



UKRI policy fellowships 2025: fellowship position

Fellowship title: Wales Centre for Public Policy: knowledge brokering and trialling tools to increase and capture the impact of What Works centres

Fellowship type: What Works innovation fellowship

Host organisation: [Wales Centre for Public Policy \(WCPP\)](#)

Host team: Professor James Downe and Dr Eleanor Mackillop

Summary: opportunity to test and share learning on innovative approaches to creating and capturing the impact of What Works Centres (WWCs)

Policy topic: improving the impact of WWCs on policy and practice.

Research Council: ESRC

Academic discipline(s): knowledge mobilisation, impact evaluation, participatory action research and embedded research

Research career stage: open to mid-career researchers onwards

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: this fellowship will involve two types of work. It will involve being embedded in different WWCs, working with their staff to develop and pilot tools and processes to achieve and capture impact. It will also involve working with WCPP as the host WWC to, among other things, shape the project, discuss findings and evaluate, and organise dissemination. Most WWCs have offices in London, and we would expect that during the inception phase, the fellow would visit the WCPP office in Cardiff at least three times. The fellow might also need to visit collaborating WWCs to develop each pilot project. During the placement phase, and according to individual agreements made with WWCs, we would expect the fellow to visit WWCs' London offices at least six times over the 12-month period. During the knowledge exchange phase, and according to demand and need from WWCs and other stakeholders (for example, policymakers, funders), we would expect the fellow to visit WCPP at least three times and WWCs' in London at least three times. You should identify the budget for travel costs based on this information provided above in your application

Hybrid working: WCPP has a hybrid working policy. Their precise working pattern will be agreed with the fellow during the inception phase considering their needs and circumstances (including travel time, caring responsibilities) We anticipate that they will work remotely for most of the time. But we believe that there will be benefits in spending some time in our offices in Cardiff University's Social Science Park to build links with other research centres at Cardiff, as well as joining in all Centre activities such as team meetings, team development days, monthly journal reading club and social events. This will ensure that the fellow feels fully embedded in and supported by the WCPP team. Eligible

Travel and Subsistence costs are supported in the main UKRI grant. Please see full call text and guidance for more details

Security clearance: there is no security clearance needed for WCPP

Fellowship description

The WCPP is seeking to recruit a fellow who will lead a project supporting WWCs to develop and capture their impact on policy and practice. WWCs are diverse organisations with different funding arrangements, audiences and ways of working. Achieving and demonstrating impact is an important priority for them all, but also for other knowledge brokering organisations, think tanks, policymakers and funders.

There is little existing research on how to achieve and capture the impact of knowledge brokers as existing studies largely focus on how research informs policy and practice and ignores the potential impact of brokers who sit between research and policy or practice. The fellowship will develop and pilot, using participatory action research methods, innovative tools aimed at improving the impact of WWCs.

WWCs have developed theories of change, used stakeholder mapping, designed capacity building initiatives and worked collaboratively with their stakeholders to increase their impact. Various methods are used to track impact including activity indicators, interview or survey data, event feedback and citations of their outputs. The fellow will help to identify and then pilot innovative models and tools (from within the What Works Network and beyond) for achieving and capturing impact in a sample of WWCs.

There are four main stages to the project:

1. A review of the existing literature and practice on tools, processes, and models for achieving impact in knowledge brokering. This will build on work conducted by WCPP. The fellow will be able to codesign the project using the results from this review
2. Setting up pilot arrangements with two to three WWCs to work on a specific tool, process or model for achieving and capturing impact. These models and tools might already have been tested elsewhere in the Network or be promising approaches identified from the literature or knowledge brokering practice. This might include testing an impact planning model, a specific activity or way of working such as coproduction, or applying a tool such as stakeholder analysis on a chosen project to think about what activities, partners, audiences, behaviours, outputs, outcomes and impacts the WWC would like to see emerge. WCPP has led impact-focused projects within the What Works Network and is well placed to support the fellow in their development of pilots
3. Most of the main placement phase will see the fellow embedded in WWCs and piloting the agreed models or tools, documenting those pilots and beginning to evaluate their effectiveness.
4. Drawing out and sharing learning from the project with WWCs and other key players in this field (for example, other knowledge brokers and key interested parties in policy and research) on what the results mean for the impact of knowledge brokering. This learning phase will include reflection sessions with the WWC staff and stakeholders and dissemination activities involving the What Works Council, UK Cabinet Office, ESRC, Universities Policy Engagement Network (UPEN) and OECD

Expected outcomes:

The fellow will apply their knowledge and analytical skills to address a fundamental problem of achieving and demonstrating the impact of knowledge brokering. They will bring WWCs together at an operational level to think collectively about impact and develop best practice. They will test out different processes and tools for framing, tracking and having impact. The fellow will share learning from the fellowship with WWCs and the wider knowledge mobilisation community via events and outputs such as a report, briefing paper, blog and academic article on the experience of testing research impact tools on live projects.

Benefits to the fellow:

- Experience of collaborating with researchers in a WWC to conduct research on a highly salient topic
- Opportunity to work with academics in WCPP to publish an academic output from the fellowship. The Centre has a very supportive research culture where work in progress can be discussed with colleagues on a regular basis
- Developing their research, impact, and dissemination skills in a real-world environment
- Opportunity to influence how the What Works Network measures its impact
- Building a network of contacts in WWCs, universities, policy and practice and those working on impact across institutions

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:

Research knowledge, skills and experience:

- A PhD level in a related subject area or equivalent relevant experience
- An established expertise and proven portfolio of research, publications or relevant professional experience within at least two of the following research fields: Impact of research and evidence on policy and practice (and evaluation of impact), public policy research (especially the policymaking cycle, evidence-informed policymaking and advisory systems), qualitative research methods (especially regarding participatory methods and action research), Evidence synthesis, Knowledge mobilisation, transfer, brokering
- Experience of managing research or knowledge mobilisation projects with multiple strands of activity, competing deadlines and finite resources
- Experience of reviewing academic or grey knowledge and drawing out key findings in an easily accessible format (such as lay summaries, briefing papers)

Communication and team working:

- Proven ability to develop relationships, work effectively with, and improve the flow of evidence and insights with a wide range of stakeholders including policymakers, academics and practitioners
- Proven ability to design and deliver events with different types of stakeholders

Applicants shortlisted from the panel assessment will be assessed at the host led interview selection process against the following desirable opportunity-specific requirements:

Desirable criteria:

- Proven ability to demonstrate creativity, innovation and leadership in understanding how to achieve and capture impact
- Evidence of collaborations with policymakers, public service practitioners or knowledge brokering organisations
- Experience of working in research or policy related to evaluation or impact
- Experience of drawing insights from research findings and writing them up for decision-makers

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 WCPP's privacy notice can be found here: [Cardiff University privacy notice](#). 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.