Economic and Social Research Council

Government Office for Science

UKRI policy fellowships 2025: fellowship position

Fellowship title: GO-Science behavioural science and sociotechnical futures fellowship

Fellowship type: Core policy fellowship

Host organisation: GO-Science

Host team: Foresight Projects Team, Tech Insights Futures and Foresight (TIFF)

Summary: opportunity to use behavioural science to advise on sociotechnical futures working on high profile policies and strategies across government, focusing on the impact of current and future technologies on the UK society, economy and people

Policy topic: the fellowship will bring a behavioural science perspective on challenges related to sociotechnical futures. This applies to all government Missions as it will deliver cross-cutting evidence for policy and strategy

Research Council: ESRC

Academic discipline(s): behavioural science (open to a range of disciplines within that, spanning the social sciences, although a multidisciplinary approach is required)

Research career stage: open to early or mid-career stage researchers

Fellowship structure

Inception phase:

Estimated start date: February 2026. Exact date to be confirmed by the host depending on onboarding and security clearance requirements
Duration: three months
FTE: 0.4 FTE

Main placement phase:

Duration: 12 months
FTE: 0.6 to 1 FTE

Knowledge exchange phase:

Duration: three months
FTE: 0.4 FTE

Work arrangements

Location requirements: the GO-Science office locations are London, Birmingham, Salford, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Darlington, Bristol. We anticipate that the fellowship could be undertaken effectively with remote working and occasional visits to a GO-Science office (as appropriate) to meet colleagues. GO-Science operate a hybrid working model with a mix of office and home working. We will discuss suitable working arrangements with the successful fellow. The Foresight Projects team holds regular team days in London, and we would envisage the fellow attends these once per month during the inception and placement phases

Hybrid working: where office-based, to maximise the benefits of the fellowship it is recommended that the fellow would spend circa 40% of their time in a GO-Science office. Occasional visits to London may be required. Eligible Travel and Subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details

Security clearance: Basic Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) checks, and, if London based, Counter Terrorism Check (CTC). We would ask the person taking up our fellowship opportunity to start the security clearance application

process as soon as their fellowship has been confirmed; and so, ideally, before the inception phase begins. Please see National security vetting: clearance levels for more information

Fellowship description

GO-Science works at the heart of government, ensuring policies and decisions are informed by the best scientific evidence and strategic long-term thinking. It's an exciting time to join the organisation, providing you an opportunity to inform and influence policymaking and the systems for use of science and engineering across government.

This role sits in the Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA)'s Foresight team. Our role is to improve the quality of evidence used in long-term decision making. We are central to government, and the role provides first-hand experience of working with senior policy makers across government departments. The role can involve working on any area of government policy and the five government Missions, given the cross-cutting nature of technology.

This fellowship is an exciting opportunity to build GO-Science's capacity to deliver robust evidence and advice on social and behavioural science, which has a small but growing presence in GO-Science. There is significant scope for the ESRC policy fellow to shape the role and identify where they can have an impact. At a high level, the fellow will be expected to:

- Provide expertise in behavioural science with a focus on sociotechnical systems and interactions. We are interested in evidence-based trends and how technologies might impact UK society, economy, and people
- Use their academic background and networks to provide evidence-based advice and multidisciplinary analytical input to our flagship projects to shape long-term policy
- Enhance the team's capability to access and use scientific knowledge. We want to better anticipate the impact of technologies on society and build this into our advice
- Help us identify evidence gaps to propose future projects and so impact policy in the years to come

Beyond providing advice and input on our portfolio of Foresight work where relevant, and across GO-Science more broadly, we expect the fellow to develop their own line of work in the team. This would be codesigned at the inception phase and would likely require a combination of shorter pieces of work, rather than a typical Foresight project. This could involve evidence reviews, behavioural analysis, workshops, applying futures tools, and collaborating with others in the team. To inform this work, the fellow will have access to analysis and outputs from teams across GO-Science who provide expert advice to government on science and technology. The fellow can also draw on previous Foresight projects which consider the future of technology and could benefit from a behavioural lens.

The following areas are of particular interest to the team:

- Understanding the implications of sociotechnical futures on behaviour and the wider impacts on the public
- What do we need from the public in relation to the technological changes that we expect to happen over the next five to 20 years? This could cover aspects such as making decisions to adopt new technologies, improving their technological literacy, adapting to changes in the workplaces
- What could be the impacts for the public of needing to adopt or use these technologies, both at home and in the workplace, and how will people respond to these? This could include technologies such as technologies required for the green transition (for example, Electric Vehicles, heat pumps, flexible energy use) and the use of Artificial Intelligence in education and the workplace
- What are the risks and unintended consequences that policymakers should consider?
- How to integrate behavioural science evidence and approaches into futures thinking and the work of the Foresight team

The outputs will include dissemination across GO-Science and government, with the potential to publish some aspects on gov.uk. There will be plenty of opportunities for knowledge exchange and feeding expertise through to a wide range of projects and initiatives across GO-Science. The outcomes will be more resilient policy, improved decision making in government and improving outcomes for society across Missions, on the most pressing issues of our time.

The fellow will become a full member of the Foresight team and our wider leadership team on Technology Insights, Futures and Foresight. The Foresight team is a circa ten-person multidisciplinary team, with a combination of policy professionals, scientists, analysts and researchers. It is currently headed up by a behavioural scientist and social researcher. The fellow will be involved in all regular day-to-day activities and receive a designated line manager to

support them for the duration of their fellowship. They will be on team emails, meetings, and programme boards to give meaningful input to our portfolio of technology and foresight work.

This fellowship offers a unique opportunity to apply research expertise to real-world policy challenges and shape government thinking on a top strategic priority. This role provides an unparalleled chance to bridge scientific research and policymaking, ensuring academic expertise directly informs future policy. Key opportunities to bringing the fellow's expertise to bear include:

- Influence policy development by contributing to high-impact analysis for strategic priorities of concern for the GCSA at the heart of government
- Build a network across GO-Science and government, working closely with the GCSA, Ministers, and senior officials across Whitehall, strengthening future opportunities for academic-policy collaboration
- Gain first-hand policymaking experience, understanding how research can better inform decision-making
- Engage in key policy debates at the intersection of foresight, science and strategy
- Access unique research opportunities, with potential to publish insights (subject to security and data requirements)

Person specification

Applications will be assessed by UKRI panel assessment against the following essential opportunity-specific requirements in addition to the generic eligibility and call criteria:

Essential criteria:

- Expertise and relevant experience or demonstrated potential at the intersection of behavioural science, behaviour change and technology or sociotechnical systems. Behavioural science is considered broadly here and can span the social sciences, although we expect some knowledge of applied behavioural science (such as behavioural public policy, behaviour change models for example the Behaviour Change Wheel)

- The ability to apply innovative and creative thinking, to bring together evidence and approaches relating to both behavioural science and sociotechnical systems. The fellow needs to be comfortable with applying theory and evidence to formulate hypotheses under uncertainty and incomplete evidence

- The ability to apply theory and evidence from several disciplines to a policy context and make it relevant to government Missions

- Adept at effectively and succinctly synthesising evidence and bringing this to life for a lay audience

- Knowledge or experience of using futures thinking approaches and tools, or alternatively, a willingness to learn and upskill quickly

Applicants shortlisted from the panel assessment will be assessed at the host led interview selection process, consisting of a 45-60-minute interview, gauging suitability against the essential criteria mentioned above and the following desirable opportunity-specific requirements:

Desirable criteria:

- Policy expertise in an area relevant to sociotechnical futures, for example, national security, green transitions, education

- Facilitation experience such as running workshops

Processing personal data

If applicants are shortlisted by the UKRI assessment panel UKRI will need to share the application and any personal information that it contains with the host for the host led interview selection process.

Your personal data will be handled in line with UK data protection legislation and managed securely. If you would like to know more, including how to exercise your Rights, please see the UKRI privacy notice.

The Hosts' privacy notice can be obtained by contacting fellows@ukri.org and requesting a copy, and will be shared with all shortlisted candidates for this position prior to the interview. Hosts will delete your data at the end of the selection process unless you are successful, in which case we will retain your data as an independent data controller.