

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the 2027 – 2029 Thematic Research Lead roles

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1. Eligibility

1.1 Am I eligible to apply?

Applications are open to:

UK university-based established researchers who already have a PhD and are employed on an academic or research contract, or undertake research as a substantive part of their role. The university must be eligible to receive UKRI funding (most are).

Or

Established researchers who work in in [UKRI Institutes, UKRI Independent Research Organisations, or Catapult Centres](#) and are active researchers within their organisation. They will either have PhD or equivalent experience. Note that those from the Connected Places Catapult are not eligible.

Researchers who have achieved the career stage or role title of 'Professor', or equivalent, within the non-academic research sector are not eligible for the TRL role and should not apply.

Researchers working in a public sector agencies or [public sector research establishments](#) are not eligible to apply.

1.2 I'm a notable and experienced researcher but I don't have a PhD. Am I eligible?

Exceptionally, those who don't have a PhD but can demonstrate equivalent experience through their application are eligible. Again, you must be employed in an institution eligible to receive UKRI funding, and hold an academic or research contract or undertake research as a substantive part of your role.

1.3 Do I need to have a permanent contract to apply for this role?

No, you don't need to be on a permanent contract, however, your contract end date must run past 31 March 2029. We know some organisations undertake to extend their researcher's fixed term roles if they are successful for the TRL role. Please see the FAQ '[I'm on a fixed term contract – can I apply?](#)' for more information.

1.4 I'm on a fixed term contract – can I apply?

All applicants must be employed on a contract which extends past 31 March 2029 (and meet all other eligibility criteria).

We know that some organisations recognise the value and prestige of the TRL position and undertake to extend the fixed term role should the applicant be successful at interview. Confirmation of this agreement must be provided at the point the applicant progresses to the assessment and interview stage. The applicant cannot proceed without this written guarantee in place. Please note there may only be a two-week period between notification of interview and the interview taking place. Therefore, potential extensions to your substantive contract must be discussed with your organisation well in advance.

Guarantees to extend the fixed term role for part time staff must be between 0.6 and 1 FTE.

1.5 I'm not sure if I'm senior enough to apply.

We are looking for established researchers with substantial subject knowledge within an aspect of the thematic area they're applying for and who have the skills and behaviours listed within the criteria for the role.

We do not specify a set number of years the applicant should have attained post PhD.

We have avoided using definitions such as 'mid-career' and 'early-career' because this is an inclusive opportunity and the definition of these terms varies within the sector. However, for applicants who feel they need a reference point here are the UKRI definitions of early and mid-career:

- an early career researcher is somebody who has yet to establish or transition to independence (where an independent researcher has submitted their own proposal and taken on the role of project lead); there are no eligibility rules based on years since PhD or whether you currently hold a permanent or open-ended job role
- a mid-career researcher is somebody who has established independence, having, for example, taken on the role of project lead, published works of intellectual distinction, or established a significant track record as a 'champion' within their field.

Drawing on these definitions this opportunity is open to both early and mid-career researchers in professional research roles who can demonstrate they are an established researcher, hold excellent subject knowledge, and can showcase the requested skills and behaviours as listed in the criteria for the role. We reiterate that this is an inclusive opportunity and encourage all researchers who feel they meet the criteria to apply.

1.6 What is an 'established' researcher?

For the purposes of this call, established researchers are considered those in professional research roles with significant expertise in the TRL portfolio area, up to **but not including professorial level** (at the call deadline).

Assessment of the researcher's established skills and expertise as detailed on their CV will be supported by two academic representatives who are knowledgeable and notable within the thematic field, alongside assessment by specialists in the thematic policy area in UK Parliament.

1.7 Can we chat or have a phone call about this role?

We're delighted that we are receiving enquiries about the TRL roles. However, we're a tiny team of three people and are unable to have individual calls about the roles. We would be grateful if you would seek answers to your queries through the information we've provided first. Please ensure you have checked for an answer from these sources before contacting us:

- this FAQ document
- the guidance notes
- the TRL role description and criteria
- the online recruitment portal (which also contains a link to the Support and Funding Verification Form)
or, where appropriate,
- attend the [online TRL information session](#) (18 June) or have watched the recording. The link to the recording will be added to the [TRL webpage](#) as soon as possible after the event. If it's not appearing it means we've not uploaded it yet.

If, after checking these sources, you have a query which isn't covered do reach out to us - we'll be pleased to assist via email. Email: keu@parliament.uk.

1.8 I'm applying for promotion to Professor. Am I eligible to apply?

That's great that you're hoping to progress in your career and we do not want potential applicants to hold back on applying for promotion.

To be eligible for the role you must not already be confirmed as a Professor on the deadline for application to the TRL role (Sunday 9 August 11.55pm).

Should you subsequently be appointed as Professor before commencing the TRL role we may ask your organisation for confirmation/assurance of the timing conferring the Professorial appointment. We thank you for your cooperation in providing this to ensure we are meeting the spirit of the professional developmental funding intent of the TRL roles.

If you are appointed as an associate professor (or non-academic equivalent) you are eligible to apply.

1.9 I am an associate professor – am I eligible?

Yes, associate professors are eligible for the TRL roles. If your career stage/descriptor is equivalent to associate professor but known as a different term we expect you to be eligible. You are welcome to email us (keu@parliament.uk) for confirmation.

1.10 I'm a new professor and consider myself mid-career. Am I eligible to apply?

Unfortunately, you are not eligible to apply for the TRL role if you have attained Professor (or equivalent) status, no matter how recently. The funding for this role is specifically aimed to develop non-Professorial researchers. Furthermore, diversity of voices is important to parliament, and the TRL roles are one of the ways we are working to create opportunities for researchers at different career levels.

We understand that not all professors have had the same career trajectory or background, and that some might feel less advanced in their career. However, we have a clear eligibility cut off as soon as an individual reaches Professorial status.

We are sorry that you aren't eligible for the opportunity. Although it is not the same at all, we'd be delighted if you'd be willing to engage with the person who we do appoint to the relevant role. And, of course, we welcome your expertise feeding into other aspects of parliamentary work.

1.11 What do you mean by 'academic contract'?

We mean that this role is open to anyone who is in a professional research role, so who is actively conducting research as part of their substantive post (though they may conduct other kinds of work such as teaching, engagement, knowledge exchange, impact duties, management or professional tasks, or administration alongside their research). This opportunity is not open to professional services staff unless they also hold a substantial research role within their eligible organisation.

1.12 I'm not a UK citizen. Can I apply?

To be eligible, you must have permission to work in the UK, and you must have lived in the UK for at least 3 of the past 5 years dating back from 2 November 2026 (which makes you eligible for security clearance to work on the parliamentary Estate).

1.13 I have lived abroad for part of the last 5 years. Am I eligible to apply?

To be eligible, you must have permission to work in the UK, and you must have lived in the UK for a total of at least 3 of the past 5 years dating back from 2 November 2026 (which makes you eligible for security clearance to work on the parliamentary Estate).

We understand that applicants who have worked in UK diplomacy positions, are UK civil servants that are posted overseas or who can demonstrate UK official services overseas may, in a rare case, be able to demonstrate the required evidence to achieve security clearance. This would include demonstration of official, structured time outside of the UK through records which are verifiable by the security clearance team. It is rare that an individual is able to demonstrate this and meet all other eligibility criteria, including the requirement as an established researcher with deep thematic subject knowledge. If you feel you meet these requirements we encourage you to get in touch before applying for the role. We will refer your eligibility to security clearance specialists to obtain an indicator of eligibility. Please note that decisions related to security clearance are final.

1.14 I don't work in academia or higher education, am I eligible to apply?

All applicants, even those that work within academia, must be employed by an institution that is eligible to receive [UKRI funding](#). Specifically, this is:

- universities or higher education providers that meet the criteria for UKRI funding opportunities. This is most universities. If you're uncertain whether your university is included, speak with your research grants professional service colleagues or refer to the 'Higher education providers' section on the [UKRI eligibility webpage](#).
- Researchers (or those with substantial research within your role) employed by UKRI Institutes, UKRI Independent Research Organisations, or Catapult Centres (with the exception of the Connected Places Catapult). The eligible organisations are listed on the [UKRI eligibility webpage](#).

Not all UKRI funded institutions are eligible. Public sector research establishments, charities and government departments are not eligible for the TRL roles – you can check the classification of your organisation through the lists on the [UKRI eligibility webpage](#).

1.15 I work in a public sector research establishment, am I eligible?

We are afraid that, because you work in a public sector agency, you are not eligible. Working two roles (as a TRL three days a week, and in a public sector research establishment two days a week) in both parliament and the public sector agency/research establishment would create a conflict of interest. For this reason, the scheme isn't open to public sector agencies.

1.16 I work in a Research Institute, am I eligible to apply?

Yes, if your organisation is [listed on this UKRI webpage](#).

1.17 I work in an independent research organisation or catapult centre, am I eligible to apply?

Yes, if your organisation is [listed on this UKRI webpage](#).

1.18 I work (or only want to work) part time. Can I still apply?

You must be able to work a minimum of 0.6 FTE to take up the TRL role.

Individuals working at 0.6 FTE would work all their 0.6 FTE hours within parliament and would not work any hours within their university or research organisation for the duration of the TRL role. However, please note that your substantive research organisation retains responsibility for you as an employee including management arrangements such as facilitation of annual leave. This is the case even if you work all your hours in parliament and none in the research organisation due to your part time working hours.

Individuals working more than 0.6 FTE but less than 1 FTE work the 0.6 FTE with parliament and complete the remaining fractional hours in their substantive role at their institution. Alternatively, they can choose to work 0.6 FTE in parliament and – with their organisation's permission – not work their remaining time at their substantive organisation. This is a decision that is taken between the employer and the employee. If this is the case, the TRL would still only be required to work 0.6 FTE in parliament.

It is not possible to work less than 0.6 FTE in carrying out the TRL role.

1.19 Can a TRL role be shared with another person?

Unfortunately, it is not possible to 'job-share' the TRL role, as the role requires someone who can dedicate three days a week to it and build connections and relationships with a wide range of parliamentary colleagues. However, people currently working part-time roles are welcome to apply to do 0.6 FTE with parliament, and no time at their university or research organisation.

2. Political Impartiality and Conflicts of Interest

2.1 Why is political impartiality required?

TRLs fall within the same requirements for political impartiality as parliamentary staff do. Our impartiality is important because we provide information, briefing and advice to parliamentarians on subjects of political significance. parliamentarians must be able to trust the support that staff and TRLs provide. parliamentarians are entitled to expect that services are provided with complete political impartiality and that briefing and advice are not influenced by the personal political opinions of individual TRLs or members of staff. It's important they feel confident that all material provided is politically balanced, represents a range of views, and does not advise towards a particular political viewpoint or 'lobby'. Our impartiality means parliamentarians can draw upon the evidence to inform their thinking or policy decisions, no matter what their political affiliation is.

Not only is our work impartial, but we must be perceived as impartial to ensure parliamentarians are confident of the integrity of our work. This means restricting how we share any personal political views in public platforms and ensuring we draw from balanced and robust evidence when publishing in the media.

2.2 My research leans towards a political standpoint – does that mean I can't apply?

It would be rare for a researcher's academic research history to bar them from applying for the TRL role. It's entirely acceptable — and often expected — that researchers will have worked on topics that intersect with political debates, policy positions, or normative arguments. Academic research can criticise, advocate, explore trade-offs, or test competing viewpoints.

Having conducted research that takes a particular perspective does not in itself make someone unsuitable for a TRL role.

What matters is not whether your work touches on political or policy issues, but how you conduct yourself in a professional advisory context.

In a TRL role, you are not being asked to set aside your expertise — but rather to apply it in a way that is fair, balanced, and evidence-led, even where the evidence challenges your own prior conclusions. In practice this means you can:

- Present evidence objectively, including findings that do not support a single viewpoint
- Reflect the range of credible perspectives in a field, not just your own
- Avoid advocacy for a particular political outcome in your role
- Support scrutiny and decision-making processes fairly, regardless of party or position

However, there are situations where prior work or activity may make it difficult to demonstrate, or be perceived as demonstrating, impartiality. This may include:

- Strong public advocacy – such as prominently campaigning for a specific policy or political outcome.
- Media articles or appearances where you repeatedly argue a single fixed position without nuance, or through the media align yourself with an organisation known for their partiality.
- Reluctance to acknowledge credible alternative perspectives, or framing evidence selectively to support a predetermined conclusion.
- Holding a formal role within a political party or campaigning organisation (holding party membership privately is acceptable, however, taking a formal or prominent role within the party structure would be considered to compromise your impartiality).
- Recent targeted approaches or contributions which were designed to influence legislation in a partisan way (usually these would be highly visible publicly).
- Situations where an observer might doubt your ability to advise impartiality, even if you personally believe you could.

The above descriptions would constitute a conflict of interest and, if appointed as TRL, you would need to step away from such affiliations and partial media publications.

Researchers should not self-select out of applying for the TRL role because their work engages with contentious topics or takes a particular stance. What matters is the ability to operate professionally and impartially in the role — something many researchers already do as part of their everyday practice.

2.3 I have party political affiliations. Am I eligible to apply?

Your personal membership of a political party does not bar you from applying for the TRL role. However, you must be careful about how and where you communicate this publicly, to avoid being perceived as partial when carrying out your TRL duties.

If you hold a formal role within the political party or the political structure, you will likely need to step down from this role for the duration of the TRL fellowship.

Further description on the importance of impartiality is available in this FAQ: [My research leans towards a political standpoint – does that mean I can't apply?](#)

2.4 What is considered as 'political activity' for the purposes of the TRL role?

Political activity includes, but is not restricted to:

At national level:

- holding office in a party-political organisation
- speaking in public, or via social networking sites, on matters of national political controversy
- expressing views on political matters in letters to the press, or in books, articles or leaflets, or by posting in an equivalent manner on social networking sites (for example via on-line discussion boards or blogs)
- being a candidate for UK Parliament (or for other parliaments)
- canvassing on behalf of a candidate for parliament or a political party
- attending conferences or functions arranged by party political organisations
- being involved in a national referendum campaign

At local level:

- speaking in public, or via social networking sites, on matters of local political controversy
- expressing views on political matters in letters to the press, or in books, articles or leaflets, or by posting in an equivalent manner on social networking sites (for example via on-line discussion boards or blogs)
- being a candidate or canvassing on behalf of a candidate for election to a local authority

3. Scope of the scheme

3.1 Where did these roles come from – what is the context?

In 2013, the [parliamentary Office of Science and Technology](#) began what would become a 10-year partnership with the [Economic and Social Research Council](#). Over that decade, we worked together to build and embed social science and knowledge exchange in parliament. In 2023, as that project came to an end, parliament began taking steps to enhance collaboration across parliamentary teams, within specific policy areas. We saw this as an ideal opportunity to continue our collaboration with ESRC and place researchers at the heart of this more strategic, collaborative cross-team activity. We commenced the TRL pilot cohort, with three TRLs, in 2023 to summer 2024. The pilot was successful, with the value of the pivotal TRL role recognised as an enabler to research engagement within UK Parliament. In 2024 to 2026, a second cohort of TRLs were recruited, in collaboration with UKRI, to sustain this valuable work. We are pleased to continue the partnership with UKRI

to recruit seven new TRLs for 2027 to 2029, and hope that you will consider applying for the opportunity.

3.2 Will you be appointing a TRL in [insert area here] in the future?

The selection of the TRL portfolios is widely consulted upon within parliament and UKRI to ensure it provides the opportunity for the greatest positive impact on parliamentary business by drawing on external research expertise. This means TRL portfolios change when we recruit a new cohort.

In the past, TRLs have been recruited to these portfolios: Climate and Environment; parliament, Public Administration and Constitution; International Affairs and National Security; Arts and Humanities; Crime and Justice; AI and Digital; Business, Economics and Trade; Health; and Transport.

For this cohort (2027-2029) we will be recruiting to these TRL portfolios and areas of expertise:

- AI, digital and technology
- National security and resilience
- Infrastructure, planning and land use, including clean energy industries
- Health and life sciences
- Education, children and young people
- Criminal justice
- Place-based economic growth

We would love to have a TRL to represent every policy area, however, funding is limited and we prioritise the areas where TRLs can make the greatest contribution.

If your expertise doesn't fit with the TRL roles we're recruiting to for 2027, please remember that we'd welcome your engagement with us through a different route. There is parliamentary provision to support scrutiny in the areas where TRLs are not being recruited, including: specialists in the parliamentary Libraries, select committee staff, and [POST's](#) advisers. Researchers who wish to engage with and support UK Parliament's work are encouraged to make connections through these parliamentary colleagues, and – of course – through the Knowledge Exchange Unit (keu@parliament.uk). We also recommend you [subscribe to our regular round up](#) which highlights a wide range of calls for expertise to engage with parliament's work.

3.3 Will the TRL role help me make a submission to REF or other policy impact related funding*?

*(with appropriate caveats for anonymising names, redacting sensitive information, etc)?

Yes and no.

We design the TRL role to provide you with a wide range of experiences that will help you develop professionally. You'll have a close connection with the legislative process, scrutiny,

and parliament's policy shaping functions. However, the type of work you will do as TRL will be what is most useful to parliament and that supports parliamentary business at that point.

Previous TRLs have found the TRL fellowship supported a REF Impact Case Study or formed part of their policy impact evidence journey, but we wish to caveat that this cannot be guaranteed.

A TRL is recruited for their significant expertise in the portfolio area and therefore they advise and bring the best available, most relevant research into parliament. This will include your own research where it is the best available and most relevant to the business in question. However, you will need to be mindful of the potential conflict of interest when wearing both your 'TRL hat' and your 'researcher hat'. We are confident that TRLs will act with integrity and not 'shoehorn' in their own content to further their personal ambitions.

Please note that the Knowledge Exchange Unit also collaborates closely with the REF 2029 team at Research England, including encouraging recognition of the significant influence and impact of TRL and other fellowship roles within UK Parliament.

In short, we will support TRLs to ensure they get the most out of their TRL opportunity, including through impact recognition, however, outcomes cannot be guaranteed as it will depend on the direction that parliamentary business takes.

4. Application process

4.1 Can I apply for more than one TRL role?

Yes! You are welcome to apply for up to three TRL roles that align with your professional research background. You should submit a separate application for each. Don't worry if most of the content is very similar – your applications will be assessed by separate teams who are each specialist to the TRL portfolio in question. We recommend you adapt your CV and, where appropriate, your responses to the criteria application questions to fit the nuance of each portfolio.

It's also essential that you state on your application form the priority order that you would accept the roles in. For example, if Health was your favourite you'd place it at priority number 1, followed by Education at 2, and then AI at 3. Should you be successful at interview for all of the Health, Education and AI portfolios, we would offer you the TRL fellowship for Health. Should you not be selected as the TRL for Health but were the preferred candidate for Education we would offer you the TRL fellowship for Education.

Please note, the priority order you indicate will have no bearing on whether you are selected for interview in the respective portfolios. Your applications will progress based on merit, and each portfolio is assessed by a separate team.

4.2 Are there any limits on the number of applications an organisation can submit?

No, there isn't a limit on the number of applications we will accept from an organisation. We hope the research organisation will feel they can support all potential applicants who are seeking support to apply. We appreciate there is a cost implication for an institution when a TRL is appointed; if it helps to reassure, we haven't yet had two TRLs from the same institution appointed within the same cohort.

4.3 Why / how do I anonymise my CV?

We are using a recruitment portal to achieve best practice in data protection, recruitment practice, and diversity monitoring. In the same way, we assess all applications without knowing who the application is from. The portal will automatically anonymise the application form which contains your personal details, however, it cannot anonymise your CV.

To anonymise your CV, please remove all references to your name, institution and contact details from your CV. This includes removing your name (and any coauthors names) from your publications.

We regret we will not be able to progress applications where the CV contains identifying information or personal details.

4.4 Will my application need any details of referees?

No.

4.5 I am in the process of relocating organisations. Should I get agreement from my future employer or my current employer?

First, you should ensure that your future organisation is eligible. You should then get agreement from your future employer. As you will have seen in the guidance, these roles are funded by UKRI and, in line with UKRI funding, UKRI funds 80% FEC, so your future employer would need to commit to the 20% FEC. If the date you will start with your new employer makes this agreement infeasible, please contact keu@parliament.uk for advice.

4.6 Will I be employed by parliament? Who will my line manager be?

No, you will remain employed by your research organisation who will release you for the 0.6 FTE fellowship within UK Parliament. Your research organisation will utilise the 80% FEC funding from UKRI to support the 0.6 FTE buy-out of your time and your essential costs.

Your formal line management, institutional benefits and HR support will remain with your substantive research organisation.

Alongside this, in UK Parliament, you will be fully supervised and supported by a parliamentary supervisor, the Knowledge Exchange Unit and a host of colleagues who are excited to welcome you to UK Parliament.

4.7 What if there is a problem?

If there is a difficulty during your time within parliament, for example a significant concern, a conflict of interest, or a performance matter that cannot be resolved between yourself and your supervisor, we will work with you and your line manager at your research organisation to address the concern.

If you have a complaint or grievance related to your experience in parliament, this will be addressed through the [independent parliamentary complaints and grievance scheme](#). Full details of this, and any other supportive services offered to TRLs, will be provided in your induction.

While your formal line management sits with your substantive research organisation, if we become concerned about your health or wellbeing during your time in UK Parliament we will raise this directly with your organisational line manager to ensure that you can be signposted or receive support.

4.8 How will I book annual leave? I've got an exciting holiday booked – can I still go?

You will continue to book annual leave in the same way you do now – with your substantive research organisation. Everything will stay the same including your annual leave allowance.

There is no requirement to split your annual leave time in the ratio 0.6 parliament and 0.4 (or less for part time working) within your research organisation. We ask that you discuss your intended annual leave with your parliamentary supervisor in advance so they can plan for your absence.

We encourage you to use all your annual leave allowance each year.

We ask all TRLs to attend the compulsory in-person induction session which will take place on 13, 14 and 15 April 2027. If you are unable to attend the induction please discuss this with us in advance of submitting your application.

You will likely find that parliamentary staff take their annual leave during the quieter parliamentary recess periods. There is no requirement for you to restrict your holiday plans to recess, however, we know that former TRLs have chosen to do this in part to make the most of the opportunities within the TRL role.

Please note, while the TRL role will commence on 1 April 2027, you will not be required to be onsite in parliament until 13 April. This means if you wish to take annual leave for holiday, caring responsibilities, or if you need time away from your duties during the period 1-12 April you are welcome to book this. (But please keep us informed in advance!)

5. Practicalities around the role

5.1 What is the TRL pattern of work?

TRLs work three days per week throughout the full two-year period. However, we are pragmatic about flexibility. If you have a peak period of work within your research organisation, for example to mark a volume of assignments within a tight deadline, and need to spend more than 0.4 FTE in your substantive organisation, we hope to support this. We hope that the reverse also applies - that if you have a peak period of parliamentary work during a lull at your substantive organisation that you will be able to accommodate this too. In both cases we would expect you to discuss your needs with your parliamentary supervisor and substantive organisational line manager and to rebalance the missed hours for either organisation at an appropriate point.

You will likely find your parliamentary workload will reduce during parliamentary recess. This may help you to plan ahead where you anticipate needing flexibility for, e.g. a focused period to progress your research.

Annual leave continues to be booked and managed through your substantive organisation and may be taken on both TRL and substantive organisational days.

While TRLs work three days per week, only a proportion of the TRLs' overall monthly time will be spent onsite in parliament. TRLs are not expected to be in Westminster every working day and are encouraged to find an onsite working schedule that suits both their personal needs and the needs of the parliamentary team they will work within. There is an expectation that TRLs will spend three days per month in person. We encourage TRLs to consider their personal needs and to discuss with their parliamentary supervisor when it's best for parliamentary business for them to attend in person.

TRLs may find it most helpful to make in-person visits to Westminster when parliament is sitting, rather than during recess. Again, after discussion with your parliamentary supervisor, if you wish to avoid in-person visits during recess periods (such as August) we anticipate it will be fine to make more frequent visits in a sitting month.

TRLs are welcome to be in-person in parliament more than three days per month if this suits their personal circumstances and is manageable within their allocated budget. However, this is not required.

All TRLs are asked to regularly work on a Wednesday regardless of if they are onsite or working remotely. TRLs are free to select their other two regular TRL working days within the week. However, we ask TRLs to discuss their proposed working pattern with their parliamentary supervisor to factor in the needs of parliamentary business. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are busy days in parliament. Select committees also tend to follow a regular pattern so the TRL may wish to select one of the days that would allow them to engage with select committee business (which their supervisor will be able to advise on). Regardless of the days TRLs elect to work, all TRLs will be asked to work an occasional Thursday (even if this isn't usually one of their three TRL days). This is to facilitate engagement across the TRL peer cohort that cannot be accommodated on a Wednesday, such as a two-day event.

Our former TRLs also offer you the advice to select a balance of days that are known to be busy in parliament with one 'down' or less busy day. This quieter day (usually a Monday or a Friday) helps TRLs focus and do some of the briefing or output related aspects of their role (and their expenses)!

Former TRLs also advise you to consider the consecutiveness of the days you select. Some prefer a Monday to Wednesday or a Wednesday to Friday consecutive pattern. It has been less popular to split days up within the week e.g. working in parliament on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday, or working at the research organisation on Fridays and Mondays. The pattern of parliament on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and research organisation on Tuesday and Thursday has not worked for former TRLs because the constant mindset demands of switching between roles and the difference in pace between the two organisations was challenging. TRL colleagues also found that colleagues in both organisations found it harder to parse when the TRL was and wasn't working and expected a faster response to their queries.

However, selection of your working days is about what suits both your substantive organisational duties and your TRL role. We also appreciate things change; your duties at your research organisation may change. We expect it to be possible to support you to change your chosen parliamentary days from your original pattern. Communication is key, so please do discuss this with your parliamentary supervisor.

Finally, most TRLs find consistent working days helpful so colleagues in their substantive organisation understand they are not available and do not expect contact quickly on non-working days.

5.2 Why are all TRLs required to include a Wednesday within their TRL working pattern.

Wednesday is a key day for parliamentary business. It is also the day all TRLs get together (in person, hybrid, or remotely) for the TRL network meeting or to collaborate with one another to provide cross-thematic insights on a policy matter. The regular network engagement allows TRLs to share key news and future insight within their thematic portfolio, which, through collaboration with the other TRLs, promotes a holistic overview of the interaction of key policy areas serving parliament's evidence, scrutiny and debate functions. It's a the whole is larger than the sum of its parts' moment.

Wednesday is also a core day for TRL training and meetings. You can expect Wednesdays early on in your role to be dominated by induction and meeting parliamentary colleagues. We also encourage the TRLs to support one another as a peer cohort. Having one day which all TRLs work facilitates this interaction with one another.

5.3 I have commitments on the induction days of 13, 14, and 15 April 2027, can I miss these or delay my start date?

Unfortunately, we do need all seven Thematic Research Lead roles to start and run concurrently. The funding for the roles is only available during the specified window. It is also important for the seven new TRLs to meet and work together as a network, and to participate in the focussed in-person induction period on 13-15 April.

If you have a significant barrier that prevents you from participating on the induction dates, please discuss this with us in advance of submitting your application for the TRL role.

5.4 How does the 0.6 FTE commitment work? Will the 0.6 FTE be spread evenly over the year?

We want to be as flexible and inclusive as we can on this; we understand that people have their substantive 0.4 FTE commitment elsewhere, and that on occasion personal issues also arise. Finding the balance of flexibility that is right for the individual TRL and their parliamentary supervisor is important. The Knowledge Exchange Unit (KEU) will support and promote positive conversations on this to help the TRL find their feet balancing two roles. Email us at keu@parliament.uk if you wish to discuss this further.

In essence we aim for the 0.6 FTE work time to be delivered as per the planned schedule each month. However, there will be peaks and troughs in both the TRL role (0.6 FTE) and the substantive role (0.4 FTE), and we will work to support this as best as we can. [See this FAQ for more detail](#) on flexibility and balancing your two roles.

5.5 What does a TRL do day to day?

Each day is different for a TRL, and so is every week!

TRLs get involved in a wide range of activities and opportunities. This includes:

1) enhancing use of research evidence and conducting research across different parts of parliament

- 2) enhancing knowledge exchange through building networks and developing new activities
- 3) operating as a network to share insights and intelligence to contribute to a holistic, cross-thematic and cross-disciplinary view of their thematic area or a wider policy, scrutiny or evidence area
- 4) engaging with research funding councils and other external stakeholders to create new opportunities and draw on quality research to support parliament's core functions
- 5) trailing new methods and innovating to improve, facilitate and enhance research use internally and externally is also core to the TRL role. As is monitoring and evaluating the impact of the TRL activities.

Here are just some of the things the TRLs have done:

- contributed insights to a select committee meeting and helped scope select committee inquiries,
- organised a policy simulation exercise for parliamentarians to model responses to crisis or policy scenarios,
- wrote, co-wrote, or briefed for parliamentary Library publications,
- identified experts and brought in specialist expertise to contribute to parliamentary activity, to act as a special adviser, to provide knowledge exchange, and hosted expert events,
- delivered seminar series' across a wide range of topics,
- undertook original research to improve UK Parliament and the devolved nations' understanding of key areas,
- meet with key external stakeholders to develop their or parliament's use of evidence,
- delivered sessions on their specialist research area to enhance the knowledge of parliamentary staff and parliamentarians,
- spoke at conferences, presented awards and shared their knowledge with the research community,
- contributed to reflective practice and impact capture,
- enhanced horizon scanning and informed the strategic work planning in their thematic area,
- adapted and innovated processes to enhance engagement with research evidence and expertise,
- influenced developments in the research-policy ecosystem,
- designed public engagement activities and organised visits for select committees,
- responded to parliamentarian's enquiries.

In short, they've made a substantive contribution to ensuring the best available research evidence is brought to bear through parliament's legislative processes, scrutiny and debate functions.

5.6 Will the successful candidate brief parliamentarians, select committees, government, Opposition?

The TRL will predominantly work with and through the research and information structures of parliament: the parliamentary Libraries, the Select Committees and POST. Their day-to-day work will usually see them operate most closely with parliamentary staff and external stakeholders. However, they will engage with MPs in the context of their work with committees, as well as briefing or enquiry work they might do through the Libraries. Each TRL will be supported by the parliamentary colleagues in their home team when engaging with parliamentarians.

5.7 Where can I find out more about the type of activities the TRLs do?

Take a look at our [30 April 2027 round up](#) and our [18 May 2027 TRL special edition](#). Read about the work of our first TRLs: [Kristen](#), [Tamsin](#) and [Rick](#).

You can also hear from some of our current TRLs in the online information session (18 June 2027), including the opportunity to ask them questions during the Q&A portion of the information session.

5.8 I live far away from London. Is this opportunity feasible for me?

We offer some flexibility around attendance patterns to help you manage the geographic distance. Across the two years in role, the expectation would be that, generally, the Thematic Research Lead would attend Westminster for three days a month, including a Wednesday. For candidates based a significant travel time from London in-person/onsite attendance days could be worked flexibly e.g. as a block of time, or balancing more days on some weeks and less on others as a rolling pattern.

In the previous two TRL cohorts we have welcomed a TRL from Scotland and one from the South West. The travel can be challenging, particularly when trains do not run as planned. In both cases we implemented a range of measures to lessen the impact of the distance on the TRL. If you are concerned about the distance, the drain on your time, or the three days per month in person requirement please do chat with us, and we can discuss how to mitigate for this so you feel confident to make an application.

5.9 How much annual leave will I receive for the TRL role?

Your annual leave allowance and arrangements will remain as with your substantive organisation. You will receive the same allowance as you would receive if you were not doing the TRL role. You continue to book your annual leave through your substantive organisation in the usual way. Annual leave can be taken on both TRL and substantive organisation days. We ask that, in the main, barring emergencies, any annual leave is planned in advance, added into your TRL calendar, and that you inform the KEU and your parliamentary supervisor of planned leave.

6. Funding

6.1 What funding is available?

Funding for the Thematic Research Lead positions will be provided by UKRI. Each post is for a 24-month period at 0.6 FTE, beginning 1 April 2027 and ending 31 March 2029. UKRI will meet 80% of the full economic costs and the host institution is expected to support the remaining 20%. If invited to assessment and interview, applicants will be required to provide indicative costing for: their salary and FTE related costs, as well as travel and subsistence to allow for three days per month in Westminster. For non-clinical applicants, we expect the estimated 100% FEC not to exceed £240,000.

UK Parliament will contribute in-kind funding, including supervision, professional development opportunities, workspace and IT equipment.

Successful applicants will need to submit a copy of their application via the UKRI Funding Service. Exact dates to be confirmed.

6.2 How will I receive the funding?

Via your institution, you will need to submit a copy of your application by the UKRI Funding Service. The funding will then go to your institution.

6.3 If, during the TRL role, I am promoted and appointed to a higher grade in my substantive role will the agreed funding to my university change?

No, the agreed funding will not change. You will not receive any funding beyond that which is agreed by UKRI when you submit your initial funding request.

7. Other ways of working with TRLs

7.1 How do I connect with the TRL that is appointed to share my research and expertise?

Thank you for your keenness to connect with the appointed TRL. Do send a short introduction to yourself and your research highlighting your expertise and the areas you would like to collaborate on. Please include your contact details, a link to your online profile information, and a small number of open access links to your most relevant research, blogs or other online information sources. This can be emailed to keu@parliament.uk with the subject line *'introduction to the [insert which portfolio] TRL'*. This can be emailed at any point (before or after the TRL is appointed). We will share the introductions with relevant parliamentary staff who are interested in your work and the TRL (once they are settled into their role). Please note, our [privacy notice](#) which explains how we manage your data.