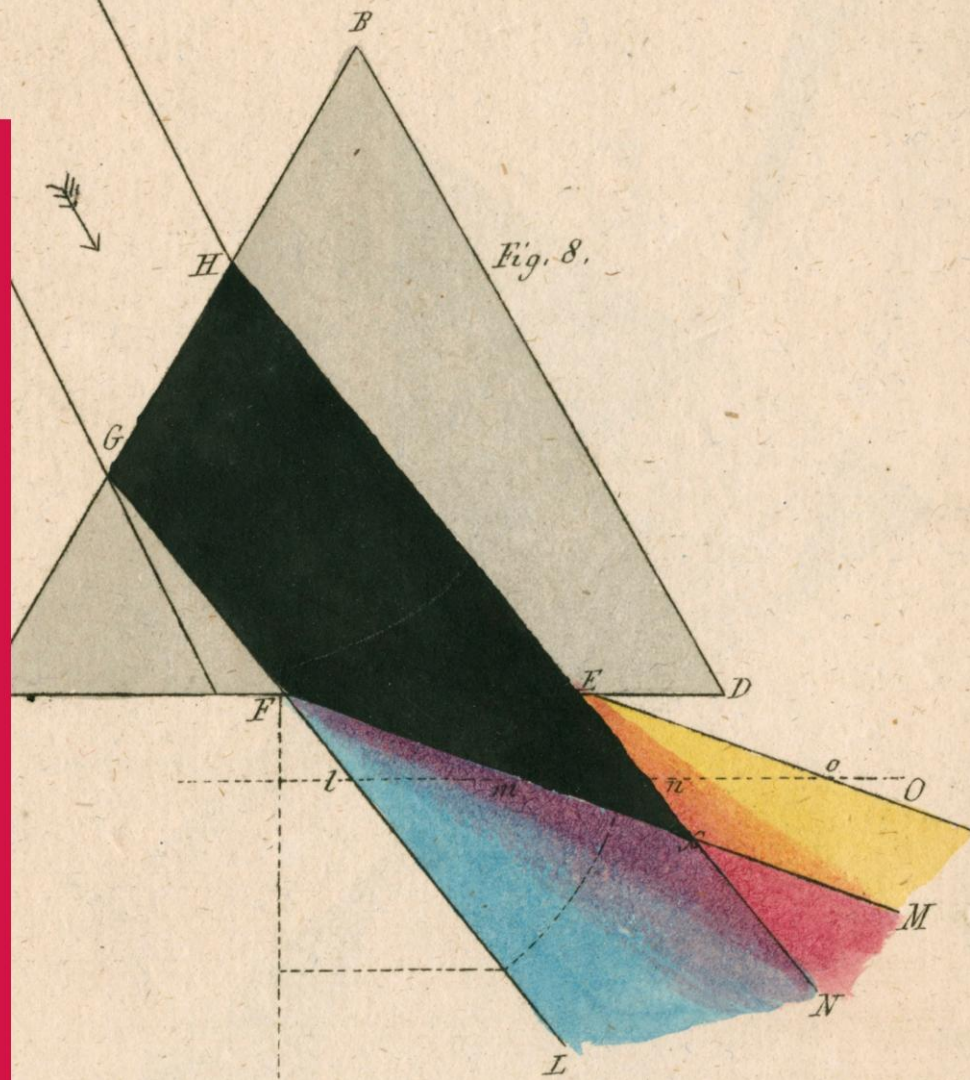


Career Development Fellowship | Information session

Chrissy Stokes

Senior Manager
Early Career Fellowship

THE
ROYAL
SOCIETY



About the Royal Society

The Royal Society is a self-governing Fellowship of many of the world's most distinguished scientists drawn from all areas of science, engineering, and medicine. The Society's fundamental purpose, as it has been since its foundation in 1660, is to recognise, promote, and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity.

About the Royal Society

The Society's strategic priorities emphasise its commitment to the highest quality science, to curiosity-driven research, and to the development and use of science for the benefit of society.

These priorities are:

- The Fellowship, Foreign Membership and beyond
- Influencing
- Research system and culture
- Science and society
- Corporate and governance

The Story so far...



Career Development Fellowship

- For talented early career researchers from underrepresented backgrounds to take the first step towards establishing their successful career in STEM in a UK institution
- Salary, Overheads and Research Expenses (£690,000)
- High quality programme of training, mentoring and networking.



Eligibility

Applicants must:

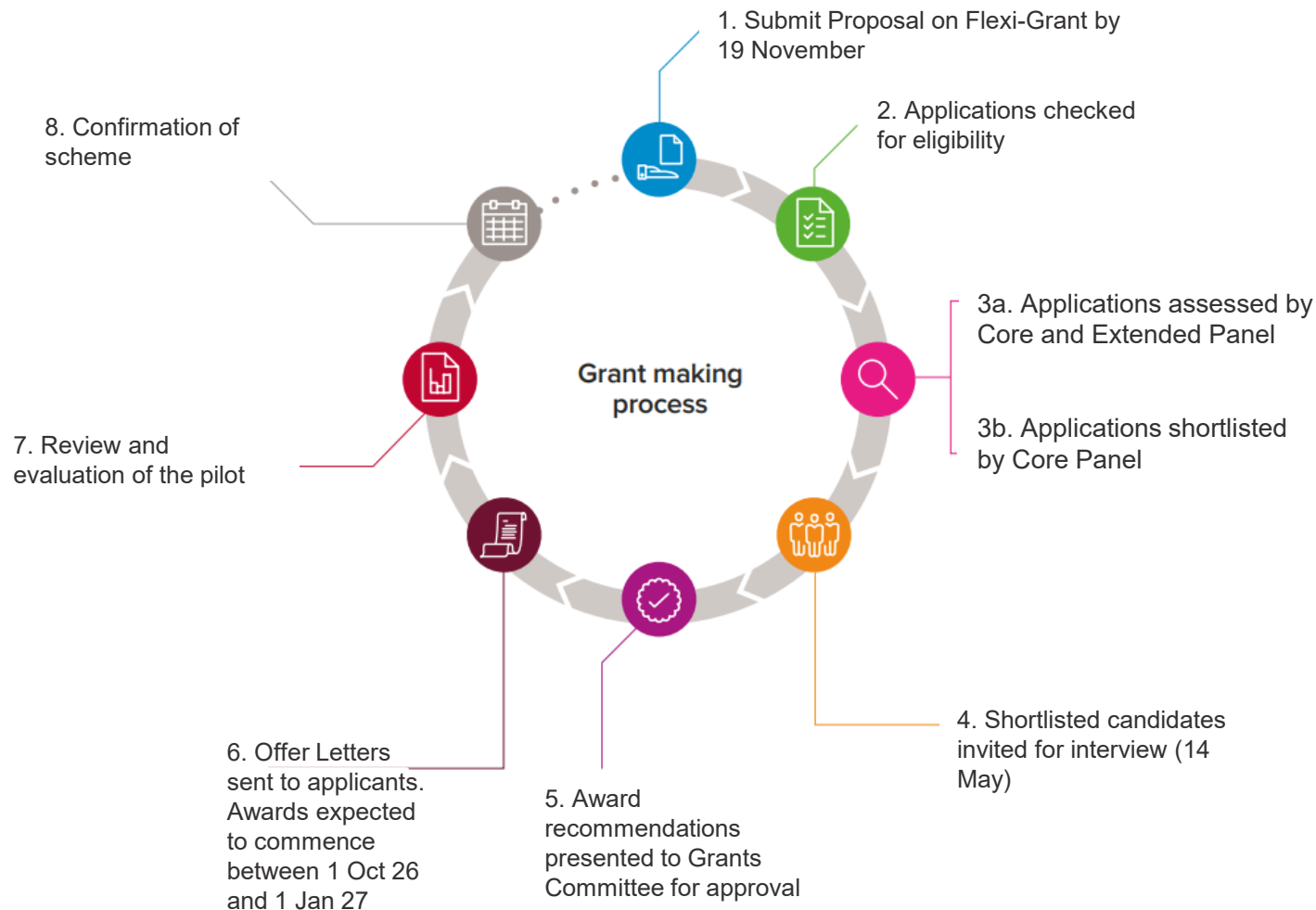
- Self-identify as being from a **Black heritage background**
- Be **UK nationals** or have **completed part of education/postdoctoral research in the UK**
- **Have a PhD or will have a PhD** by the time funding starts
- **Have less than 24 months of full-time postdoctoral research experience** by the closing date of the round
- Projects must be within the Royal Society Remit, no priority funding areas



UK Sponsor

- Research Fellows will be **hosted at a UK research institution** and **supported by an academic sponsor**.
- The UK Sponsor will provide **lab space** and ensure the Research Fellow receives the necessary **career guidance** to progress within the research landscape.
- Contact between the UK sponsor and the applicant prior to the application is essential.
- A clearly defined and mutually beneficial research project proposal.

Application and Assessment



Support for disabled applicants

Contact the
Scheme Inbox

Support to
complete
application

Deadline
extensions

Support and
adjustments at
interview

Flexibility

Costs for
additional
adjustments

Preparing your application

Read the
scheme notes

Identify your UK
sponsor

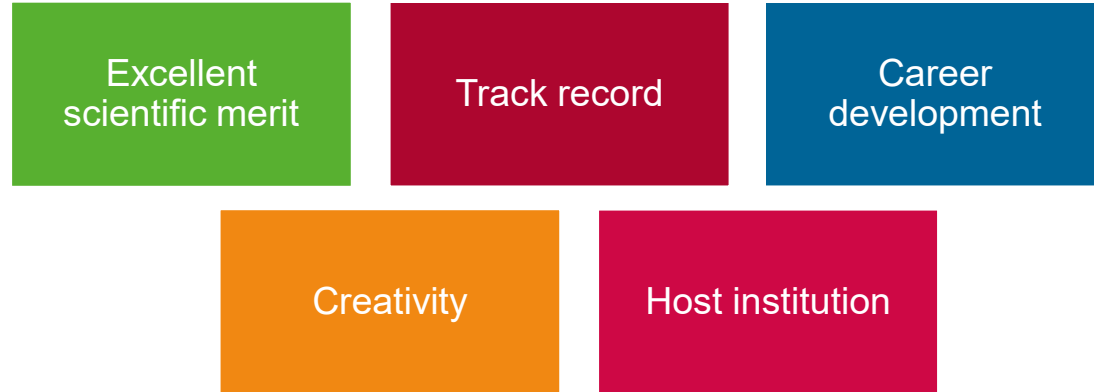
Demonstrate
enthusiasm

Write a
comprehensive
lay summary

Leave plenty of
time

Contact Grants
team with
questions

Preparing your application



Interviews

In person at the Royal Society, London

An **interview preparation webinar** and interview guidance documents allows candidates to fully prepare.

Career Development Fellowship Selection Committee,
15-20 members

14 May 2026



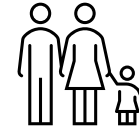
Benefits and flexibility of support

Flexibility



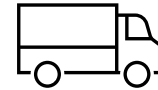
Sick leave

Parental leave



Part time
working

Transfers



Wraparound support



Dual bespoke
mentoring

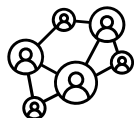


Communication
and public
engagement



Leadership and
research team
management

Networking
opportunities



Research
dissemination and
future funding



Confidence and
time management



Contact details



royalsociety.org/grants



CDF@royalsociety.org



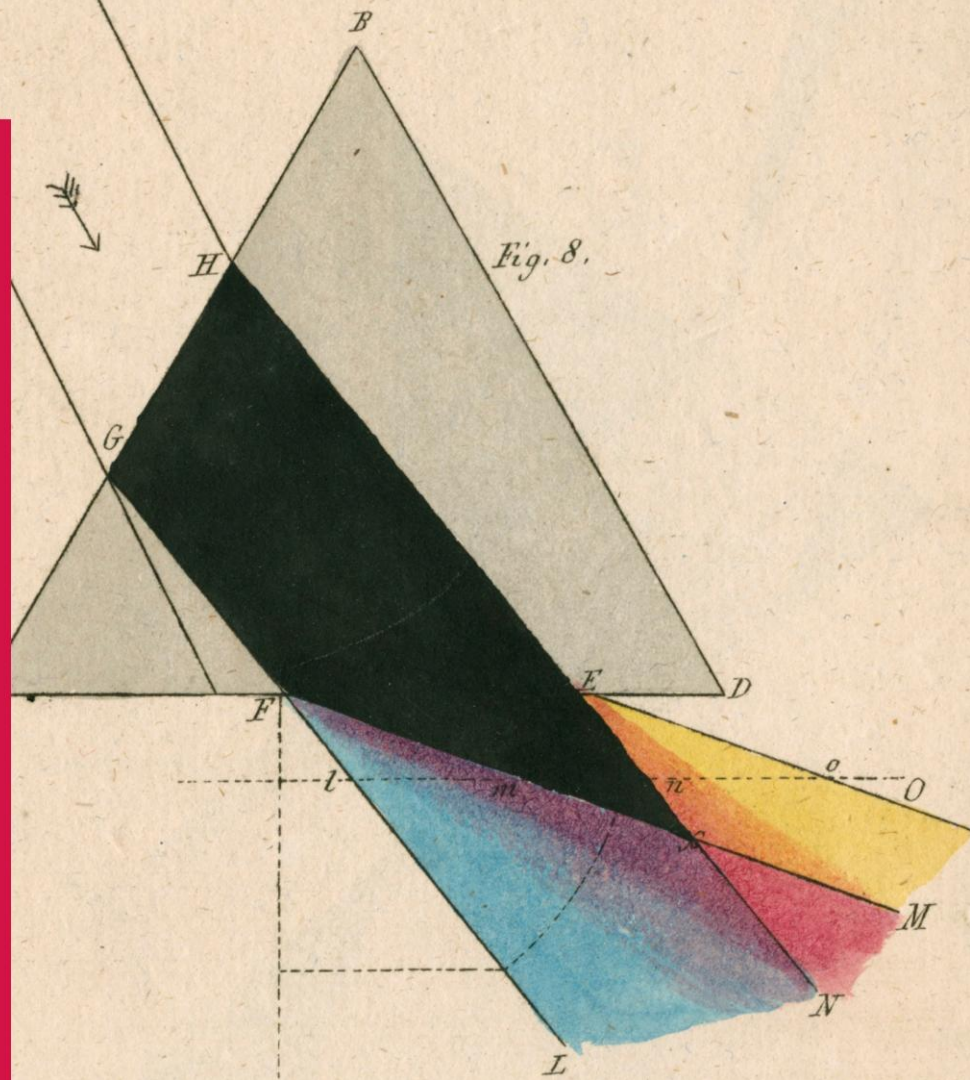
[@royalsociety](https://twitter.com/royalsociety)



royalsociety.org/stay-in-touch/email-newsletters/

Top Tips for writing a CDF application

Winston Morgan



CDF Promotional Webinar:



Pioneering Futures Since 1898

Top Tips for making a strong application

A view from the panel

Winston Morgan, BSc, PhD, FHEA, FRSB,
Professor of Toxicology, Equity and Inclusive
Practice. School of Health Sport and Bioscience,
University of East London.

What is the panel looking for in your application and what is the process?

- Each panel member will be given **several applications** to score, so application which are well written will automatically be an advantage.
- Applications will be allocated according to panel member based on their general field of expertise at the early stage.
- The panel will be given guidance, this ensures:
 - **Consistency** in scoring between applications by each panel member
 - **Consistency** in scoring between panel members

What does the panel assess, what are they looking for?

- The panel will be asked to assess and score in three key areas:
 - The applicants track record
 - The research proposal
 - Host organisation
- *When assessing, I like to start with the proposal, then the person and then the host.*
- *A **strong proposal**, can only be delivered by an **individual** with appropriate skills and experience in the environment and support of a committed **host and sponsor**.*

Why do I start assessing with the Proposal. The Person, The Host?

- Think of it like applying for a job, except:
- The applicant; decides what is in the **person specification** and that will be determined proposal
- When we apply for jobs, we always **tweak our CV to match the requirements of the role.**
- Similarly, you the applicant will write the proposal and select the host, so you have a chance to create ***a proposal that complements your skillset and the resources of the host organisation and sponsor.***
- *So, you are effectively guiding the panel to select you as the person best suited to deliver the proposal you wrote.*

The proposal

- *What is the panel is looking for in the project proposal?*
- We want to see two things: good **quality** and **novelty**
- For some, **novelty** is about going in a new direction, but it can also be:
 - A **new approach** to an **old question or new question**, both could be novel
 - It may be about innovation using **new or existing techniques or technologies** in a different way.
 - Exploration of the unknown
 - *If it is a continuation of your PhD project show, there is a step change in approach*

A deeper look at the criteria for the Project:

- Inherent quality (*is the science sound*)
- Is it **achievable** using the parameters (funding, time scale) of the scheme?
- How do we make the judgement?
- We want to see work that is outstanding in terms of:
- **Quality and Novelty,**
- Does the project address **well defined, timely and serious scientific questions.**
- Will the outcomes lead to significant contributions to the research field,
- *Remember, not all panel member will be from your field, so ask someone outside your areas to read and ask you some questions*
- *But it must resonate with those in your field so we can advocate for you*



We will look at the *specifics* of the proposal

- Is there a clearly defined:
 - **Context** (lay and scientific),
 - Research objectives and expected outcomes: Specific and Measurable (think SMART analysis)
- The potential **impact** but do not overstate,
- There should be a clear description of:
 - **Methodology,**
 - **Data analysis;**
- The plan should identify **clear milestones** over the period of the project
- An itemised **budget with justification**
- *Do not forget to including **an awareness that some aspects of the study may not work** and the **possible mitigation**.*
- Mention **limitations** but do not overstate.

The panel will be looking for Rigor, Originality and Significance in the proposal

- **Rigor** in your proposal, is the clarity of fit between the proposal goals, design, implementation and dissemination or reporting.
- **Originality** is the level of **novelty and innovation** (will the work produce new knowledge or understanding). For example; new empirical findings, engaging with new complex problems, innovating a methodology, in some areas it could be advancing a theory, analysis of a doctrine, policy or practice.
- Then we want to see **Significance**; will the work have the capacity to influence scholarly thought or practice in the field
- The project as described **must show the potential** to take the individual to the **next stage of their career**
- At the end of the fellowship, it is expected that you will become a strong candidate for independent research fellowships equivalent to University Research Fellowships, Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships and/or academic posts in institutions.



The Person and their Track Record

- ***The proposal will frame specification for the person needed to deliver the proposal***
- We want to see if you can deliver the proposal **you** wrote.
- It is possible to have great proposal, but the person as described cannot deliver it, ***make sure you sell yourself and your strengths.***
- **How?**
- **Start with the general**
- You must demonstrate a track record commensurate with your actual research experience to date including:
- **Publications, Conferences and Seminars, External recognition (e.g. awards), Datasets held in repositories, Software as well as any experience or commitment to public communication of science.**

- We know you only have **less than 24 months post-doc experience** as a maximum.
- Where **appropriate, extenuations** may account for your “actual research experience to date”
- Circumstances that may include:
 - **leave periods and less traditional research environment** where resources and outputs may be less.
 - **Highlight these in your personal statement**
- Highlight **work outside academia**, showing you are multi-dimensional, ***if this is a strength state it.***

We also want to see evidence of **Leadership and Independence**

- We are looking for someone with a **leadership and independence mindset**.
- Evidence will include:
 - **Small grant applications and success,**
 - **Supervision of students (UG and PG)**
 - **Setting up a research group**
 - **Lead author on publications.**
 - **Appointed to lead a project in your lab.**
 - **Panel membership**
- That you took the initiative to start a **collaborative interaction** with someone outside your lab.
- You attended training courses to **improve the breadth and scope of your research**.
- ***If the project is a continuation of your PhD project, you must show have you have moved on and are more independent***

- Remember we will be looking at your profile and asking:
- *Can this person **deliver the project described**, are they capable of moving to the next stage of career development to **become an independent researcher***
- **The Host**
- You have the **project**, you have the **skills, experience and track record**, but:
- *Research is never undertaken in isolation*, we need to know who will **host you and your research** to close the circle.

The Host, Sponsor and other support

- There has to be clear evidence that the **host is suitable, will provide the appropriate research environment and the specific support for you and your project.**
- A key component is the necessary resources (people, equipment, environment) for the project
- *We can generally tell when letters of support is generic*
- Evidence that the sponsor and **host can provide the necessary career development**, not just a place to do research.
- **Highlight similar schemes in the host organisation if they have them.**
- The general track record of the hosting department
- Is the host committed to the fellow becoming an independent researcher?



- Some evidence that the **scientific interests of the proposed research fellow are aligned** to that of the department that will host them.
- The **support should be at a senior level and broad**, what if the sponsors moves on, will the fellow still have support.
- Similarly, if part of the work relies on an external collaborator **what will happen if the collaboration ends?**
- *Ultimately, the most successful applications will be the most balanced: proposal track record and host.*

- The panel want to be challenged, so don't make it easy for us.
- Good luck!

• Thank you!