



UK Research and Innovation Staff Networks Framework of Operations and Engagement

Workforce Equality Diversity and Inclusion

Contents

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Purpose of staff networks	3
3.	Roles and responsibilities	3
4.	Terms of reference	4
5.	Leading a staff network.....	4
6.	Strategy Development	5
7.	Expectations and behaviours	6
8.	Governance and budget	7
9.	Engagement	9
10.	Support from Workforce EDI team.....	10
11.	Network structure and roles	10
12.	Arranging network meetings	12
13.	Network communications.....	12
14.	Establishing a new staff network.....	13
15.	Closing a staff network.....	14
	Annex 1 Workforce EDI Governance Model.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
	Annex 2 Role profiles	Error! Bookmark not defined.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) has a critical role in fostering an outstanding research and innovation system in the UK, to which everyone can contribute and from which everyone benefits. To deliver on this vision as an organisation we must lead by example and challenge ourselves to be a more inclusive equitable and accessible organisation.
- 1.2. More than 8,000 people work across the breadth of UKRI. Staff networks provide a safe space for colleagues to share experiences, provide support to each other and work collectively to support organisational change.
- 1.3. The eight formally recognised UKRI staff networks are a critical aspect of employee voice within UKRI, providing advocacy and support for the groups they represent. They help to develop a work environment and culture where colleagues feel safe, valued, and able to be authentically themselves at work.

- 1.4. Providing support to the staff networks through training, guidance and funding is a priority for UKRI to enable the staff networks to effectively contribute to EDI activities that make UKRI a more inclusive organisation.
- 1.5. This Framework of Operations and Engagement sets out the terms that govern the establishment and management of EDI staff networks within UKRI.
- 1.6. Staff networks are self-managed, however, networks are expected to operate within these terms and should work in partnership with the Workforce Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team and the wider organisation to support the delivery of the Workforce EDI plan, and UKRI's Strategy.
- 1.7. Any practice not in line with this Framework may result in intervention by UKRI.

2. Purpose of staff networks

- 2.1. Staff networks provide a space for employees to connect and build relationships, provide and receive peer support, and to network with colleagues across the organisation. The networks offer support through member events and activities as well as signposting to relevant information and resources where appropriate.
- 2.2. By working with the Workforce EDI team and other teams across UKRI, networks have the opportunity to identify, generate and offer solutions to workplace challenges and barriers so that members and non-members can achieve their full potential.
- 2.3. Staff networks also provide a platform for staff to raise awareness of important topics through activities such as communications, events, and campaigns to help staff, managers and leaders across the organisation to better understand the experiences and challenges faced by their colleagues.
- 2.4. Staff networks do not act as subject matter experts on EDI and do not replace the role of Trade Union representatives, however networks can engage with union representatives to discuss mutual areas of interest.

3. Roles and responsibilities

- 3.1. UKRI staff networks are expected to:
 - lead by example, be an advocate and help to promote inclusive behaviour across the organisation
 - organise, support and promote relevant activities and events

- support the organisation's delivery of the Workforce EDI plan through collaborative working, sharing ideas and experiences and constructively challenging where appropriate
- celebrate and promote positive change and success

3.2. UKRI staff networks are **not** expected to:

- deliver the Workforce EDI plan
- provide subject matter expertise in EDI
- train colleagues on EDI
- act as Trade Union representatives
- handle EDI related casework
- provide HR advice

4. Terms of reference

4.1. Staff networks are responsible for developing and annually reviewing their own terms of reference, which should be made available on their respective pages of The Source.

4.2. It is expected that a network and its members will:

- operate within this Framework set out by UKRI
- abide by UKRI policies in the running of the network including [employment policies](#), [Data Protection](#) and [IT Acceptable Use Policy](#)
- act in accordance with the [UKRI People Standards](#)
- engage with the Workforce EDI team on network activities, including if there are concerns about the network's activities, membership or leadership
- protect UKRI's reputation on EDI internally and externally
- feed into UKRI Workforce EDI Steering Group activities through the nominated UKRI staff network chair representatives

5. Leading a staff network

5.1. All leadership team roles are voluntary. Co-chairs are allocated 1 day (0.05 FTE) per month each as allocated time to carry out network related activities. This will on average equate to 8 hours per month. Any additional time required should be agreed

with their line manager. For networks that currently have greater than two chairing roles, for example two co-chairs and a vice chair, the network will receive a total allocation of 0.1 FTE per month which can be split between the chairing individuals as required.

- 5.2. It is advised that staff sit on only one network leadership team, however there should be no restriction on staff joining multiple networks as members.
- 5.3. As part of the allocated time, the chair or co-chairs are expected to attend a monthly staff network chairs meeting, meet with the Workforce EDI team regularly and complete an annual network activities report.
- 5.4. Leadership team members are expected to attend regular leadership team meetings.
- 5.5. All leadership team roles should be appointed through an open and transparent application process. Networks should have continuity plans for leadership team roles, and where possible ensure numerous roles are not vacated at the same time.
- 5.6. (Co)-chair roles should be held for a maximum term of 3-years to ensure continued innovation and new ideas, and to enable opportunities for others to develop. If after a 3-year term, there is no-one wishing to stand for election, those who have served their maximum term may stand again for a second term of office. There is no maximum term of office for other roles within the leadership team however networks should consider reviewing all roles as part of the chairing role election process, and as part of succession planning and action planning for network activities.
- 5.7. Those joining a leadership team should discuss and agree this with their line manager. It is advised that a specific “Core Ongoing Responsibilities” objective is included in the individual’s Annual Performance and Development Review (APDR) to ensure there is formal recognition for their contribution. Guidance on objective setting can be found on the [Appraisal & Performance Toolkit](#).

6. Strategy Development

- 6.1. The Workforce EDI team is responsible and accountable for delivering the Workforce EDI plan and will engage with the staff networks on activities and initiatives where appropriate. Staff networks should work with the Workforce EDI team to support initiatives and disseminate information to members.

- 6.2. Staff network leadership teams are expected to develop their own annual strategy in consultation with the network's members and Executive Sponsors. This should set out the network activities, engagement and budget spend planned for the network. The strategy should be made available on the respective network page of the on The Source and reviewed at the end of the intended duration of the strategy.
- 6.3. Staff may have intersecting identities and characteristics; therefore, all networks are encouraged to work collaboratively with other staff networks to fully represent the diversity of UKRI staff. Staff can also choose to be a member of more than one network.

7. Expectations and behaviours

- 7.1. The [UKRI People Standards](#) lay out the behaviours and attitudes expected of all UKRI colleagues based on the four core values of Innovation, Integrity, Collaboration and Excellence.
- 7.2. Behaviours are aligned to three categories:
- **leading self:** collective behaviours for all colleagues
 - **leading teams:** additional required behaviours for colleagues who either manage direct reports or manage a team(s)
 - **leading the organisation:** further behaviours for senior managers who have influence across the organisation and play a vital role in connecting with colleagues to develop and embed the UKRI strategy
- 7.3. Staff network chairs and co-chairs, and leadership teams have a critical role as leaders and representatives of UKRI and are therefore expected to demonstrate the additional behaviours identified for those leading teams and leading within the organisation.
- 7.4. Should there be any concerns with regards to an individual's behaviour on the staff network leadership team, then this should be raised with the Workforce EDI Team who will manage the situation as appropriate. The Workforce EDI Team retain the right to remove an individual from a role on the leadership team if the individual is deemed to be demonstrating unacceptable behaviour as set out by the people standards, or if after a formal investigation or process, they are found to be acting in breach of UKRI's policies in their role on the leadership team.

- 7.5. Those in staff network leadership roles should ensure all network activities are conducted according to all [UKRI policies](#) and guidance.
- 7.6. Any breach of UKRI policies, including formal complaints or grievance relating to conduct will be handled formally through the line management structure, and in line with UKRI's policies and procedures.
- 7.7. There may be occasions when leadership team members are given access to information prior to the wider organisation and will be expected to treat this information in the strictest confidence.

8. Governance and budget

- 8.1. UKRI currently formally supports eight staff networks that each focus on a shared identity:
- Carers
 - Disability Matters
 - Early Career (ECN)
 - Multi-Faith
 - Parenting
 - Pride
 - Racial Inclusion Striving for Equity (RISE)
 - Women and Gender Equity (WaGE)
- 8.2. Staff networks play a critical role within the Workforce EDI governance structure ([Annex 1](#)) by sharing the lived experiences of UKRI staff, and by challenging the organisation on policies and processes. They support UKRI to become a more inclusive, equitable and accessible organisation and help to develop a work environment and culture where colleagues feel safe, valued, and able to be authentically themselves at work.
- 8.3. Staff network chairs should nominate two representatives to collectively represent the networks on the Workforce EDI Steering Group, which oversees the Workforce EDI plan. These roles may be rotated annually if required.
- 8.4. In order to be considered a functioning UKRI EDI staff network, networks should:
- aim to provide a safe space for staff with a shared identity, or those wishing to provide allyship

- have a leadership team covering the following roles or functions (as a minimum): (co-)chair, secretary, treasurer, communications and events
- hold an Annual General Meeting for all members
- provide the opportunity for all members to input into network plans and activities a minimum of every 6 months
- engage with the Workforce EDI Team and their work, for example, working collaboratively, providing input on EDI initiatives and ensuring a representative of the network (usually the chair/co-chair) attends staff network chairs meetings
- submit an annual report between June and October to the autumn Workforce EDI Steering Group, outlining their activities and outputs from the year and how they align with the network's strategy, and the UKRI Workforce EDI Plan

8.5. An annual budget of £500 for each network is available to support activities such as events, meetings and resources. An additional cross-network budget of £4000 is also available to support collaborative activities and enable flexibility of spend across the eight networks according to differing needs. The available annual budget is subject to UKRI's overall budget allocations and will be reviewed on an annual basis. All expenditure should have a clear business purpose. This may include expenditure related to:

- awareness-raising of issues relating to the network
- support for network members
- educational purposes e.g. attendance at conferences or training for members
- hosting events or meetings

The funding provided may not be used for:

- alcoholic beverages
- political activity or lobbying
- any activities that would exclude or cause detriment to another UKRI colleague
- any activity that would bring UKRI's reputation into disrepute

- 8.6. Staff networks are strongly encouraged to work intersectionally and consider planning joint events with other internal or external networks to maximise the impact of the investment.
- 8.7. Where a staff network requires additional funding outside of the allocated budget for specific activities, there is the opportunity to build a case that will be considered by the Workforce EDI team and within the Culture, Inclusion and Learning team. A decision will be taken depending on the:
- benefit to potential members and all staff
 - strategic alignment to the Workforce EDI plan
 - similarity to other activities planned or recently undertaken
 - availability of funds

9. Engagement

- 9.1. Where reasonably possible, staff networks will be provided with the opportunity to engage with UKRI teams on activities and changes that directly impact on staff.
- 9.2. The Workforce EDI team is the conduit between the networks and the wider organisation and will manage requests in relation to staff network engagement with UKRI activities, including ensuring networks are given a minimum timeframe of three weeks to respond.
- 9.3. Staff networks receiving requests directly should redirect the requestor to the Workforce EDI team in the first instance. This includes asks or suggestions from members where it relates to the wider organisation as opposed to being limited to current members of the network.
- 9.4. Staff networks are not part of the formal consultation stage with regards to policy reviews, however once policies have been redeveloped, staff networks will be included in the same manner as all other stakeholders in the consultation exercise to provide feedback.
- 9.5. The Workforce EDI team will utilise the insights from staff networks as part of a wider array of subject matter, organisational, legal and best practice expertise to identify issues of concern and work with HR Policy to address them.
- 9.6. Whilst staff networks are encouraged to participate in consultation and review activities to utilise their membership's voice across UKRI activities, it is not

mandatory. Staff networks should consider what is realistically achievable with the resource and capacity they have at the time of any request.

10. Support from Workforce EDI team

10.1. The Workforce EDI team commit to offering:

- opportunities to input into initiatives and events
- brokerage of relationships with other internal and external equality networks and/or key internal or external colleagues, to support with sharing experiences and establishing good practice
- leadership support to progress issues causing the network concern and/or the opportunity to discuss progress or suggestions
- support with publicity of the network and its activities within the organisation
- advice on the establishment or dissolution of a network
- learning and development opportunities for members of the leadership team

10.2. The Workforce EDI team will meet a minimum of every 2-months with each staff network chairing team. These meetings provide an opportunity for networks to seek support and guidance on network activities, concerns and issues arising; and bilaterally share updates.

11. Network structure and roles

11.1. Leadership team

- Networks are advised to have two co-chairs
- Each network is also expected to have the following roles or functions:
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Communications
 - Events
- Networks may have additional roles or functions depending on the needs of the network. For example:
 - Membership officer/s,
 - Local or site leads

- Project managers
- Non-portfolio roles should be avoided, and instead individuals should be given short-term positions on the leadership team for the duration of a project they are leading.
- Role profiles can be found in [Annex 2](#).
- Networks should regularly update the Workforce EDI team on any new and retiring leadership team members.
- Leadership team roles are open to anyone regardless of an individual's background, career stage, area of UKRI or contract type.

11.2. Membership

- All UKRI employees are welcome to join and support one, or multiple staff network/s.
- All members should be invited to attend the network Annual General Meeting (AGM).
- All members should have the opportunity to vote in the election of chairs.

11.3. Executive sponsors

- Vibrant and successful staff networks are those which have the long-term support of senior managers and decision-makers. For this reason, networks have Executive Sponsors who act as champions by:
 - Learning and better understanding experiences and perspectives within the organisation
 - Providing a sounding board and advice on network business
 - Connecting networks with stakeholders across UKRI
- Executive sponsors should be senior leaders who, in their position, have influence or who are decision makers for UKRI. They do not necessarily have to share the identity of the staff network they sponsor, however they should have a good understanding of the purpose, needs and challenges of the network and be an active and visible advocate for it.
- The roles and responsibilities of an Executive Sponsor can be found in [Annex 2](#).

- It is advised that Sponsors meet at least once every quarter with the Network Chair/Co-Chairs; and attend at least one Leadership Team meeting every six months.
- Executive Sponsors are expected to attend the network AGM where possible.

12. Arranging network meetings

- 12.1. Staff Network core leadership teams are expected to meet a minimum of once every six weeks. A note of each meeting should be made available on their respective pages of The Source, redacting confidential or sensitive information or discussions where necessary.
- 12.2. Each staff network should hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM), which should provide the opportunity for members to discuss and input into the running of the network. Minutes should be shared with all members and made available on their respective pages on The Source.

13. Network communications

- 13.1. Staff network leadership teams may at times be contacted by members about personal situations and cases. Leadership team members should avoid sharing their personal assessment of an individual's case, particularly if this relates to potential discrimination or harassment. Always redirect the individual to contact their HR advisor in the first instance. Leadership team members should not forward emails relating to personal cases onto anyone (including HR or Workforce EDI) without the express permission of the individual.
- 13.2. Staff networks are expected to communicate regularly with members through a variety of forums and ensure there are opportunities for bidirectional feedback.
- 13.3. Staff networks encouraged to manage their own communications working with the Internal Communications team to manage their dedicated page on The Source and sharing information through other formal internal communication channels.
- 13.4. A network's dedicated page on The Source should be kept up to date with at least the:
 - leadership team names and roles

- terms of Reference
- network strategy
- membership sign-up information
- leadership team meeting minutes
- annual general meeting minutes

- 13.5. Each network is responsible for establishing and maintaining its own peer communication channels such as email groups, yammer and zoom groups, abiding by UKRI policies.
- 13.6. Staff networks are encouraged to make connections and engage with networks and employee resource groups at other organisations, exchanging best practice and collaborating on activities.
- 13.7. Whilst communication of network activities externally is permitted, networks are required to discuss any planned external communications with the Workforce EDI Team and External Communications team. Any communications must adhere to UKRI's [Code of Conduct](#) on employee use of social media.

14. Establishing a new staff network

- 14.1. Any staff member or group of colleagues can formulate a proposal to establish and lead a recognised EDI related UKRI staff network.
- 14.2. Colleagues should contact the Workforce EDI team in the first instance with their proposal outlining:
- the proposed name of the group
 - a mission statement demonstrating how the group will support staff with a shared identity and the UKRI's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion
 - the names of those proposed for leadership team functions including chair, secretary, treasurer, communications and events
 - the number of prospective members
- 14.3. Propositions will be considered by the Workforce EDI team, along with relevant teams within the Culture, Inclusion and Learning centre of expertise and HR depending on the subject matter or shared identity. Approval to establish a formal Staff Network will be dependent on the:

- proposed mission statement and alignment to UKRI's commitment to equality diversity and inclusion, and priorities for Culture, Inclusion and Learning
- availability of funds
- distinctness from existing UKRI staff networks

14.4. Many networks have members with particular interest or affinity within the wider network, and it may be appropriate for sub-groups to be established within one of the formal networks. These groups should operate within the network's terms of reference and be included in the network level governance including reporting and AGMs.

14.5. Employees may choose to establish staff groups that are not focused on a characteristic or not recognised formally by UKRI. These groups are not covered by this Framework of Operations.

14.6. UKRI staff networks should ensure they engage with the leadership team of any pre-existing local staff networks where subjects align, to ensure the voice of these colleagues is heard. If appropriate, local networks may wish to consider re-branding as a subgroup of the formal network.

15. Closing a staff network

15.1. A Staff Network must have a quorum of greater than 50% of the membership (including leadership team) if it wishes to close.

15.2. If greater than 50% of the membership agree to close, then the (co-)chair should contact the Workforce EDI team to oversee and advise on communications and processes.

15.3. Should the leadership team wish to close the network, but greater than 50% of the total membership do not agree then an election may be held to fill vacated leadership team positions. If the core leadership team roles are not able to be filled (from membership or wider UKRI community) within 3 months, then the network may proceed to close