



Agri-Food for Net Zero (AFN) Network+ Year 2 Champions Call

Please ensure you read all 7 pages.

We are recruiting six Champions to drive forward the work of the [AFN Network+](#) in its second year, starting 1 January 2024 for 12 months.

The mission of the AFN Network+ is to identify and shape the research, innovation and policy development required to deliver a net zero agri-food system for the UK. We build collaborative relationships between key actors in the agri-food system, from researchers to stakeholders and back, to combine systems-level expertise with comprehensive coverage of all key specialisms, allowing us to:

- *envision plausible futures for a net zero agri-food system;*
- *analyse the environmental, economic, social and technological implications of each of these scenarios; and*
- *define practical pathways to achieving the most optimal of these net zero agri-food futures.*

AFN Champions bring their expertise from industry, academia, public or third sector, and from any point in the agri-food system: primary production (agriculture, horticulture, and aquaculture) and food processing (food and drink manufacture) to food retail, consumption, and waste management.

AFN Champions will be expected to drive progress by:

- *Building an inclusive community of practice across their theme and the wider AFN project;*
- *Synthesising ideas and thinking from across their networks to ensure inclusive input into the scenarios and plausible futures work, and the pathways and roadmapping phases of the project; and*
- *Mapping the research and innovation landscape in their own and adjacent thematic areas and, crucially, identifying critical knowledge and activity gaps to be addressed.*

Champions are the Ambassadors for the Network who are experts in the practice, knowledge, and know-how across agri-food systems. As a Champion, you will lead one of six themes and through a series of engagement activities while creating a network of people committed to achieving a net zero food system by 2050.

The six themes are:

- 1) Healthy and sustainable diets
- 2) Land productivity
- 3) Food security and trade
- 4) Land use and land management
- 5) Circular food systems
- 6) Behaviour change

Descriptions of each theme are detailed below.



Champions are encouraged to look for synergies across the themes and will be expected to work together. This will be our second year of Champions for the Network. Champions are highly motivated and well connected and are committed to the strategic objectives of the AFN Network+.

We particularly encourage Early Career Researchers¹ and people working outside academia to apply, although applications from practitioners or academic researchers at any career stage are also welcome. We have a commitment to increase the diversity of our community, and particularly encourage applications from, but not limited to Black, Asian, people who belong to a minority ethnic community; people who identify as LGBT+; and disabled people. Candidates will always be selected based on merit and ability.

Closing date for Applications is **23:59 on Thursday 7 September 2023** and your submission can be made [here](#) via an on-line application.

The selection criteria are based on:

- (1) fit to the terms of reference; and
- (2) increasing the diversity of the team.

This is a key project, funded by UKRI, and involves a substantial list of committed partners – both at an organisational and individual level. Please see [here](#), to find out more about who is currently working with the AFN Network+.

The Terms of Reference for the role should be referred to when making your application.

Terms of Reference for Agri-Food Network+ (AFN) Champions 2024:

- Champions will be well-connected knowledgeable sector experts and/or future research leaders in their own community within their theme.
- Champions will drive engagement and impact activities with stakeholders relevant to their theme in order to build an active and committed community – this will take the form of running workshops, attending key sectoral events, etc. Some activities will require and benefit from coordination with other Champions. A separate budget for arranging and hosting events is available.
- Champions will attend and contribute to the running of key AFN Network+ events, including leading discussion groups and sessions as requested by the AFN Executive Team.
- Champions' activities will help inform the Network's work on mapping the research and innovation landscape, and the development of plausible pathways to a net zero UK agri-food system.
- Champions will act as enthusiastic ambassadors for the AFN in all situations and may be invited to represent the AFN at external meetings.

¹ An early career researcher (ECR) is someone who is either:

- within eight years of their PhD award (this is from the time of the PhD 'viva' oral test), or equivalent professional training
- within six years of their first academic appointment (the first full or part-time paid employment contract that lists research or teaching as the primary function).

These periods exclude any career breaks, for example due to family care, health reasons and are pro-rata for any periods of part-time work.



- Champions will meet regularly with each other at a bi-weekly online meeting, chaired by Professor Stefan Kepinski, Champion Lead for the AFN Network+.
- Champions will be paired with a member of the AFN Team in order to agree priorities and the direction of activities, and to provide further support and guidance within the role.
- Champions will be impartial across the broad scope of their remit.
- Champions will strive to be selfless and will be highly motivated in their service to the strategic objectives of the AFN.
- Champions are expected to engage with each other to look for synergies and new ways of working.
- Champions will be part of the Community of Practice, including agreeing to abide by the AFN Network+ Code of Conduct, available [here](#).

Contractual Details

Appointment is for a 12-month period from 1 January 2024.

The Champion will receive a block grant of £60k for the 12-month period, funded at 80%, for time spent on Champion activities. The remaining 20% contribution is a cost absorbed by your host organisation. No monetary payment to the AFN project is required.

Travel to AFN meetings for Champions will be reimbursed by the AFN at 80% of the total costs through a central pot of money, subject to approval by the AFN Executive.

The AFN Executive has a duty to administer UKRI funds responsibly and ensure effective progress over the life of the award. In the event a Champion is not able to deliver on the above commitment, either as assessed by the Champion or the AFN Executive, an informal discussion may be followed by a decision by the Co-Investigators on whether the appointment is to be continued.

The final round of Champions will be advertised next summer for the 2025 year in topic areas defined by years 1 and 2 of AFN Network+ activities.

Interviews for this role will take place in late September 2023. If you have any questions about the Champions' Recruitment, please email Claire Pickerden, AFN Network+ Project Manager, University of Leeds, c.pickerden@leeds.ac.uk.

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Research Priority Themes

These are the themes that emerged most strongly from the Big Tent annual meeting in April 2023 and are being used to structure the next round of Network Champions.

- 1) **Healthy and sustainable diets:** How to develop a resilient UK food system that contributes to net zero while promoting healthy UK diets?

This theme focuses on the need for dietary and food system change to contribute to a net zero UK, while promoting access to healthy and affordable diets. It analyses social, environmental and economic dimensions of animal production and meat, and of plant-based alternatives in the agri-food system, as well as the role of fruit, vegetables, and ultra-processed foods in diets.

- 2) **Land productivity:** What should we grow in the UK?

This theme focuses on the productive utilisation of our finite land resource. It covers questions of how crop and animal breeding can help ensure sufficient food is produced from less land, and how space can be created for ambitious targets for planting trees to sequester carbon.

- 3) **Food security and trade:** Where should our food come from?

This theme focuses on the geographical scales at which our agri-food system operates and the balance between food produced and traded locally, nationally and across national borders. It covers questions of the food security, reliance and sustainability of markets and supply changes at different spatial scales.

- 4) **Land use change and land management:** How should we change land use and land management in the UK?

This theme focuses on the mechanisms and incentive systems to drive required changes in land use and land management in the UK. It covers questions of agricultural support policies, new markets for carbon sequestration (trees and soils), land use frameworks and reconciling demands of net zero, biodiversity and other environmental services.

- 5) **Circular food systems:** How can we develop a more circular UK food system, including the agricultural economy and ecology, other components of the system, and the infrastructure that underpins it.

This theme focuses on the question of more sustainable agricultural production systems with a particular emphasis on the concepts of circularity. It covers questions of the need for smaller-scale, mixed farming systems and the relative merits or otherwise of systems such as agroecology, agroforestry and regenerative agriculture, and the re-use of nutrients from along the supply chain.

- 6) **Behaviour change:** Individual and institutional behaviour change in the UK agri-food system.

This theme focuses on the role of institutions and policies to encourage behaviour change in the agri-food system. It covers questions of the politics, economics, psychology and food nutrition science of effecting large-scale dietary change across the population.



FAQs

Can more than one person apply from the same organisation?

Yes, there is no limit on how many people can apply from the same organisation. Each application will be assessed on its own merit.

Is this a contract of employment?

No, this is a UKRI research-grant funded role. The usual contractual status is a collaborative agreement with an institution. However, it is possible for consultants, freelancers, and people with self-employed status to apply. It is preferred if there is a host institution, but this is not mandatory.

Champions continue their employment status under the current terms and conditions of their employing organisation.

Is there an expected time commitment or work pattern?

There is no expected work pattern or time commitment. You will need to declare how much time you will give to the role and make the case about the level of knowledge and experience you bring, and how the time commitment you can make would represent good value for money. There are AFN Network+ meetings that you would be expected to attend, both regular online, and at core AFN Network+ events, in-person, throughout the year. You will also be expected to organise and run several of your own events and workshops throughout the year.

How much match is required?

The total grant of £60k is paid at 80% (due to research council funding rules) and so your organisation will cover the remaining 20% ie £12k of costs to cover your time spent on AFN activities.

What can the £60k funding be used for?

The grant of £60k (£48k + 20%) is for all the activities undertaken as Champion – ie the time commitment to lead the theme, run events, build the community, identify research gaps, attend meetings etc. In the application, you need to state how much FTE (full time equivalent) you would be able to commit to the role eg 0.8 or 0.5 or 1.0 FTE etc. The costing can include provision for organisational overheads.

Some of the grant can be used for other tasks eg Research Assistant time if required but this should not be a prominent part of your application. The focus is very much on what the Champion will bring to the role and the activities you envision implementing. Consumables are also an eligible cost.

Are travel and subsistence costs included in the £60k?

There is an additional budget, over and above the £60k, to be used for Champions to run events and pay for their own, and participants', travel and subsistence to attend. There will be an agreed minimum number of events to be organised by each Champion in 2024.

Can part of the £60k be used to commission other activities eg, literature reviews?

Yes, it is possible to commission certain tasks to add value to the work of the Champion. These should be transparent, and a clear explanation provided of their benefit. However, most of the application should be focused on the knowledge, skills and experience that the Champion will bring and the activities they will lead in their theme.



Do you need to have a particular level of qualification?

There are no qualification requirements, but each Champion should be able to offer considerable experience and knowledge of their theme to fulfil the role. We are hoping to attract a diverse range of applicants, including from industry and the third sector, as well as from Higher Education.



Guidance for completing the Application Form

In each of the answers, consider and refer to the Terms of Reference and use specific examples to illustrate your knowledge, expertise and experience. Frame your response in terms of the Research Priority Theme you are applying to champion.

Q6 ...the experience and qualities that would make you a good Champion

Think about:

- Why do you want to be a Champion?
- Why have you chosen to champion this particular theme?
- What would you hope to achieve as a Champion?
- How will your work leading your theme help AFN Network+ reach its objective of achieving net zero through the agri-food system by 2050? eg linking practice and research
- What existing networks do you already have and how would you engage them in joining and working with the AFN Network+?
- How will your experience of working with different types of stakeholders shape your work as a Champion?

Q7...enhancing diversity and inclusion

Think about:

- How you would seek engagement with under-represented groups in the agri-food system?
- How would you ensure your communications and marketing is inclusive?
- How would you encourage equity of contribution and voice?

Q8...time, and value of activities

Think about:

- Ensuring that the outputs reflect the learning and knowledge of the theme and are both informative and useful for the AFN Network+ to reach its objectives.
- Embedding the 'paid hours' as a Champion into your other areas of work – what is the reach and scope of the work? e.g. influence over other networks, spheres of influence, carrying the AFN Network+ goals with you.
- Ensuring the outputs produced by the work of the theme reflect the expenditure made to achieve them i.e. reflect quality levels.
- Managing the spending of your budget so that costs aren't excessive or expenditure wasted.
- Ensuring that any expenditure reaches beyond the 'usual suspects' and increases the diversity of your network (see question on inclusion)

Q9 Institutional approval of 20% contribution

No monetary payment to the AFN project is required but we do need approval from your organisation that the 20% contribution is agreed.

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