



Trustnet



News



Sophie Moorcock
24 Aug 2021, 00.17

Tags

[Diversity and inclusion](#)[Funding approach](#)[Grants](#)[Mental health](#)[Research Culture](#)[Strategy](#)

Focus on funding: access, equity and divas

97 20



[Shomari Lewis-Wilson](#), neuroscience and mental health Grants Advisor and Crazy in Love with funding Beyonce fan, walks us through how three opportunities reflect our new strategy, support stable research, and encourage the finest talent to unlock discoveries that will improve the health of the most people possible.

So, what does a typical working day look like?

Depends on where we are in the lifecycle of a grant! At the moment, I am reading tens of grant applications, checking eligibility, making sure the costs are appropriate, that the proposal looks good and is ready to present to our Expert Review Groups. They assess applications for shortlisting, to pass through to the interview stage for potential funding.

I'm also answering lots of emails from researchers, providing timely advice about our grants.

When do our next funding rounds start?

We are just about to launch our three new funding schemes.

1. [Wellcome Early-Career Awards](#)
2. [Wellcome Career Development Awards](#)
3. [Wellcome Discovery Awards](#)

These rounds open today, 19 August, to submissions. The deadlines for those will be in the autumn.

What do you advise on?

I give advice to applicants about eligibility and further information to help candidates decide whether they are a good fit for a grant scheme or better

candidate decide whether they are a good fit for a grant scheme or better suited to a different fund. In my department, we provide application advice to universities, online, in virtual conferences or with in-person presentations.

I also advise candidates about how the application process works, what to expect and about supplementary funding requests (if a grant holder is sick or going on parental leave, for example).

I'm passionate about making sure we are able to give advice to a wide spectrum of people. So, we're not getting the same people from the same institutions and see a range of applicants getting access to our advice.

How much does the strategy play a part in the new funds?

It's clear our new strategy has been fully woven into the design of the funding schemes. It has influenced the design of larger and longer grants of up to eight years.

When a researcher has secure funding, the scope of their activities encourages excellent ideas that lead to more fruitful programmes of research. Also, teams build a stronger place in the academic process.

The hope is that we create a firm, stable research system that provides a healthy culture for research.

The new strategy offers opportunities to continue to push the envelope of science and research, to think about our practice and how we live up to the ideals of being an ethical and equitable, forward-thinking funder of great science.

How can we consider equity in our work processes?

We think about how we can make sure that the greatest number of different people can access these new schemes.

We look at the application advice we give, how we work with other funders and scientific institutions. We also make sure we've got a fair culture for research. There are lots of people thinking about this, because it is really important that we get the best people doing the best science in the best way.

These questions are being thought about by many teams across Wellcome, including the [Research Culture team](#).

When I think about equity, I think about what we are doing to create systems that ensure no one is held back by factors outside of their control.

That comes down to protected characteristics, including gender, sexual orientation, race and disability. I think it's important that if Wellcome wants to be promoting the best health ideas that benefit everyone, we are making sure that everyone can get involved with driving that forward.

I will always be an advocate for the processes that enable a broader spectrum of people to have a part in our mission.

Science as a system wasn't designed with everyone, from every background in mind. If only a certain type of person is researching questions in a particular way, in a very specific set of organisations or institutions, that naturally creates a hierarchy and limits the questions asked, and the breadth of ideas and opportunities.

Not having equity properly considered limits the impact that science has because it will be skewed towards some populations and not others. That means science potentially loses great ideas or people who could be involved in the next big discoveries

...the next big achievement.

It could mean funders like Wellcome can't achieve their health missions, ambitions and goals because we aren't putting our funds and efforts in the right places. It's a practical question as much as a philosophical one.

It's more than just the right thing to do. Science depends on having a broad selection of people involved - it means the impact, outcomes and ways of working are better.

Who, living or historical, would you invite to a dinner party or a socially distanced picnic?

Anyone who knows me well will understand that Beyoncé Knowles-Carter is my favourite celebrity in the world. Without a shadow of a doubt, I would 100% love to go to dinner with her.

I'd also love to have a conversation with Barack and Michelle Obama. I think they're fascinating people, and whether you agree with their politics, I think it would be a mind-blowing experience to have a conversation with them.

I suppose three guests of that calibre would be plenty. I would choose a dinner over a socially distanced picnic because I have an idea, the odds are, they would put on a pretty lavish dinner.

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20 Comments



Kathryn Merritt

Internal Communications Manager

Thursday 19 August 2021

This was a great read! Really interesting to learn a bit more about what people do across the organisation. And [@Shomari Lewis-Wilson](#), if the dinner party doesn't work out, you can always hop in the time machine back to the 2009 Inaugural Ball:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGq1SzkHs0>

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Shomari Lewis-Wilson

Senior Manager, Research Culture & Communities

Thursday 19 August 2021

Genuinely still get chills whenever I watch this!

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Melanie Keen

Director of Wellcome Collection

Friday 20 August 2021

Not sure how I missed this, but chills is so right!

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Kerry Garfitt

Senior Funding Policies Adviser

Thursday 19 August 2021

Love this @Shomari Lewis-Wilson! And this bit in particular: "It's more than just the right thing to do". Absolutely true

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Lucy Clulow

Funding Manager

Thursday 19 August 2021

Great article Shomari! :)

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Fon Browndy

Organisational CEDI lead

Thursday 19 August 2021

I enjoyed reading this Shomari, you've explained really clearly why equitable science and research is so important. Thank you for sharing your work and your insights.

Before I go.... if you ever do get Barak and Michelle round for dinner I NEED a seat at that table - I have questions!!!

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Hannah Hope

Open Research Lead

Thursday 19 August 2021

Thanks @Shomari for this great article. My take home sentence: "Science as a system wasn't designed with everyone, from every background in mind." So true and its why the whole system needs a good overhaul.

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Shomari Lewis-Wilson

Senior Manager, Research Culture & Communities

Thursday 19 August 2021

Yes, yes and yes! 😊

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Sabrina Lamour-Julien

Research Lead, Therapeutics

Thursday 19 August 2021

Great article Shomari and Sophie- cool to get to know more about the behind-the-scenes in Grants, especially with the ongoing thoughts about how we can make our

processes as inclusive as possible. As you rightly pointed out Shomari, science has not been designed for everyone in mind and it's our job (our calling!) at Wellcome, as a major science funder, to help push/lead the way for that to no longer be the case. On another note, please invite me when (notice not if, when) you get invited to a fancy dinner with the Obamas and the Carters - even if I'm just end up being a groupie in the background! 😄

[Edit](#)[Delete](#)[❤️ 7](#)[↩ Reply](#)**Diego Baptista**

Head of Research and Funding Equity - CEDI

Thursday 19 August 2021

Sign me up for the Beyonce + Obamas dinner. Can we get them interested in funding research and broadening who participates???

[Edit](#)[Delete](#)[❤️ 2](#)[↩ Reply](#)**Shomari Lewis-Wilson**

Senior Manager, Research Culture & Communities

Thursday 19 August 2021

After Bey sees my 'Single Ladies' routine, she will have no choice but to stan our research culture approaches.

[Edit](#)[Delete](#)[❤️ 16](#)[↩ Reply](#)**Dawn Duhaney**

Product Manager

Thursday 19 August 2021

Great article Shomari. We need to actively broaden who has access to the 'system' so we can get to an equitable future. And Wellcome is in a unique position to make that happen.

[Edit](#)[Delete](#)[❤️ 8](#)[↩ Reply](#)**Jeremy Farrar**

Director

Friday 20 August 2021

Great article Shomari - thank you. Dinner...Obamas yes - but I would go for a small group of tomorrow, not yesterday. If that was the criteria, who would your three be?

[Edit](#)[Delete](#)[❤️ 2](#)[↩ Reply](#)**Shomari Lewis-Wilson**

Senior Manager, Research Culture & Communities

Friday 20 August 2021

Thanks Jeremy, good question! If I was to go to dinner with a small group of 'tomorrow's leaders' I would look to the many great examples of leadership in young people such as:

- Stormzy
- Marcus Rashford
- Daniel Kaluuya
- Reni Edo-Lodge
- Greta Thunberg
- Malala Yousafzai

All of the above have seized opportunities and used their talents to create change with whatever resources they have to hand. All bar two are younger than I am. Difficult to pick just 3 in this context!

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Paul Schreier

Chief Operating Officer

Friday 20 August 2021

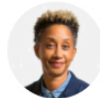
It is difficult to pick three: these are six interesting choices and the dinner party might just have to be a little larger to accommodate them.

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Melanie Keen

Director of Wellcome Collection

Friday 20 August 2021

What an inspirational read, and the photo is pretty exceptional too. Many thanks [@Shomari](#)

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Richard Muscat

Senior Partner Translation

Monday 23 August 2021

Thanks for the overview on the funding strategy, new schemes and getting across the importance of equity in our work processes. Absolutely agree that science is potentially losing out on great ideas and people who could be involved in the next big discoveries.

What approaches [@Shomari](#) (and others!) are you excited about that Wellcome might be able to use to support the broadening of the ideas and people we support?

And I can't not ask... where did you get out for a hike?

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Shomari Lewis-Wilson

Senior Manager, Research Culture & Communities

Tuesday 24 August 2021

Thanks Richard, really good question. I know that the Research Culture and CEDI teams will be working hard to decipher what is possible within our new strategy for increasing the representation of our funded researchers. Some ideas for the things I would like to see them explore are discussed here.

The picture is from a spot of wild-camping I did at the Breacon Beacons in May 😊❤️

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Richard Muscat
Senior Partner Translation
Wednesday 25 August 2021

Thanks for posting the link – I forgot to comment at the time but it's an excellent article highlighting an alarming trend and neatly brings together ways to tackle it. Wholeheartedly agree with the ideas in there. I think there are plenty of changes that could still be implemented to grant schemes to make them more open and targeted approaches, like the ones you describe, are also much needed to “move the needle” and see change.

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Richard Muscat
Senior Partner Translation
Wednesday 25 August 2021

Only been to the outskirts of the Breacon Beacons ages back, but looks spectacular, so a proper visit is on the "to do" list

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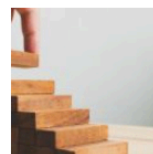
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