

The logo for the Nuffield Foundation, featuring a stylized 'N' shape that forms a frame around the text.

**Nuffield
Foundation**

Appointment of the Executive Director, Research, Grants and Programmes

2026 | NBZUB



Evidence to improve lives in a changing world



The Nuffield Foundation tackles the UK's biggest social challenges by funding research, generating evidence, and guiding decision-makers to implement solutions that improve people's lives.

Purpose

The Nuffield Foundation aims to improve the social and economic well-being of individuals, families, and communities within the UK.

Founded in 1943, during the second world war, the Foundation was created with the conviction that its work could help to inform post-war reconstruction. Today, in a world marked by rapid change, entrenched inequalities, social divisions, and deep uncertainties, its purpose remains as vital as ever.

In addition to its core programmes, the Foundation is the founder and co-funder of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory, and the Ada Lovelace Institute.

Details of the Foundation's governance are available here: [Governance | About | Nuffield Foundation](#)

The Nuffield Foundation's latest annual report is available here: [Nuffield-Foundation-2024-Annual-Report.pdf](#)



Strategic Review 2025

In July 2025, the Foundation published its Strategic Review, which is available [here](#).

The Strategic Review renews the Foundation’s commitment to prosperity, inclusiveness, and fairness, and a strategy focused on the complex challenges shaping lives in the UK today.

At a time of the weakening of long-standing alliances, the spread of populism and protectionism – together, these forces have shaken assumptions that once underpinned policymaking and public debate.

Leaders today face starker dilemmas than most of their post-war predecessors. Science and technology is outpacing our ability to govern it effectively. Economic shocks have revealed and compounded inequalities and eroded resilience. Political consensus around climate action is fraying.

As a diverse society and open economy, the UK is experiencing these global shifts directly and indirectly. There are gnawing doubts that our systems of governance are not up to the task.

The role the Foundation plays

The Foundation is committed to confronting the scale and urgency of today’s challenges with the same commitment to rigour, evidence and nuance that has defined its work since 1943. In this context, its underlying goal of advancing well-being in a more inclusive and just society has renewed purpose. The Foundation’s independence gives it the freedom to take the long view, focusing on issues that can be overlooked in short-term policy cycles, while also responding rapidly to fast-moving events.



Strategic Review 2025

The Nuffield Foundation will use its resources to generate evidence, convene debate and promote innovation to deliver lasting social benefits by:

- Influencing policy
- Improving practice
- Funding innovative interventions
- Backing groundbreaking institutions

The priority questions that will shape the Nuffield Foundation's work

The work the Foundation funds and does will prioritise prosperity, inclusiveness, and fairness. It will maintain a clear focus on inequalities, disadvantage and vulnerability for individuals, families, and communities – and how to address them.

Over the next five years, the Foundation's work will be guided by five interconnected questions:

- How can we build a prosperous and fair society, where people are secure and can fulfil their potential?
- How can we build an inclusive society, where people thrive and feel they belong, in the context of changing demography and ways of life?
- How can we ensure that developments in science and technology work for people and society?
- How can policies to address climate change be developed in a way that promotes a prosperous, fair and inclusive society?
- How can we build and maintain the effective, accountable and trustworthy institutions that our society and democracy need?

Executive Director, Research, Grants and Programmes

Your Role

The Executive Director, Research, Grants and Programmes (RGP) is a key new role to shape the future direction of research funding at this leading independent funder. The Executive Director will develop and lead the portfolio-wide strategy to increase the reach and impact of the Foundation's work.

The Foundation appointed Gavin Kelly as Chief Executive in 2025, with the new Strategic Review and roadmap for delivery published in his first year. The new Executive Director RGP position has been created to ensure that the Foundation meets the level of ambition articulated in the Strategic Review. The Foundation has made an ambitious spending commitment across the next five years, and will use its resources to generate evidence, convene debate and promote innovation to deliver lasting social benefits. The Foundation will have a

singular focus on evidence to improve lives in a changing world, and will work across a broad field of interests in five interconnected topics: a prosperous and fair society; inclusive society; science, technology and society – including the impacts of AI on society; climate change; and trustworthy & effective institutions. To achieve impact, what the Foundation funds will also evolve, with the focus placed on influencing policy; improving practice; funding innovative interventions; and backing groundbreaking institutions.

The Executive Director will be a key member of the Foundation's senior leadership team, supporting the Chief Executive, and work closely with the ED Strategy, Governance and Engagement (ED, SGE), to deliver the Foundation's mission, purpose, and charitable objectives in the areas of interest articulated in the Strategic Review.



Executive Director, Research, Grants and Programmes

Key Responsibilities

Strategy

Working closely and collaboratively with Grants Programme Directors (responsible for leading defined areas), and senior grants team to lead, develop and deliver the Foundation's overall research grants and programmes in line with the Strategic Review and roadmap for delivery, to address the Foundation's priority questions:

- Develop and shape the overall research and grants portfolio to ensure it remains current, future focussed and impactful addressing key social and economic challenges facing the country
- Encourage a portfolio-wide strategic perspective, identifying synergies and areas for collaboration, as well as gaps and opportunities for strategic grants decision making
- Identify how best to address the five priority questions (as outlined in the strategic review) and consider routes for delivery, and associated resourcing plans
- Develop the Foundation's horizon-scanning capabilities, working with the ED SGE
- Lead and monitor the development of new initiatives and incubation projects, working with the ED SGE, to deliver on the Foundation's strategic questions and emerging areas of interest
- Ensure the Foundation is at the frontier of research/policy debates with respect to evidence, data, methods and analysis

Strategic Leadership

Work with the ED SG&E to support the Chief Executive with the strategic leadership of the Nuffield Foundation and its leadership team, deputising for the Chief Executive, if required.

Lead and develop the research grants and programmes executive teams working with Programme Directors (PDs).

- Provide strategic and collaborative leadership for the senior research grants and programmes team, coaching and mentoring as appropriate; identify new research talent; fostering synergies both within grants and programmes, and across Nuffield-wide teams
- Ensure that the team works effectively to meet the needs of the organisation as it develops, managing and leveraging resources effectively
- Work with PDs to drive forward the Foundation's EDI objectives and grants and programmes action plan
- Drive change programmes where appropriate and ensure that the organisation remains adaptive, relevant and impact and delivery focussed

Executive Director, Research, Grants and Programmes

Key Responsibilities

Stakeholder Engagement and Development

Work collaboratively with the CE and Grants Programme Directors to identify new research talent, increase the Nuffield Foundation's visibility, and develop a strong external network of stakeholders, decision makers and potential collaborators.

- Actively build networks and partnerships, particularly in newer areas of interest, with other organisations to identify talent/ideas and maximise the effectiveness of the Foundation's work and impact
- Act as a spokesperson, and cultivate networks & partnerships in service of the Foundation's research
- Liaise regularly with external bodies, including government departments at national, regional and local levels; regulatory bodies; professional bodies; research and funding councils; learned societies; academia, and other charitable funders in the same space, and external stakeholders
- Develop and oversee - with the CE, ED SEG and Programme Directors - the Foundation's outreach and convening programmes, to reach a wide audience, and effectively disseminate the Foundation's work to enhance impact and engagement
- Develop and maintain close communications and working relationships with internal stakeholders across the organisation, including the Trustee Board

Operational Oversight and Grants Approvals

- Work with the CE, Programme Directors and Head of Grant Operations to lead on the strategic grants committee decision making, balancing trade-offs and opportunities, and appropriate risk, and ensuring that decision making is rigorous, objective, supports the mission effectively and in line with the Nuffield Foundation's values
- Work with grants Programme Directors and Head of Grant Operations to set, monitor and manage budgets, and allocation of resources against budgetary limits

Other

The above list of key responsibilities is not exhaustive, whilst the role is strategic in nature, the ED may get involved in some aspects of operational delivery of key projects on occasions.

Resources

- Overall responsibilities for the RPG department, currently c. 20 staff, and an annual budget of c. £19 million.
- Direct reports: The Programme Directors for Education, Justice, Welfare, and the Head of Grants Operations.
- Deputise for the Chief Executive, alongside the ED, SGE, as required.

Person Specification

Essential Experience and Skills

- A senior background in, or highly developed understanding of, social science/social & economic policy and research, and the power of evidence
- A clear commitment and passion for the Foundation's mission and our values: Independent, Rigorous, Inclusive, Collaborative and Curious
- A well-developed understanding of the characteristics and ethos of the research, charity and government policy domains
- A well-developed understanding of how research relates to society more broadly, and can impact policy development, whether gained as a practitioner, a researcher or a funder or commissioner of such work, or by some other means
- Impact focussed with experience of strategic decision making, balancing trade offs to focus on maximising impact and value
- Experience of developing organisation-wide strategic priorities, and developing and delivering on associated implementation plans
- Strategic vision and mindset
- Skilled at strategic horizon scanning with a track record of identifying and building on gaps and opportunities to increase impact

Strategic Leadership

- A skilled strategic leader
- Ability to inspire, support and develop talented senior directors and managers
- A strong track record in effective change management and innovation, skilled at seeking out opportunities and driving forward innovative approaches and projects
- An inclusive and collaborative leadership style, with the ability to lead teams through change, innovation and different working styles

- Experience of working effectively with Trustees or Non-Executive Directors would be desirable
- Financial acumen, with experience of financial oversight of large budgets and organisation level financial plans would be desirable

Communications

- A highly skilled and persuasive communicator and networker, with the ability to articulate a vision to inspire others
- Well networked across research, government and policy domains with strong interpersonal skills to develop good relationships with existing and potential stakeholders and partners.
- A strong public speaker, skilled in dealing with press and public affairs.
- Well-developed influencing skills with a successful track record or building reputation and influencing change

Personal qualities

- Visionary
- Committed to high standards of rigour, objectivity, and integrity
- Resilience
- Collaborative
- Innovative and open to taking managed risks

Values

The Nuffield Foundation's values define the kind of organisation it strives to be. They establish the standards it expects of its team, and how it works as an organisation to make a difference, drives its decision-making, and guides how it works with partners and each other.



Independence

Our financial and political independence gives us the freedom to be open and objective in our approach, and to focus on the power of evidence.



Collaboration

We convene and connect with individuals and organisations to maximise our collective impact, recognising that we will not bring about change on our own.



Rigour

We have high standards in all that we do, achieving a quality that gives us influence and impact.



Curiosity

We foster a spirit of exploration, encouraging our staff and those we fund to pursue new ideas and challenge old assumptions.



Inclusivity

We will further diversity, and work to ensure that everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered.



Terms of Appointment

Terms

This is a permanent, full-time position, based at the Nuffield Foundation's headquarters in Farringdon, London.

Due diligence

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.

How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the Nuffield Foundation on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at <https://roles.saxbam.com> using code **NBZUB**

The closing date for applications is noon on **Tuesday 14 April**.

* The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete as part of the application process.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your Sensitive Personal Data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.