end-to-end climate services.

Climate services are at an early stage of development and new research will: develop novel co-production processes; develop industry quality standards; and investigate governance approaches and design improved monitoring.

This objective will:
- Develop a small number of climate service pilots e.g. transportation, which will also support development of good practice and refine the climate service approach and scope requirements for operational Climate Services;
- Develop novel approaches to co-production of climate services within a network of climate service providers (academic, public, private and third sector);
- Produce tools and processes to facilitate the use of research outputs from objectives 1 and 2 in the real world;
- Provide recommendations to Government and the climate service industry on appropriate future governance.

The research from this programme should add to the evidence base for the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment and the National Adaptation Programme; and align with the UK Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan (2018), specifically the goal to reduce risk of harm from environmental hazards and to mitigate and adapt to climate. It will contribute to the Government’s Clean Growth Strategy (2017) and support the Department for Transport’s current priorities for building resilience. It will support the Public Health England Strategic
Plan (2016) and the Animal Plant Health Agency with respect to increasing our resilience to pest and diseases with changing climate, extreme heat, and impact of flooding.

3. Champion Role and Delivery of the Programme

The Programme is being delivered by UKRI and the Met Office through a combination of open calls and directly commissioned research. The first call aims to build the multi-disciplinary climate resilience community and address key knowledge gaps. Grants will be awarded by the start of 2019. Further open calls will be announced in 2019.

The Champion role will be to:
- ensure alignment across the portfolio of research;
- promote knowledge exchange across the programme and to all relevant communities;
- ensure linkages to user community including business and practitioners;
- ensure linkages to governmental policy requirements;
- ensure linkages to international efforts;
- raise the profile of the programme in all relevant communities;
- coordinate monitoring and evaluation activities;
- provide data management and reporting;
- provide advice and recommendations to the Programme Board regarding the scope of subsequent calls;
- participate in the Steering Committee.

In the first six months the key priority for the Champion will be to:
- refine the priorities for the subsequent calls for funding to achieve the objectives of the programme.

The Champion will be part of a Steering Committee, composed of senior representatives from policy, the academic community and business leaders, which will support and provide advice to the Champion. The Champion will report to the Programme Board composed of UKRI and Met Office representatives.
4. Funding available

A grant of up to £500K (80% FEC) is available from UKRI for a period of 40 months. This grant must start no later than 1 February 2019.

The funding can be used for the following:
- Buying out teaching, if applicable
- Admin support
- Communication support
- Research Associates (RAs) to help with workshops, etc.
- Travel, networking, venues, etc.

There may also be opportunities for limited additional funding to support Champion activities throughout the programme.

Applications are welcome from academics that job share, have a part time contract or those currently committed to other longer, large existing grants (centres, hubs, programme grants, CDT, etc.) which commitments enable the applicant to be able to fulfil the Champion role.

Applications are also welcome for Co-Champions. In this case the distinct roles and responsibilities of the two Co-Champions (maximum two: one should be listed as PI and one as Co-I). For co-applications, applicants must demonstrate the clear split of responsibility (e.g. 1) Strategy, 2) Management). In this case the applicants must make clear to the panel how they would effectively work together.
5. Eligibility

The successful applicant must be able to show they can fulfil the assessment criteria (See Assessment Criteria and Person specification below) and become the Climate Resilience Champion.

The successful applicant should have a research and / or policy background with a clear grasp of the multidisciplinary research make-up of climate resilience research in the UK. Individual and organisational eligibility is detailed in on the UKRI eligibility web pages. UKRI grants for all schemes may be held at approved UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), approved Research Council Institutes (RCIs) and approved Independent Research Organisations (IROs), PSREs.

Public Sector Research Establishments (PSREs) with 10 or more researchers with PhDs (or equivalent) are eligible to apply. If PSREs wishing to apply have not previously applied for UKRI funding and are not currently designated IRO status they will be required to complete an eligibility form to ensure they have the required research capacity, systems and controls in place to manage the research and grant funding. PSRE applicants should contact HCA@mrc.ukri.org at the earliest opportunity to discuss their interests in applying.

6. Application Process

Notification of Intent closing date: Midday on 12 November 2018

Before submitting the full application to the UK Climate Resilience Champion call, applicants must first complete a Notification of Intent via the Champion call website. This allows UKRI to assess demand, and select appropriate non-conflicted panel members. Notifications of Intent should be submitted by midday on 12 November 2018.

Full proposal closing date: 4pm on 4 December 2018

Proposals must be submitted using the Research Councils’ Joint Electronic Submission system (Je-S). Applicants should select:

- Council: NERC
- Proposal Type: Standard Proposal
- Scheme: Directed
- Call: UK Climate Resilience Champion Dec 18

The call will close on Je-S at 4pm GMT on 4 December 2018 and it will not be possible to submit to the call after this time. Applicants should leave enough time for their proposal to pass through their organisation’s Je-S submission route before this date. Any proposal that is incomplete, or does not meet UKRI’s eligibility criteria will not be considered.

Proposals for this call should be submitted in standard grant format following the requirements outlined in Section F of the NERC research grant and fellowships handbook.

Submissions should include the following documentation:
1) Personal statement – Up to eight A4 pages (use Case for Support in Je-S)
The first page should describe the applicant’s vision for the research area and the following pages should cover:

- How the applicant fits the assessment criteria and person specification – identifying any research gaps and how the applicant will fulfil these aspects. The applicant should give relevant examples for each criterion.
- Why the applicant wants the role and what they will bring to it
- How they will be a leader to the community (including research, practitioners, decision-makers and users).
- How much time they expect to commit to the role and how they will manage other, existing commitments in order to undertake this role
- Demonstrable links to stakeholders relevant to climate resilience.

2) Applicant’s CV – Up to two A4 pages
This should include:
- Your employment history
- Your academic or professional qualification history.
- Track record of relevant experience: for grants, include start/end dates, funding body, value of award, type of grant (e.g. first grant, fellowship, etc.), your role on the grant (PI, Co-I, Researcher, etc.)
- Any current large project commitments
- Any current administrative activities e.g. may include editorial responsibilities, committee membership, networking activities, etc.
- Other, e.g. may include invited talks, awards, prizes, memberships of professional bodies, etc.

3) Community engagement plan – Up to three A4 pages (Use Workplan in Je-S)
Applicant will detail how they intend to engage with the wider climate resilience community (including research, policy, business) to build a multi- and inter-disciplinary community and their approach to establishing a strategy for delivery of the programme. This will include:
- How they will consult with the community to build a community led programme of research
- How they will consult with the relevant stakeholders and understand their needs to inform the research questions.
- How the applicant will identify the key research challenges and themes which underpin the objectives of the programme

4) Host organisation statement – Up to two A4 pages
Senior leader within your host organisation (e.g. Head of Department) must complete a statement (two sides A4) in support of the application. The statement should be on organisation headed paper, dated, and should clearly state the position held by the author. The statement must include details of the following considerations:

- The statement should identify the key characteristics and skills that the applicant has, which the institution feels highlights the applicant’s ability to succeed as a research leader
- The level of support that the host institution will be giving the applicant both as a standard career development package that is open to all staff and additional support as part of the institution’s backing of their applicant to be successful in the competition
5) Justification of resources – Up to two A4 pages

This should be a narrative description of the need for the resources requested. This can include administrative support, buying out teaching time (if required), funding workshops, venues, travel and networking events.

All attachments, with the exception of letters of support and services/facilities/equipment quotes, submitted through the Je-S system must be completed in single-spaced typescript of minimum font size 11 point (Arial or other sans serif typeface of equivalent size to Arial 11), with margins of at least 2cm. Please note that Arial narrow, Calibri and Times New Roman are not allowable font types and any proposal, which has used either of these font types within their submission, will be rejected. References and footnotes should also be at least 11 point font and should be in the same font type as the rest of the document. Headers and footers should not be used for references or information relating to the scientific case. Applicants referring to websites should note that referees may choose not to use them.

Applicants should ensure that their proposal conforms to all eligibility and submission rules, otherwise their proposal may be rejected. More details on NERC’s submission rules can be found in the Research Grants & Fellowship Handbook and in the submission rules on the NERC website.

Please note that on submission to council ALL non PDF documents are converted to PDF, the use of non-standard fonts may result in errors or font conversion, which could affect the overall length of the document.

Additionally where non-standard fonts are present, and even if the converted PDF document may look unaffected in the Je-S System, when it is imported into the Research Councils Grants System some information may be removed. We therefore recommend that where a document contains any non-standard fonts (scientific notation, diagrams etc), the document should be converted to PDF prior to attaching it to the proposal.

7. Assessment

Upon the receipt of the Notification of Intent (NoI), UKRI and Met Office reserve the right to reject any applications which are deemed out of remit and do not fit the assessment criteria.

Stage 1: Sift stage process

Depending on volume of applications received, an expert panel will sift the full applications using the Assessment Criteria in Section 7a.

Stage 2: Interview process

There will be no formal peer review at this stage of the process; instead the proposals will be reviewed by an independent panel of experts. The applicants will be invited to an interview in December 2018 and will be asked to give a brief verbal presentation on a specific topic.

The expert panel will then rank the applicants based on the assessment criteria and person specification (see Assessment Criteria and Person specification in Section 7a.).
7a. Assessment Criteria and Person specification

Since this is an assessment of the applicant and their ability to lead, the standard UKRI assessment criteria, such as quality of research, national importance and impact, do not apply to the process. Instead, a competency-based person specification is used to describe the desired qualities, skills, experience, and attributes expected to be demonstrated by a successful applicant, as provided in the table below. Note, the role isn’t just about research coordination, but is more outward facing in terms of engagement with stakeholders and understanding the research landscape.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Subset</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td>The candidate (Primary criterion)</td>
<td>Thought leadership</td>
<td>The applicant must:</td>
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<td>• Demonstrate that they are mindful of the current research landscape (including academic and Met Office research)</td>
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<td>• Show evidence that they are able to assemble key information across disciplines to build a compelling narrative and communicate this, effectively, to the right stakeholders at the right time</td>
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<td>• Be able to demonstrate how they have given advice to or influenced industrial users of the research and/or policy makers</td>
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<td>Inspirational team leader</td>
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<td>The applicant must:</td>
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<td>Demonstrate their ability to guide and inspire others and to identify and maximise potential in others (i.e. get the best out of people)</td>
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<td>Community ambassador</td>
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<td>The applicant must:</td>
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<td>• Give evidence of a profile within the research community for research excellence</td>
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<td>• Demonstrate they can act as a figurehead for the UK Climate Resilience community</td>
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<td>• Demonstrate how they would act as an ambassador to the wider research and user communities and advocate for a research field / theme and for research in general</td>
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| Strategic vision | The applicant must:  
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------
|                  | • Be a strategic thinker who is focused on ensuring the multidisciplinary research achieves maximum impact  
|                  | • Demonstrate an aptitude for identifying, exploring and developing research opportunities more broadly and across different interfaces  
|                  | • Demonstrate where they have positioned themselves to take-up opportunities and have the ability to make decisions to deliver their vision  
| Track record of coordinating research and translation | The applicant has a track record of running a programme of outstanding multidisciplinary research, delivering demonstrable impact and translating research outputs to users (e.g. to industry, the innovation infrastructure or HM Government) – at both the national and international level.  
| Understanding of the UK Climate Resilience landscape | The applicant can demonstrate that they are not only focused on their specific research but can also take a systems view of climate resilience.  
| | They will also have a good understanding of the interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary research which is required to form a meaningful and cohesive programme of research to address the objectives of the programme.  
| Communication and engagement skills | Communication  
| | Demonstrates excellent communication and interpersonal skills.  
| | Engagement  
| | The ability to implement the comprehensive stakeholder mapping exercises needed to identify key audiences and develop strategies for engagement.  
| | It is recognised that the skills needed for effective knowledge exchange may not, necessarily, reside with the leader but they should be able to facilitate others to carry out these tasks  
| Host institute environment | The host institute must demonstrate how it will support the applicant during length of the UK Climate Resilience programme.  

The applicant must be able to justify the planning and project management of the grant, including the management of any staff requested.

They must be able to demonstrate that the resources requested in this application are justified and appropriate for delivering the proposed outcomes.

They must identify the main risks and put contingencies in place.

### 8. Key dates

- Announcement published: 22 October 2018
- Notice of intent to submit: Midday 12 November 2018
- Deadline for submission: 4pm on 4 December 2018
- Interview panel: w/c 17 December 2018
- Start date: 1 February 2019

### 9. Contact

For all enquiries, please contact the UK Climate Resilience secretariat:
[climateresilience@nerc.ukri.org](mailto:climateresilience@nerc.ukri.org)