

# Targeted approaches to supporting people with black heritage backgrounds in academia and research

Learning brief







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# Acknowledgements



*The three inaugural Sanger Excellence Fellows 2022/23. From left to right: Kudzai Nyamondo, Oumie Kuyateh and Ore Francis*

Yulye Jessica Romo Ramos (Founding director of [Nexus Evaluation LTD](#)) led the development of this learning brief in collaboration with Dr Saher Ahmed (Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Wellcome Sanger Institute), Dr David Adams (Senior Group Leader, Sanger Institute) and Dr Maria Augusta Arruda (Director of the Brazilian Biosciences National Laboratory at the National Centre for Research in Energy and Materials).

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All the Excellence Fellowship Programme applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, that participated in the [external review](#) of the first funding cycle – which provided insights and evidence for this learning brief.

Members of the Excellence Fellowship advisory group: Tomi Akingbade (founder of the Black Women in Science Network), Prof Jason Arday, (Professor of Sociology, University of Cambridge), Dr Paula Bailey (Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, EPSRC), Dr Diego Baptista (Head of Research and Funding Equity, Wellcome Trust), Prof Dawn Edge (Professor Mental Health and Inclusivity, University of Manchester), Dr Sarah Goler Solecki (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Engagement and Change Manager, Medical Research Council), Dr Adrian Ibrahim (Founder, Mosaic TX), Dr Matt Kaiser (Head of Careers and Discovery Research at Cancer Research UK), Dr Esther Mukuka (Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, NIHR), Prof Rachel Oliver (Professor of Material Science, University of Cambridge and leader of The Inclusion Group for Equity in Research in STEMM), Dame Cilla Snowball (GRL Board, Member of Wellcome Board of Governors), Prof Nicholas Thomson (Senior Faculty, Wellcome Sanger Institute and Professor at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine).

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## Introduction

The Wellcome Sanger Institute is a non-profit British genomics and genetics research institute, primarily funded by the Wellcome Trust. We are a world leader in genome research that delivers insights into human, evolutionary and pathogen biology. We tackle some of the most difficult challenges in genomic research. This demands science at scale; a visionary and creative approach to research that pushes the boundaries of our understanding in ever new and exciting ways.

**We are aware that scientists from marginalised groups such as LGBT+, Black, Asian, Minority and Ethnic and disabled scientists do not achieve success at the same rates as the majority groups working in science. This is why, In December 2021 we launched the Sanger Excellence Fellowship<sup>1</sup>, a pioneering initiative to enable Black academics to develop their portfolio of research experience and thrive in the field of UK genomics science. The Fellowship is now in its second round of funding.**

According to an external review we commissioned<sup>2</sup>, which included interviews with both successful and unsuccessful candidates, the process was equitable and inclusive and also unique: it had a strong sense of caring and support for candidates throughout the process; it tested new approaches and used targeted promotion to attract high calibre candidates.

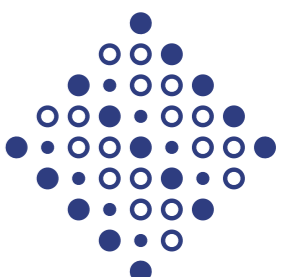
We recognise that we do not have all the answers and we are on a long journey towards systemic change, with lots more to learn. But we already have a wide range of lessons learned, insights and evidence, which we think are valuable for anyone interested in driving change and furthering equity, diversity and inclusiveness in the academic and research sector.

Finally, we hope that the principles and ways of working in this learning brief are also relevant to any equity, diversity and inclusiveness efforts, namely: building an evidence-based and compelling business case for change, ensuring senior leadership support, nurturing allies and champions, testing new approaches and remaining flexible and focused on learning and improvement.

We are also interested to hear from you and your experiences. Get in touch by emailing us at: [equality@sanger.ac.uk](mailto:equality@sanger.ac.uk)

1. For more details consult: <https://www.sanger.ac.uk/about/equality-in-science/sanger-excellence-fellowship/>

2. Document available here: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:705400634097733632/>



# Overview of the Excellence Fellowship programme.

The Excellence Post-Doctoral Fellowship is a three-year programme aimed at people from Black heritage backgrounds – including those with a mixed heritage background – with an Undergraduate and PhD (or equivalent) from an institution in the UK, the Republic of Ireland, Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.

The Fellowship was the first of its kind within the UK and a unique positive action initiative within the field of genomics<sup>3</sup>. It has been developed in close collaboration with internal and external experts, centering lived experience - including senior Black academics and Black-led community groups, who helped to shape the overall approach.

Figure 1 below provides a visual summary of the process we used to promote, select and appoint eligible candidates.

3. A new Royal Society Fellowship has just been launched: <https://royalsociety.org/news/2023/09/career-development-fellowship/>



Figure 1: Excellence Fellowship Process Overview

The next sections describe how we made this happen, what works and thoughts on how we can make improvements on the design and implementation of the scheme to make it stronger. We end with recommendations for the wider sector.





The Wellcome Genome Campus

# Preparing the ground

What was key for us is senior level buy-in and having visible support and advocacy from the top, including from Mike Stratton (Former Director of The Sanger Institute and Chief Executive Officer of the Wellcome Genome Campus), Sanger's senior Board and from Wellcome, our funder. The next sections detail other efforts we pursued to make this initiative happen.





# Sanger's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Our global reputation for scientific excellence is underpinned by our commitment<sup>4</sup> to foster an environment and cultivate an inclusive culture where everyone can thrive and diversity is celebrated. EDI is a key strategic area with six key priorities:

- Maintaining a diverse, representative workforce at all levels
- Managers at all levels taking ownership of EDI and demonstrating effective leadership and due regard to EDI
- Sustaining an inclusive work environment where staff and students respect and value one another's diversity
- Nurturing a diverse talent pipeline.
- Delivering facilities and services in a way that promotes equality and respects diversity and inclusion.
- Ensuring Inclusive research approaches.

Our race equity strategy hangs off our wider EDI strategy and has been developed in collaboration with our community, based on data, dialogue and research. It is underpinned by four pillars: leadership; positive action; citizenship and processes. The Excellence Fellowship is embedded into our broader programme of activities to ensure a holistic and joined-up approach.

We started our journey with this Fellowship in 2021 and one of the first things we needed to do was to build a strong business case to secure leadership and funding support for this new and innovative programme.

## Developing a strong business case

We used our recruitment, census and wider academic data – quantitative and qualitative insights to outline the issue, being mindful that behind each data point there is an individual and we are talking about people's real life experiences. These data show us that the numbers of people from Black-heritage backgrounds and in particular, Black British backgrounds, disproportionately drops at each stage of the academic pipeline and this is propagated along all stages of the academic process – e.g. from degree awarding gaps at the undergraduate level, through to fewer numbers at postgraduate and professoriate levels and lower success rates with funding councils and granting agencies. Moreover, there is a lack of diversity amongst senior leaders and an under-representation of people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds progressing within the sector<sup>5</sup>.

Evidence also suggests that unconscious biases and dominant Eurocentric curricula can negatively impact aspects of degree attainment, which disproportionately disadvantages Black, Asian, Minority and Ethnic students and their application success rates<sup>6</sup>.

This is very topical and as a sector we all recognise that change is needed. The Nature article referenced above tells the story in terms of data; other influential institutions, such as The Wellcome Trust<sup>7</sup>, the LSHTM<sup>8</sup> and Liverpool School<sup>9</sup> have also recently had independent reviews to examine their race equality work and these reviews have found that much more targeted work is required to catalyse meaningful change.



4. Find out more here: <https://www.sanger.ac.uk/about/equality-in-science/>  
 5. Gibney, E (2022) How UK science is failing Black researchers – in nine stark charts. *Nature*. Available online: <https://www.nature.com/immersive/d41586-022-04386-w/index.html>  
 6. "The Broken Pipeline – Barriers to Black Phd students accessing research council funding". *Leading Routes*, 2019. Available online: <https://leadingroutes.org/the-broken-pipeline>  
 7. <https://wellcome.org/news/update-wellcomes-anti-racism-programme>  
 8. <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/aboutus/organisation/governance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/racial-equality/independent-review>  
 9. <https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/about/equity-inclusion-at-lstm/race-equity-at-lstm>





Under the pillar of positive action within our Race Equity strategy, we launched our Sanger Excellence Fellowship in December 2021<sup>10</sup>. Below are quotes from Mike Stratton and Saher Ahmed, Head of EDI at the Sanger Institute, when we launched the scheme.



“

**Diversity is essential to scientific progress. When we have a group composed of individuals with diverse perspectives and approaches, innovation is more likely to flourish leading to new insights and better science.**

”

Michael Stratton  
Director Wellcome Sanger Institute



“

**There are barriers that we must remove if we are to better represent society in science and ensure that excellence can thrive.**

”

Saher Ahmed  
Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion  
Wellcome Sanger Institute

10. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-59563717>

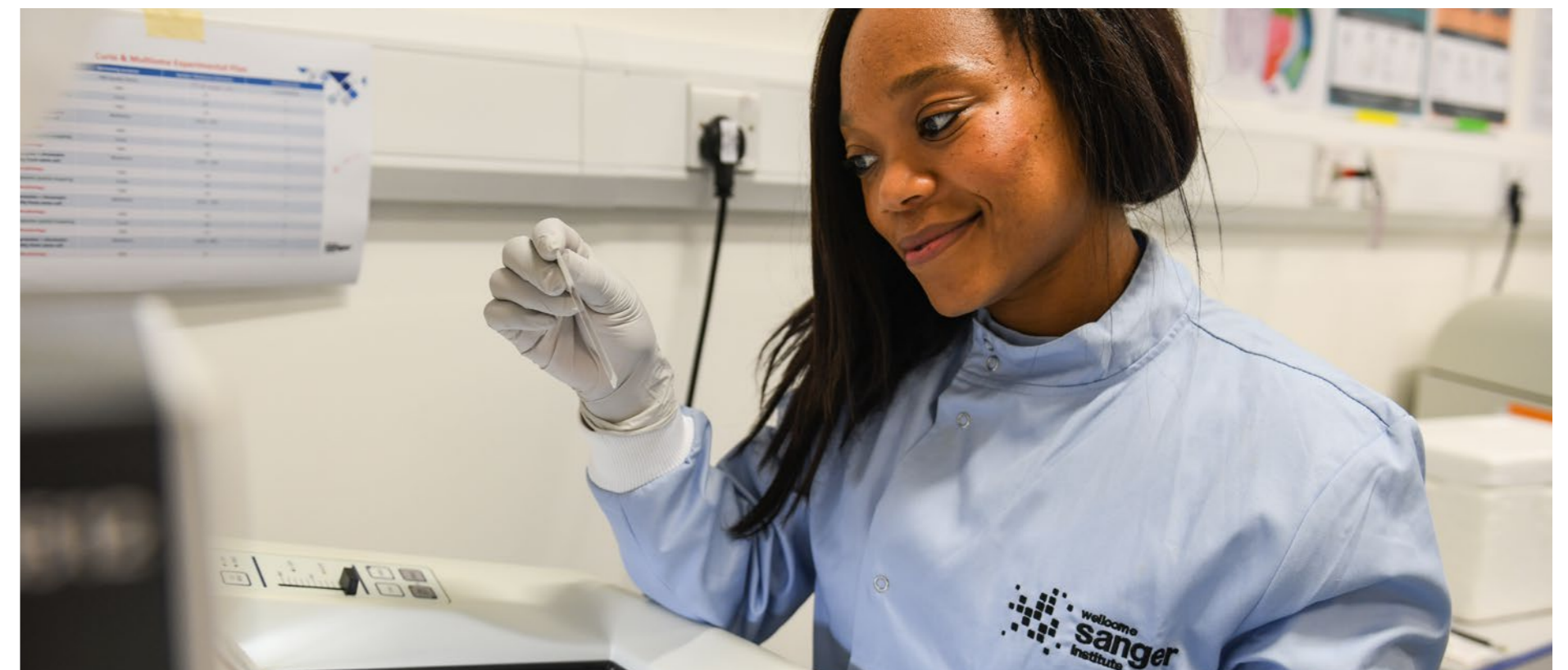
11. Members of the advisory group can be found here: <https://www.sanger.ac.uk/about/equality-in-science/sanger-excellence-fellowship/>

## Identifying and engaging allies and champions



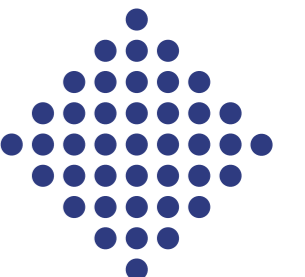
A wide range of internal and external stakeholders<sup>11</sup> were invited to form part of an advisory group. They included senior Black academics and Black-led community groups; funders, policy-makers; senior Sanger Faculty and influential agents of change - our key premise was to centre people's lived experience to co-create and co-design the overall approach. An internal steering group was convened to help make the scheme come to life.

We would like to acknowledge the huge support that our advisory and steering groups provided and their enthusiastic and keen participation. The members of our groups act as allies, champions, provide technical and expert advice and are used as a sounding board to test out ideas and they really helped us to push and challenge our own thinking. Members of the groups also provide mentorship and support to the candidates along the process.



Staff at the Sanger Institute

A range of activities were also implemented internally at Sanger to raise awareness, socialise the programme and to work with Faculty members to understand and reflect on what it means to lead diverse research teams. The work with Faculty included co-designing practical solutions and procedures to support them to create and nurture a thriving and inclusive environment. This included talks and targeted workshops and facilitated discussions with our research leaders.





# Deconstructing the notion of research excellence

What is really exciting is that we are using the Fellowship as an opportunity to pull apart our processes and to do new things in the way that we outreach, engage and work with candidates - completely deconstructing the existing journey. This is a very purposeful and intentional approach, utilising interventions that are proven to work, which are underpinned by data, evidence and research. At the heart is mentorship and support – recognising that academia is not a “meritocracy” and the current landscape rewards and recognises a very one-dimensional view of what contributes to “research excellence” and the lack of diversity in science will limit innovation<sup>12</sup>.

We partnered with Leading Routes to organise an internal workshop for potential supervisors and panel members. This was followed by peer-to-peer support and discussions to co-create processes used in the scheme.

The goal was to refocus attention to “potential for excellence”, since we know that Black students do not always get the same mentorship, sponsorship and access to opportunities as their White counterparts.

We wanted to make sure we were valuing all types of research outputs, not just the more “traditional” markers of what denotes “research excellence”, such as research publications, where it has been shown that discrimination against members of minoritised groups leads to racial inequalities along the publishing processes<sup>13</sup>.



Staff at the Sanger Institute



We utilised “narrative CVs” to support the application process. This is a framework that was developed by The Royal Society and aims to specifically recognise broader and varied contributions to the research environment<sup>14</sup>.

We were also aware that a lot of Black students and researchers might end up in flexible working arrangements, pursuing alternative career routes and breaks from academic research, which negatively impacts productivity, track records, career development and progression in academia. We wanted to make sure that this is understood and taken into account when assessing potential for excellence.

During the workshop, we challenged ourselves to co-design a process that reflects these aspects, with a focus on potential versus access to opportunity.

12. Hofstra et al (2020), *The Diversity-Innovation Paradox in Science*. PNAS, 117 (17) 9284-9291. Available online: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1915378117>

13. Heidt, A (2023), *Racial inequalities in journals highlighted in giant study*. Nature. Available online: <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-01457-4>

14. More information is available online: <https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/projects/research-culture/tools-for-support/resume-for-researchers/>





# Design & implementation







## Promotion & recruitment

We opened the call for the Fellowship in 2022 with a comprehensive promotion strategy. Key was that we built authentic and genuine partnerships with Black-led community groups and networks. The Excellence Fellowship was promoted via our website, social media and across a wide range of outlets, including news and media organisations. We also ran webinars and Q&A sessions for interested applicants. But what was particularly effective in reaching out and attracting high-calibre candidates was to work closely with Diverse (a recruitment agency involved in the process) and our EDI networks - many applicants were directly contacted and encouraged to apply (source: external review).

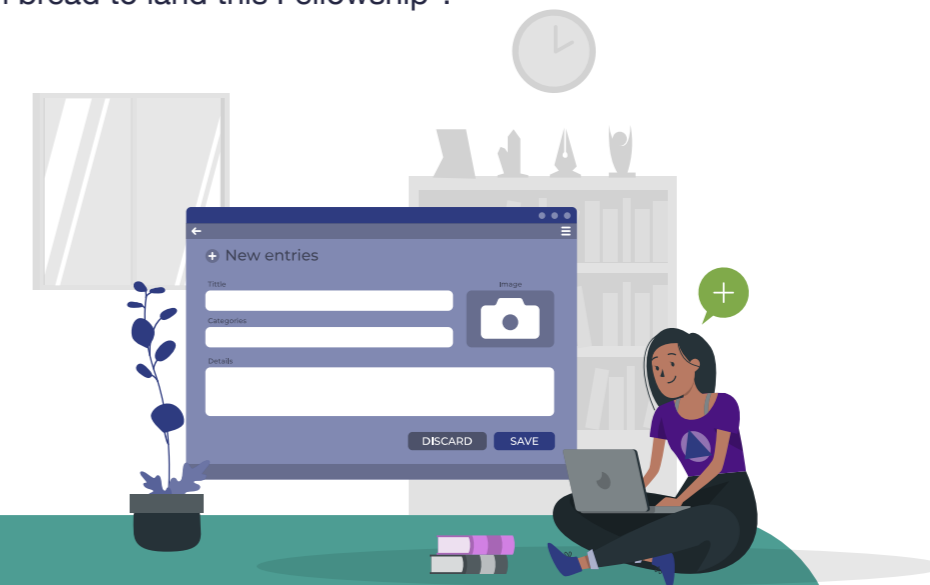


### The remaining challenge

How can we expand the reach of our promotional and recruitment efforts to ensure that all Black academics that might be eligible to apply for this Fellowship are reached, particularly those most disenfranchised or marginalised within the Black community?

Promoting this opportunity through the more usual routes could also help to expand reach. This might include posters and mailing list notices at universities, and hosting summer visits and careers talks for PhD students/potential applicants. There is also more work we would like to do to better understand how socioeconomic dimensions play a role and what support different individuals might need throughout the process.

Through our external review, we also became aware that Sanger's reputation and profile can make it "daunting" to potential applicants, giving the impression that "you might need to be from a certain bread to land this Fellowship".



### The remaining challenge

There is a high likelihood that the programme attracted Black candidates with high levels of confidence, already in academia, that could see themselves working at a place like Sanger.

There is also more work we would like to do on examining how we communicate, with the aim of demystifying Sanger and what it means to work in a high-performing research setting. This might be through case studies from current Fellows and staff from different backgrounds and varied academic journeys.





# Application stage

Interested candidates were asked to submit an expression of interest, which was used to assess their eligibility. At this stage, they were also offered the opportunity to have an informal discussion with the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Sanger. The latter was particularly useful to clarify the process, encourage applications and get support early on (source: external review).

It was made clear that any further requests for informal discussions, and questions, would not negatively affect or influence any subsequent decision-making processes, so that candidates felt comfortable to seek the support they needed and provide a bespoke package of support.

All eligible candidates were sent an application form to complete, comprising of a narrative CV (see above). The applications were assessed by the Sanger Faculty Lead and “matches” were made between the potential candidates and Faculty.

Anonymised applications were sent to principal investigators (PIs) at Sanger, which would act as supervisors. Names, university names, degree classifications and other identifying information was removed to minimise bias. The Faculty were encouraged to utilise the six criteria co-developed in the Leading Routes Workshop to assess the applications (see *Tables 1 and 2*).

Table 1: Criteria used to make the “matches”

1. Education, training and research experience
2. Career trajectory
3. Motivation/ interest (“passion”)
4. Institute/science fit
5. Alignment with the ethos of the institute (BCF) Collaboration; Communication; Innovation; Integrity; Leadership; Results-driven
<p>Potential for further growth is a cross-cutting theme. Assessing potential could include exploring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Track record of continuous learning</li> <li>• Track record of continuous accomplishments (based on opportunity)</li> <li>• Continually seeking more responsibilities</li> <li>• How their leadership has produced results</li> <li>• Evidence that they are self-motivated with drive</li> <li>• Track record of adopting technology</li> <li>• Track record of adaptability</li> <li>• Track record of successfully implementing innovation</li> </ul>

Detailed rubrics were developed to help score each application, here is an example:

Table 2: Application - scoring criteria & rubrics

## Criterion: Career trajectory

Score : 3 – Outstanding

### Evidence to look for

- Exceptional set of evidence of being an active researcher.
- Worked within the field of genetics/genomics or related areas
- Displays understanding of the whole project life cycle, from conceiving the idea to publication/reports
- Has built their network of collaborators
- Has their role as e.g. senior Post-doc shaped the team’s direction, organisation and strategy
- Potential to fulfil a more rounded function which might include: teaching, project supervision, raising of research funds.
- Desire to engage with stakeholders, whether they be potential collaborators or end-users both within and outside of the Institute - ensuring the maximum societal impact of their research.

### Quality Indicators

- The applicant has made outstanding contributions to the research field, generation of knowledge, ideas and tools in the field.
- The applicant has articulated in great depth the impact of their contributions. They possess all of the relevant necessary practical skills/research and/or management/leadership skills to undertake a post-doctoral research project.
- The achievements listed provide outstanding context regarding their importance to the applicant’s career/research experience/potential for further growth
- The motivation for the research activities/research career in which the candidate has been involved is outstanding.
- Meets all expectations at a high level and is an outstanding candidate.
- Suitable for advancement based on accomplishments, potential, and career goals.







## The remaining challenge

The use of narrative CVs, while welcomed as a way to reduce bias, was questioned for its effectiveness. Most candidates reported it being their first time writing a narrative CV and needing more guidance and support around it. Some were unclear about what was being assessed as part of this effort or what was important for Sanger (source: external review).

Anonymised and the redacted applications were useful up to the shortlisting stage, after that it was useful to share all information with the principal investigators as background and to build an open and nurturing relationship for the rest of the process.



## The remaining challenge

It was unclear whether this approach effectively allowed reviewers to assess performance based on opportunity and potential for excellence (source: external review).

Candidates were encouraged to indicate their preferred research programme areas and/or principal investigators' research interests within their applications to ensure that we built in these insights from the outset. This was followed by calls with the candidates, Head of EDI and Faculty Lead to further explore the candidates' interests, motivation and scientific synergies. This information supported the "matching process". Once the potential matches were made, candidates were invited to a 30min call with the PIs and the Head of EDI. Together, they explored research interests and synergies further to ensure alignment.

If there was a match, then the candidates worked with the principal investigators to co-create a project building on the candidates' skills, experience and interests and ensuring fit with Sanger's scientific strategy.





# Selection Process

The majority of candidates felt that the opportunity to co-create a project worked well, enforcing the care and support model that makes this Fellowship unique (source: external review)



## The remaining challenge

The process is time-consuming and might not be scalable. PIs with two candidates or more might struggle with the workload and there are no rewards or incentives for them (source: external review).

Some PIs were keen for candidates to demonstrate leadership behaviours, even though this was not made clear to candidates nor acknowledged as assessment criteria. Therefore, we needed to improve support and clarify the co-creation process, with a focus on increasing transparency and fairness by:

- Providing further guidance around the co-development of the project proposals (e.g. roles/responsibilities/expectations for PIs and candidates)
- Clarifying what level of leadership and other behaviours are being assessed or expected.
- Providing guidance on how to write proposals for Sanger (e.g. scale, values & strategic areas of interest).

As part of the co-creation process, candidates were invited to visit the Sanger Institute in Cambridge, which was a highlight for most of them, leading to increased motivation and a desire for the Fellowship. It also allowed candidates to see a more diverse set of stakeholders otherwise not encountered before that point. Suitable alternatives might need to be offered to cater for those that are not able to do this trip (source: external review).


Co-created projects were then reviewed by an internal scientific review panel. This comprised Sanger’s Scientific Programme Heads and Institute Director. To ensure that we were continuing to mitigate against any bias, the panel received the co-developed projects and no additional information about the candidates. The purpose of this process was to assess and re-confirm scientific excellence and although this was welcomed, it also reflects the level of scrutiny that these kinds of efforts face.

The assessment criteria and scoring included: quality of science, clarity of project, innovation and strategic fit. Detailed rubrics were developed by the Head of EDI and Faculty Lead to help score each application, here is an example:

Table 3: Scientific review - scoring rubrics

Score: 3 – Outstanding
Evidence to look for
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposal develops and test new concepts, methods or technologies.</li> <li>• The proposal combines existing ideas and approaches in a novel way.</li> <li>• The research is highly likely to deliver a significant shift in understanding in the relevant field and beyond, and will stimulate further innovative research.</li> <li>• Where the goal of the research proposal is to develop new methods, tools or technologies, it is highly likely that they will provide a clear and significant advance over existing methods.</li> </ul>

### Meets all expectations at a high level; advancement

## The remaining challenge

There were concerns around unconscious biases based on the area of interest since some Heads of Programmes at Sanger were scoring proposals that were part of their programme (source: external review).



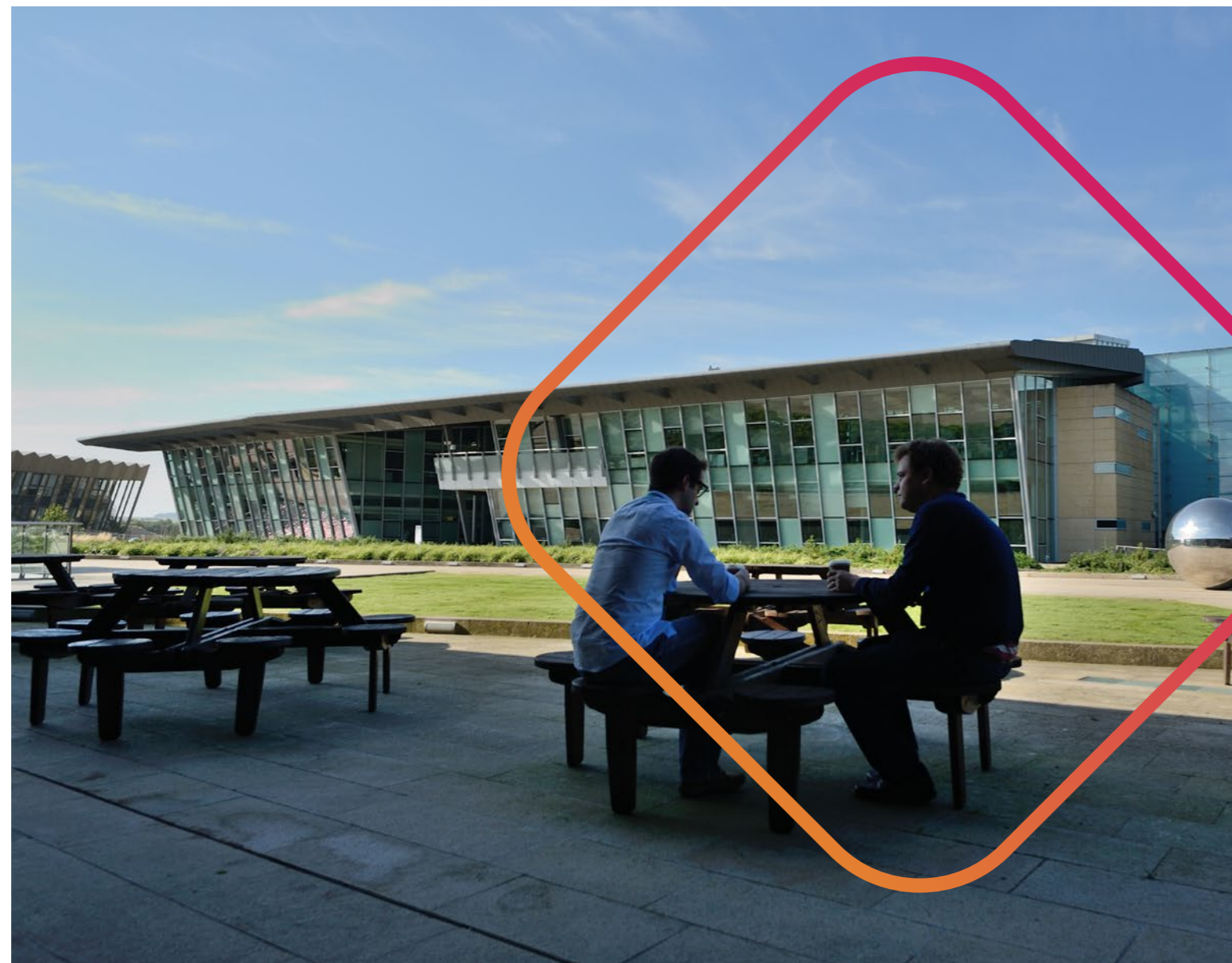


The top-scoring candidates were progressed through to the interview stage. Applicants were asked to prepare a 15 min presentation with slides on their previous experience and an outline of the research proposal. This was followed by a Q&A session around the proposal, the candidate's broader skills, experience and career development ambitions.

**Pre-interview** The Head of EDI ran workshops for the interview panel and the PIs to ensure that as much information as possible was shared ahead of the interviews, this included sending the candidates the prepared Q&A questions (which had been co-developed at the workshop with Leading Routes). These worked well - they gave candidates a sense of what to expect and how to prepare.

The interview panel comprised a cross-section of people across the advisory group; steering group and Black academics- people who had already invested time, energy and effort in making the process come to life and were personally committed to the scheme and making sure that it was a fair and equitable process.

Most of the candidates that reached the interview stage, identified as already being in academia, and reported feeling that the panel was constructive, fair and supportive. This is in contrast to how other processes feel (source: external review).



*Staff at the Sanger Institute*



## Appointment & Closure

Mentorship, training and sponsorship are built into the heart of the programme and all candidates, including those who are unsuccessful, receive feedback, and career development support and have the opportunity to be mentored by members of the Advisory or Steering group.

Most candidates reported that communication was mainly around decisions made and suggested that the feedback could be improved to include further mentorship and training plans, particularly if given in writing. (source: external review).

Candidates felt positive about the follow-up received after the process concluded, however, most reported not having talked to their PIs since the process ended. And some PIs were unclear about the next steps and whether they could hire unsuccessful candidates for something else. Further clarification on this in future rounds was needed (source: external review).







# Evidence-based learning and knowledge management







Staff at the Sanger Institute

Innovative programmes need evidence-based learning and improvement. This is why we commissioned an external review in 2021, after our first funding call. We wanted to understand what worked well or needed to improve before launching the second funding call.

[Nexus Evaluation LTD](#) conducted the review, they talked to both successful and unsuccessful candidates, to faculty and leadership stakeholders at Sanger as well as external stakeholders involved in the process as members of the steering and/or advisory group, scientific review and/or interview panel.

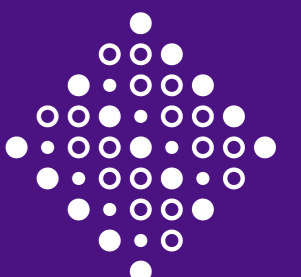
We recommend that reviews and evaluations of this kind of programme consider the below lines of inquiry, as our external review did:

- Uniqueness & potential impact of Fellowship.
- Equitable access by all Black academics in the field of genomics.
- Relevance and impact of support provided during the process.
- Equity, diversity and inclusiveness of the overall process, with a focus on transparency, panel interview dynamics & decision-making criteria.
- What worked well and what could be improved, and why.

We shared findings broadly, with our advisory and steering groups, with Sanger’s EDI Forum and via this document. But ensuring that findings can be used for strategic and corporate-level discussion is key for systemic change. Nexus Evaluation enabled this by developing a table that maps what the journey towards systemic change looks like, using key factors of success emerging from primary and secondary data collection.

Table 4: Journey towards systemic change

Success factors	1. Project focus	2. Expansion focus	3. Systemic change Focus
<p>Leadership</p>	<p><b>Sceptic leadership:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project does not originate or is led by senior leaders.</li> <li>• They need extra data, insights and influence to understand the issue &amp; agree to pilot a solution. They are not involved in making the effort successful or are consistent in their commitment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Converted leadership:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are convinced that the effort has value to them and the organisation.</li> <li>• They are committed to playing a role &amp; contributing to the success of the effort.</li> <li>• They support the expansion of efforts</li> </ul>	<p><b>Champions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They show emotional investment and empathy for those at a disadvantage and implications around potential vs access to opportunity.</li> <li>• They have a significant role in the effort and its success.</li> <li>• They advocate for systemic change within the organisation and across the sector.</li> <li>• They create incentives and rewards for those innovating and implementing solutions.</li> </ul>
<p>Reach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works within the existing pool of candidates.</li> <li>• Focus on finding the best within the pool.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to expand the reach.</li> <li>• Focus on engaging those most disenfranchised or marginalised within the target group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeks to expand the pool of candidates .</li> <li>• Takes a pipeline approach.</li> </ul>
<p>Scale</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conceived as a pilot or experiment.</li> <li>• Limited funding in terms of envelope or period (1-3. Years)</li> <li>• Small scale: mainly implemented within one organisation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replication and/or scale-up across more than one organisation.</li> <li>• Increased funding for a larger number of beneficiaries.</li> <li>• Medium-term investment (5 years+)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systems change</li> <li>• Long-term commitment (10 years +)</li> <li>• Focus on convening a wide range of organisations playing complementary roles.</li> </ul>
<p>Communication styles</p>	<p>Do not challenge preference for particular styles, incl. extrovert communication styles &amp; that come across as having high levels of confidence.</p>	<p>Starts experimenting with how to engage with non-preferential communication styles and to understand what support they might need to perform adequately.</p>	<p>Is inclusive and suited to different communication styles, has adequate support and rewards that help them thrive.</p>
<p>Process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time-intensive, a lot of time and effort goes towards developing and trying new approaches.</li> <li>• Group involved is not diverse nor representative of the target group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on balancing time and effort investment to produce more results.</li> <li>• Group involved is diverse and more representative of the target group.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is nimble &amp; scalable, focusing on reducing barriers to success based on evidence on what works, for whom, and when.</li> <li>• Governance models and org culture is diverse and representative of the population at large.</li> </ul>





We are proud to say that we have moved to the expansion phase of our journey. We are delighted that The Medical Research Council (MRC) is partnering with us to provide opportunities for six more fellows over three years and in 2023, we appointed four Fellows (two funded by Sanger and two funded by the MRC). We are also exploring further additional strategic links and the Head of EDI has been sharing insights with other organisations that are interested in setting up similar initiatives.

In June 2023 we ran a workshop for Faculty and funders on “Leading Diverse Research Teams”. During the workshop participants discussed what equality, equity and justice in research means to them and the main barriers for Black heritage researchers. They were also encouraged to think what they could continue, start or stop doing to positively impact the recruitment, experience and retention of minoritized groups in their labs and across the Sanger Institute. Key recommendations from the workshop include:

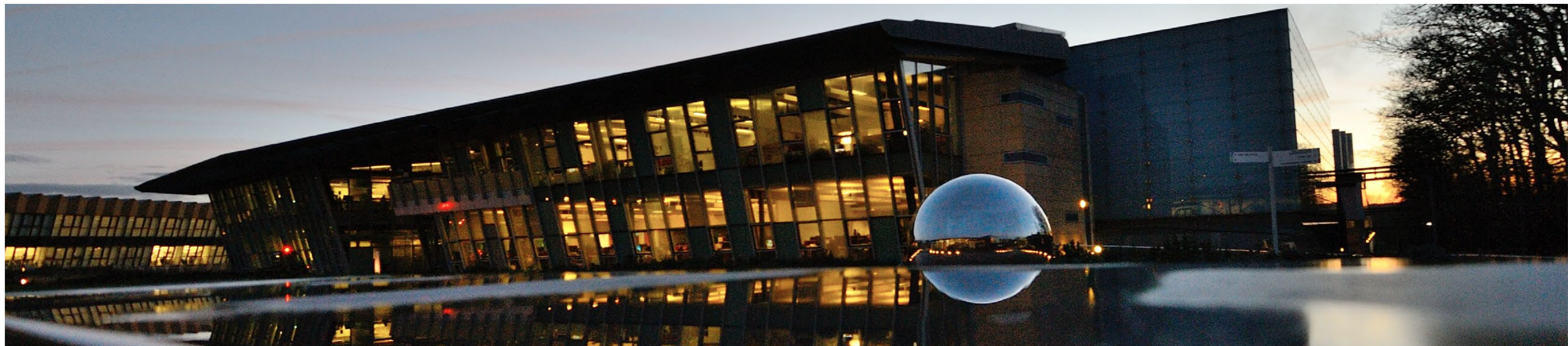
- Establishing the “Diverse Research Teams Workshop Series”, giving the Sanger community (and beyond) a forum to exchange ideas, disseminate best practice and promote accountability.
- Co-creating with the wider community, particularly non-Russell Group Universities, Sanger Excellence “offspring programmes” (undergraduate internships, MPhil, PhD Programmes).
- Co-creating with funders, particularly The Wellcome Trust, Cancer Research UK and Medical Research Council - UKRI, instruments to guarantee the sustainability of current and future initiatives and how to support the roll out of these programmes across the UK Research Ecosystem



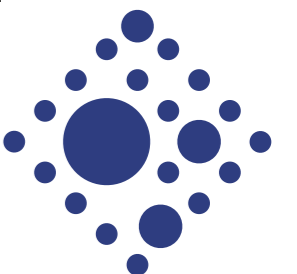
Other areas of inquiry that will be useful to pursue are:

- Assessing whether the Excellence Fellows are able to flourish at Sanger as any other post-doctoral Fellow.
- How relevant and effective the mentoring, training and sponsorship provided to both successful and unsuccessful candidates is.
- Tracking the career development and journeys of the Fellows, to better understand the long-term impact of the Fellowship.

We will be continually reviewing, evaluating and making adjustments to strengthen the scheme and its underlying processes.



Staff at the Sanger Institute



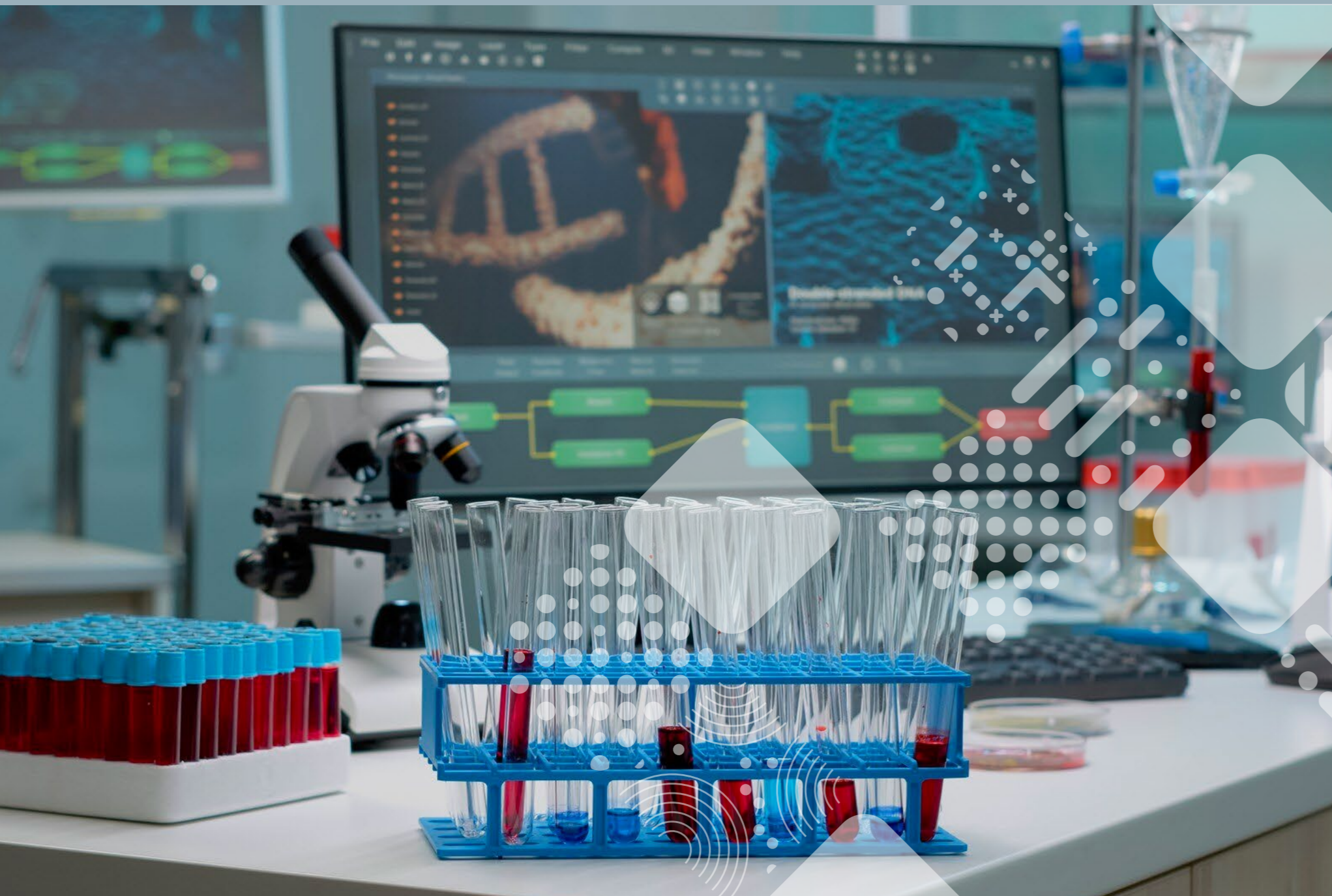




# Final thoughts







There is a big risk that people misunderstand recruiting/funding Black candidates as the solution to a problem that is systemic and long-term. Too much responsibility is often placed on the few successful candidates to represent their entire group in exceptional ways.

Work needs to continue within organisations to transform governance, working practices and culture to adequately support more diverse, equitable and inclusive environments. Leadership is key to advancing EDI over time and making it a genuine organisational commitment.

EDI is highly relational, the way we talk, behave and relate to those we aim to support is as important as the funding we provide. The challenge is how to scale up the level of care and support provided in this programme if, over time, awards increase significantly.

But we also need to come together as a community to:

- Build partnerships that address challenges throughout the academic and research pipeline.
- Jointly reflect on challenges, lessons learned and emerging evidence to inform strategic and operational practice. But also, to celebrate success!
- Advocate for systemic change and elevate the voices of marginalised and discriminated individuals, groups and communities.
- Support each other as a community, leading systemic change can take a personal toll on people, nurturing relationships and safe spaces are key to success

Finally, perseverance is key- meaningful and sustainable change takes time and a lot of effort.





# Excellence Programme Leads



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Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion  
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Targeted approaches  
to supporting people  
with black heritage  
backgrounds in academia  
and research

Learning brief



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