

Future Leaders Fellows Development Network

Plus Funds Governance

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Part 1: Summary

The Development Network offers flexible Plus Funds to enable fellows to design and lead their own events, small collaborative research projects, policy or practice development, and impact acceleration and innovation projects. Funded activities or projects should add value to the Development Network as a whole, by adding value to its existing provision and/or bringing new insights, skills, and opportunities to this community. In addition, it is expected that activities or projects supported by the Plus Funds will promote and uphold the highest standards of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI).

Plus Funds projects may enable:

- the building of proof-of-concept for new ideas
- the running of events which promote the values, cultures, and behaviours supported by of UKRI, e.g. EDI and positive research cultures
- commercialisation of research
- collaborations with industry-based fellows
- engagement with new networks
- public or policy engagement.

Collaborative applications between fellows in the Network are strongly encouraged where these will further networking, interdisciplinary working relationships, and diversity within the Development Network community.

Funding will be awarded via a rolling open call, and applications will be assessed by a panel comprising fellows, members of the Development Network team, colleagues from UKRI's FLF team, and external research and innovation leaders.

Part 2: Plus Funds Review Group

The Plus Funds scheme will be overseen by a Plus Funds Review Group (PFRG), chaired by the Deputy Director with responsibility for community engagement.

Members of the PFRG will comprise:

- a) fellows who are members of the Development Network
- b) members of the Development Network Project Board
- c) members the Development Network Advisory Board
- d) representatives from UKRI's FLF team

Persons with appropriate expertise may be invited by the Chair to join the PFRG from time to time.

Part 3: Eligibility

3.1 Who can apply?

The Plus Funds are open to all researchers and innovators registered as members of the Development Network – that is, fellows who have opted in to the Network from cohorts 1-6 of the FLF scheme and those nominated by the Research Councils.

The Development Network aims to encourage interdisciplinarity and network building. As such, we encourage collaborative applications from multiple fellows and institutions working together.

Project teams will usually be led by a named Lead Applicant (Principal Investigator). Where necessary for the success of the project, inclusion of up to two co-Lead Applicants will be permitted. Where there are two co-Lead Applicants, both investigators must be members of the Network. Where project teams include two co-Lead Applicants, *one* of the co-Lead Applicants must be nominated as the Budget Holder.

Project teams may involve others outside the Development Network but the Lead Applicant must be a member of the Network. Other team members, including co-investigators, are not required to be members of the FLF Development Network. External colleagues including Post-Doctoral Fellows and PhDs can be included as co-investigators on the grant. Applications should outline why team members have been included in the project team, and what contribution they will make to the proposed project.

The Lead Applicant(s) will be the main point of contact for all matters related to the application and be responsible for submitting the Final Review at the end of the project.

3.2 Eligible applications

Eligibility of applications will be determined by the PFRG.

On receipt of an application, the Chair of the PFRG will assess whether the application is in scope for the scheme. If it is deemed to be in scope, the application will then be submitted to the next meeting of the PFRG for assessment.

In response to feedback received from the PFRG, an unsuccessful application may be resubmitted once. Such a resubmission should indicate, in the form a brief covering note, the changes made to the original application.

The PFRG reserves the right to adjudicate eligibility on a case-by-case basis. For example, the PFRG may use its discretion to:

- permit an individual fellow to be named on more than one application to the Plus Fund scheme;

- consider applications for funding to 'top up' existing Plus Funds projects, provided that the Lead Applicant(s) can demonstrate a justifiable need and clear benefits; or
- consider applications for 'follow on' funding for previously funded Plus Funds projects where it can be shown the initial project achieved impact and a strong case can be made further benefits will be delivered.

3.3 Project duration

Projects may start at any time. For Lead Applicants from Cohorts 1-3 of the FLF scheme and for UKRI-appointed fellows, projects must be scheduled to finish by October 2023. For Lead Applicants from Cohorts 4-6 of the FLF scheme, projects must be scheduled to finish by December 2024.

3.4 Funds requested

Plus Funds may be requested up to a maximum of £25,000 per application. Proposed activities will be assessed for cost effectiveness, sustainability, and legacy.

We appreciate that external factors might impact project delivery milestones and, as a result, the budget. Variations and changes to the budget are permitted with explicit permission from the FLF Development Network. If conditions such as strikes or inclement weather impact the budget as outlined in the application, grant holders are encouraged to confer with the FLF Development Network about potential solutions and/or exceptions.

Part 4: Scope

4.1 Activities in scope

The Plus Funds are intentionally broad in scope, so that fellows can be creative and ambitious. Successful applications would demonstrably add value to the Network, by enhancing the Network's own provision or by enhancing support for fellows in the Network by bringing new insights, skills, and opportunities to this community.

4.2 Costs in scope

The major proportion of funding requested should usually be for consumables and equipment costs and/or for buying out support roles. All costs must be justified in the application and will be assessed for value for money by the PFRG. Where an application seeks significant funds for costs other than consumables, equipment, and buy-out for support roles, these costs should be justified explicitly.

The following costs will usually be within scope:

- accommodation

- equipment
- venue hire
- salaries or wages of students - including PhD students, post-doctoral research assistants or administrators (for work they would not be expected to undertake through their institutions under their current contact, and where the costs are justified by the extent of the project)
- event catering
- external facilitator or fees
- speaker travel expenses – where justified
- workshop materials
- relevant software or hardware - e.g. online surveys
- development costs for websites or blogs
- costs related to enabling participation for EDI
- other consumables.

4.3 Costs out of scope

The following costs will usually be deemed out of scope:

- fees for activities and events which are already offered by the Development Network
- salaries of FLFs and/or additional staff who would usually be paid for by the host institution/organisation
- equipment, software, or projects that the institution/organisation would normally be expected to provide or fund
- projects that have already been externally funded to 100%
- individual conference attendance
- unjustified contingency costs.

4.4 Support provided by the Development Network

The Development Network may be able to provide support with technical infrastructure for online meetings. In such cases, it will not be justifiable to seek Plus Funds to purchase duplicate licences. Please contact the Network at hello@flfdevent.com to clarify what support is available and what costs should be requested in the application.

Part 5: Timeline

5.1 Timescales

Applications may be made at any time and will be assessed on a rolling, monthly basis. Applications submitted by the 10th of each month will usually be reviewed within two weeks.

The PFRG will aim to notify applicants of their decisions within six weeks of receiving an application.

Applications submitted after the 10th of the month may be rolled over to the next-but-one meeting of the PFRG.



Applications need to be made well in advance of the proposed activity start date to allow time for: the application to progress, the transfer of funds after decision, any further project planning required once the decision has been communicated to the applicant.

Retrospective funding of projects will not be possible.

For FLFs from Rounds 1, 2 and 3, and non-FLF early career researchers nominated to join the Network by UKRI, the final round of applications will close on 15th August 2023, to allow for final accounting and reporting. For FLFs from Rounds 4, 5 and 5, the final round of applications will close on 15 November 2024 to allow for final accounting and reporting.

Part 6: Application Process

6.1 Application form

The Lead Applicant(s) will submit a Plus Funds Application Form, available on our website, along with any supporting documents via email to hello@flfdevnet.com.

The application form includes a project outline and case for support setting out how the proposed activity will meet the Plus Funds criteria.

6.2 Review: preliminary steps

The Development Network will undertake the following preliminary steps on receipt of a Plus Funds application:

- Applications will initially be checked by the Project Manager to ascertain that all sections of the application have been completed appropriately. If information is missing, the proposal will be returned to applicant for clarification.
- After this initial check, all applicant names and identifying characteristics will be redacted for the purposes of anonymity.
- The Chair of the PFRG will review each redacted application to confirm that it is in scope for the Plus Funds scheme.
- Redacted applications will also be assessed separately by the Development Network's EDI Consultant and/or Manager, in order to ensure that EDI impacts and unconscious bias have been considered.

Upon completion of these initial reviews, applications will be sent to the PFRG for discussion at their next meeting.

6.3 PFRG Panels

Decisions on funding will usually be made by a panel of up to five reviewers who sit on the PFRG. Panels will always comprise at least one person from each of classes (a) to (d) of the PFRG membership (see above).

Panels will meet online or in person to discuss their assessment of proposals. At each meeting, Panels will consider proposals in the order in which they were



received. If there are more applications than the Panel can assess in the allocated time, proposals that have been received later may need to roll over to the next meeting.

Panels will be chaired by the Project Manager or Chair of the PFRG.

6.4 Decisions

All proposals will be assessed against the weighted assessment criteria in the Application Form. Panel scores will be aggregated in order to reach a decision.

Where applications similar in nature or topic to other Plus Fund projects are received, the PFRG reserves the right to suggest collaboration between applicants.

Panels will come to one of three decisions:

- **Award.** The Panel judge the application to be successful and approve it for funding. See below for details.
- **Revise and resubmit.** The Panel judge the application to be in scope and to have genuine potential to be fundable but, in its current form, not to meet all of the criteria sufficiently.
- **Reject.** The Panel judge the application to be out of scope and/or to fall substantially short of the criteria.

The Panel Chair will be responsible for collating the Panel's decision, feedback, and/or further information as needed. Applicants will be informed of decisions via email.

6.5 Resubmissions

Where the Panel has indicated that an application may be revised and resubmitted, an explanatory note should be appended to the revised application outlining changes that have been made in response to the Panel's feedback.

Resubmissions will be reviewed by the Chair in the first instance. Where the Chair feels that the resubmission adequately addresses the feedback from the PFRG they may award the funding by Chair's action.

Where the Chair is not convinced that the resubmission has adequately addressed the concerns of the PFRG, the resubmitted application will be considered at the next PFRG panel, alongside the original application and reviewer responses. The second Panel will not re-score the application. Instead, they will be asked to decide whether the revisions have adequately addressed the first Panel's concerns.

When considering resubmissions, the Panel will decide either to **award** or **reject**. A resubmitted application cannot be revised and resubmitted a second time.

6.6 Complaints

Should an applicant feel that the Panel's decision or feedback is unfair or unclear, they should contact the Chair of the PFRG via hello@flfdevnet.com in the first instance.

Part 7: Successful applications

7.1 Funding process

When an application is successful, a funding confirmation email will be sent to the Lead Applicant(s) soon after the decision. The Lead Applicant(s) must confirm acceptance of the funding offer within one week of receiving this email or the offer may be withdrawn.

Funding distribution will be administered by Edinburgh Innovations on a monthly basis following the submission of your monthly expenditure reports. Where possible EI will pay invoices directly to your supplier. Projects will be asked to submit brief updates on spend against budget in their monthly reporting and provide receipts for costs incurred.

The funding must be used for the purpose awarded and should be spent at the close of the project.

- Any funds remaining (over £100) at the end of the proposed activity must be returned to the Plus Funds team.
- Equipment or fixed assets purchased will remain the property of the FLF Development Network

7.2 Additional documentation

On the successful award of funding, the Lead Applicant(s) may be asked to provide additional information required for the Network's UKRI reporting commitments (for example, number of participants in proposed activity).

7.3 Review points

Lead Applicants for funded applications will be asked to complete brief monthly update surveys to include progress against predicted milestones/spend/impact, as well as overall RAG (red/amber/green) status for their project.

Lead Applicants are also expected to submit brief updates on spend against budget in their monthly reporting and provide receipts for costs incurred.

At the close of the proposed activity, the Lead Applicant(s) will be asked to complete a *Final Review* to be returned within one month by email to hello@flfdevnet.com. This will include:

- Impacts, outputs and outcomes

- Review of EDI considerations and the efficacy of any mitigation taken
- End-of-project financial report (including receipts)

Information gathered from the Plus Funds final reviews will be analysed by the Community Manager and Project Manager and any issues highlighted within the reports brought to the Project Board for consideration and action.

7.4 Acknowledgement

Where possible the support of the FLF Development Network should be acknowledged e.g. on websites/blogs, printed materials, event marketing.

This activity was supported by the Future Leaders Fellows Development Network and funded by URKI.

Part 8: Support for applicants

A range of help and support materials will be made available to applicants via the FLF Development Network website:

- *Application Form (with Review Matrix)*
- *Guidance for Applicants*
- *Finance/Budget Table Template*
- *Risk Register Template*
- Contact for help: Bridget Mellifont, Community Manager (hello@flfdevnet.com)

Part 9: Administration of Plus Funds

9.1 Initial set up

Governance of the Plus Funds and the application process have been developed by the Network's Project Team, with oversight from the Project Board, Advisory Board (include FLF Representatives), UKRI, and the Network's Lead for EDI.

The weighted assessment criteria used for decision making has been developed by the Network's Project Team, in consultation with the Advisory Board, with FLFs and the Project's Lead for EDI. The assessment criteria is reflected in the Plus Funds *Application Form*.

9.2 Administration

The Project Manager will manage the administration of the Plus Funds in collaboration with the Finance Lead.

The Community Manager will track impact through ongoing communication with FLFs and assessment of their scheduled reports.



The Plus Funds pot (initially consisting of minimum £300K) will be reviewed against the FLF Development Network budget by the Director and Project Manager each year and topped up as appropriate.

9.3 Reporting

The Review Group will update the Project Board and Advisory Board on Plus Funds as and when appropriate. Reports may include:

- Progress of awards and current distribution of funding
- Larger projects that may require additional 'sign-off'
- EDI issues highlighted within the Plus Fund process and activities
- Any emergent themes

Progress reports will be made to UKRI on a three- and six-monthly basis with an overview of the Plus Funds activities, alongside data to include:

- Type of activity and outline agenda/objectives
- Dates, duration, region
- No. of participants
- Value of support awarded
- Outputs, outcomes and impacts

9.4 Review of processes

The governance, documentation and administration of the Plus Funds will be reviewed on an ongoing basis so that, where appropriate, the process can be amended to ensure the effective administration of the scheme or in response to any reported issues, EDI concerns or administrative difficulties raised by FLF participants or the Project Team.