Joint Funders Group

Supported by **UK Research and Innovation**

Alternative Uses Group

Supported by **UK Research and Innovation** & **Universities UK**

Culture Change; a collaborative systems approach – How-to Guide

Culture Change; a collaborative systems approach – How-to Guide

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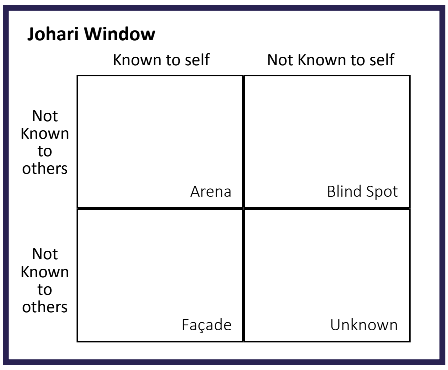
1. Culture Change; a collaborative systems approach

Culture Change is complex, and cannot be brought about by just one individual, organisation or sector. It requires all parts of a system to come together around a shared ambition that helps others to engage in the journey, illuminates blind spots,[1] and ensures that any unintended consequences are predicted and minimised.



This approach has been explored as part of a key Culture Change endeavour within the Research & Innovation (R&I) system, focussed on supporting the widespread adoption of narrative CVs. The work has involved funders, professional bodies and employers across a variety of contexts and countries, working together in changing what is visible and valued within reward and recognition systems. This one system/ one sector method recognises that we are all part of a global R&I community, and aims to foster porosity across roles, countries, disciplines and sectors.

Especially important in this approach is the cultivation of safe spaces where people can talk and share ideas; not bound by hierarchy, just a shared vision. Creating such spaces helps to enable and protect honest conversations about the challenges being faced, and what has or hasn't worked in the past. This approach is integral to understanding the 'what?' and 'how?' of the given challenge, the system and culture that creates and maintains it, and how to make a change systemically and sustainably. This space is co-created and protected by all in the group in a number of ways, which this guide will help you replicate.

To know what works we can look at what has worked, and learn why (contextual factors that enabled it to work) in order to replicate it.

The aim of this guide is to help others replicate key features of this programme, to help address other intractable organisational, system and Culture Change challenges.

The Chairs and Secretariat

Reward and recognition are key levers in influencing change within the R&I system. Narrow definitions of success and hyper-competition are recognised as being among the main drivers of poor behaviours, which negatively impact R&I culture. In 2017, work by the Royal Society explored ways to address this with the R&I community, resulting in the co-creation of the 'Résumé for Researchers' narrative CV.

Why?

This structured narrative format enables a wider array of contributions to be evidenced beyond the publications and grant income that are often seen in traditional academic CVs, making it easier to identify the people and ideas that need support to flourish. Narrative CVs align with a range of sector and organisational priorities, including:

responsible research assessment (eg DORA, CoARA)

- equality, diversity and inclusion
- career, skills and talent development
- reducing unnecessary bureaucracy
- enabling increased movement between roles, sectors and disciplines across the global R&I community.

Reducing bureaucracy: by replacing current varied formats and guidance with a single approach to describing track record when applying to or assessing for R&I organisations using this CV.

Inclusivity: allows better description of varied career pathways, reduces focus on continuous productivity, and enables a broader range of people, ideas and outputs to be highlighted.

Incentives: A healthy, functioning R&I ecosystem requires a breadth of contributions. Our incentive system needs to value a much wider range of contributions and outcomes as excellent.

Research and Collegiality: Recognising the skills needed to deliver effective teamwork, collaborations, and contributions to support colleagues and others.

Reduces barriers: can describe breadth of outputs and put in context to aid reviewers who may be unfamiliar with the discipline or sector to understand the significance and impact.

Responsible assessment: reduced focus on lists and quantity of outputs, increased focus on quality of outputs. Supporting decisions based on 'whole picture' of the applicants' contributions and experience.

Figure 1: Image credit: UKRI R&I Culture Team with support of JRS 1:

2. Purpose & background

This guide captures experience and learning from the vanguard programme designed to support widespread adoption of Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI)-like narrative CVs across the Research and Innovation (R&I) community. The programme has been highly successful, achieving and exceeding its initial ambitions, and it has attracted interest from the global community, not just in what has been achieved, but how. This document pulls out the key learnings from the process as a potential help to others.

The programme comprises two communities of practice; the Joint Funders Group (JFG) and Alternative Uses Group (AUG). Together these form the R&I community roll out of R4RI-like narrative CVs, and deliver the Tier 1 commitment of the UK Government's People and Culture Strategy, to *drive adoption of the 'Résumé for Researchers' narrative CV, which broadens the range of experiences and accomplishments that are recognised*. The programme was developed to reassure the R&I community that aligned approaches would be taken wherever possible, helping to minimise confusion and unnecessary bureaucracy, while maximising shared learning, best practice, and responsible research assessment.

The JFG explores shared approaches towards using a R4RI-like narrative CV in funding decision-making, and develops a range of resources that accompany its use. The AUG was co-developed in partnership with Universities UK (UUK) to complement the efforts of the JFG, and explore the alternative applications of R4RI-like narrative CVs in the assessment of people (for example, in hiring and promotion).

Both groups co-created resources to support the widespread adoption of narrative CVs across the R&I community. These are hosted in the Résumé Resources Library, and include training materials and a Shared Evaluation Framework (SEF) to help monitor for unintended consequences, and allow for iterative development of the resources accordingly.

The combination of both groups' efforts has enabled a more efficient, cohesive and comprehensive approach to shifting what's visible and valued in research and innovation.

3. Top questions to ask yourself before you start

Given the resource and energy that it takes to design and deliver a collaborative programme, it is advisable to consider the following questions to help inform the design, avoid duplication, and identify and connect with complimentary activity (figure 2 overleaf) that can help to accelerate Culture Change.

1. **Why are you doing this (your motivations/ vision/ ambition)?**
   - Consider why this group needs to exist. Write it down and reflect on this collectively over time. Consistently check to make sure you are working towards the shared motivation/ vision/ ambition, and consider if/ how it needs to adapt as the ecosystem shifts.

2. **Who should/ can you collaborate with?**
   - Consider the diverse perspectives, experiences, levels of authority, geographies, disciplines, organisation sizes, individual backgrounds, etc. that are needed to effect meaningful change. It's useful to map these out to help identify any gaps.

3. **What does the success of the group look and feel like?**
   - In this complex space, mission-drift can dilute your intended objectives and impact. Being clear about your purpose and keeping this as an 'anchor' is critical to success. Consider how you will communicate the vision of the group. Who are your target groups? What/who are you trying to impact? How will you reach these?

> Within the R&I community roll out programme, all members wanted to create and maintain a 'safe space'. This allowed them to share ideas and concerns freely. This was key to co-creating resources that were authentically effective in a range of contexts.

4. **What could the group offer (expertise, resources)?**
   - Consider diverse outputs, practical resources, and evidence of what works. How will you offer these? For example, making your outputs publicly available and attending events to share information. It is useful to ask framing questions in the group to get to this, for example "if you were tasked with X, what would be most useful to you?"

5. **When will the group's work on this ambition come to an end?**
   - Do your activities require completion by a specified deadline or within a specified period, such as before a law change? What can be realistically achieved in this period and how will work be updated in future? It is worth exploring a maintenance phase after the group ends, to ensure that information is up-to-date, to benefit those who discover it after the group ends.
   - If there is no specific time limit, ask, as a group, how "will we know we have 'finished' or achieved the ambition/vision?" What does this look like, and how will progress towards this in the group be tracked/ measured?

6. **Where/ how will you convene, and where will you host materials?**
   - Consider the frequency and format of meetings (in-person, virtual or hybrid). Explore any barriers that your approach may create and how these can be mitigated or managed.
   - Where and how will you share materials? Materials in development, or those ready for public use may exist in different places with different access levels. For example, you might have a shared Teams/ Source/ Google space where draft documents are worked on, and a website where the final version is shared. Where possible encourage use of a shared document, to help with version control.

7. **How will you work together?**
   - Where should 'ownership' of the group sit, and what does this look like? For example, does this mean that the convening/ secretariat/ Chair support comes from one place/ organisation, or can this be shared/ rotated without losing traction or consistency towards the mission/ vision of the group?
   - Consider establishing terms of reference reflecting what the group can and cannot do, and setting the tone for the collaboration. This can be referred-to later, should membership change.

In asking these questions, consider how you might use the creation of the group or design of the programme to do things differently, to try something new or borrowed (giving credit where due), or whether to retain some aspects because they are tried and tested.

In this programme we noted our work aligned to agendas that included, for example, but not limited to:

International initiatives:

- Coalition for Advancing Research assessment (CoARA)
- San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)

Assessment and accreditation processes:

- allows Research/Teaching Excellence Framework (REF/TEF)
- Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF)
- Centres of Excellence (e.g. nationally recognised badges of quality)

Concordats, agreements and charters:

- A healthy, Concordat to Support Research Integrity
- Concordat on Open Research Data
- Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
- Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research
- Concordat for the Advancement of Knowledge Exchange in Higher Education
- Athena Swan Charter
- Race Equality Charter
- Technicians Commitment

Government and organisational strategies:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
- United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals/Global challenges
- UK Government R&D People and Culture Strategy
- UK Government R&D Roadmap
- UK Government Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy.

Figure 2 collaborative programme complimentary activity

4. Set-up and planning

It is important to consider several things prior to establishing a group, to ensure its success and to set the tone for future activity. Below are some factors to consider for a smooth take-off.

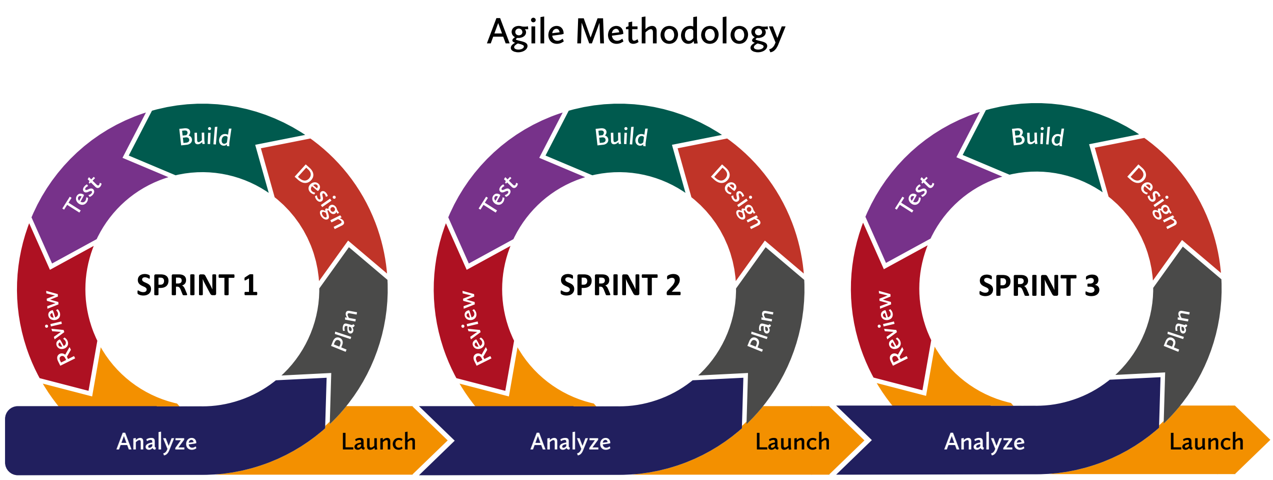
- **Why** is the group being set up? This can be conveyed in a few ways:
  - A succinct way of summarising the purpose, aims and objectives of the group. Have agreed phrasing/ lines that all group members can take in a range of contexts.
  - Name and branding. Does the name clearly reflect the group's purpose? Are there ways you can involve the members in this process? Avoid copying the name of an existing group and be sure to check acronyms and alternative interpretations.
- **Who** could be involved and how you can approach them?
  - Map out who else shares your vision and might be interested in collaborating. Consider drawing on different expertise to form an agreed membership, or inviting guest speakers for differing views/ inputs.
  - How will dependencies/ perceived duplications be managed? Can you highlight and connect with different perspectives, or agree a division of labour to accelerate Culture Change collectively?
  - How will you ensure that you have the voices/ experience you need? Will it be a closed or an open group? Ensure that you have a shared understanding of what this means. How will you advertise/ recruit members, or decide on the eligibility criteria or varying levels of membership/ relationships?
  - Will the membership or group information be published or will this be optional, to ensure that sensitivities are catered-for?
- **What** will you aim to take forward/ progress each time you meet? This is important to help people feel like progress (both individual and collective) is being made.
  - The sub-group model (fig X) is a key to success. Sub-groups can move things forward outside of the main group.
  - What kind of outputs will the group create? Consider audience, readability, accessibility, language (does it need to be context/ country-specific to be useful?). How will the group determine the priority order of producing outputs? Will these be made available publicly? Are proofreading or design needed? Are these in-house or will you need to commission?
  - Do you need a set budget to help create this group? Consider the resources that are required to support the secretariat or Chair. Having a strong chair and secretariat can help drive pace and progress but this can be a substantial role, so consider the commitments involved. Will these be in-house resources or could you commission a third party? Consider the messaging or other implications that this may have for the group objectives or intended impact. If you plan to meet in person will there be a budget to support people's attendance?
- **When** will the group end?
  - When are the group's milestones, deadlines or thresholds for success/ impact? Consider tasks, outputs, deadlines, resource allocation etc within this timescale.
  - Time-limited sub-groups can help to harness specific skills and should feed back to the main body. A sprint-like approach (see figure 3 overleaf) can help shift the focus from perfection to something useful that can be built on refined feedback from the wider group.
- **Where** will you meet?
  - Consider location and timing (including global time-zones if relevant). Will meetings be virtual (Teams or Zoom) or hybrid? Is an annual in-person meeting useful? If so, consider travel expenses, room size and equipment that may be needed, such as display screens. Can other functions, such as separate 'chat,' be facilitated?
  - Decide collectively the best way to communicate between meetings. Will this be via email or a secure online shared space, enabling people to edit/ comment on documents? How will access be managed?

- **How** will the group determine 'ground rules'? These could be co-created or drafted and shared for consideration, then refined accordingly.
- How will group members be empowered to be ambassadors of the programme? How can they be supported in this? For example, by providing a master slide deck for all to use. Terms of reference may also include roles and responsibilities, the number necessary for a quorum, frequency of meetings etc.
- Will you be operating under Chatham House Rule (with explicit agreement when you are not)? Ensure that people know what this means- that anyone who comes to a meeting is free to use information from the discussion, but is not allowed to reveal who made any particular comment. It is designed to increase openness of discussion. Encourage openness, transparency and honesty; ensure that the Chair and secretariat have a clear understanding of what this involves, so that group members feel safe to contribute.
- **Respect members' autonomy**. For example, by not making decisions on behalf of individuals members, but instead agreeing to handle suggestions within each organisation on an individual basis.

> Respect members autonomy. Not everyone / every organisation will be able to do everything in the same way or at the same pace due to different contexts/resources/capacity etc. This is ok. Look for the minimal common product which all can agree on, and focus on this. For some, huge progress may be small steps – this is still progress and should be celebrated.

- Will you record or capture progress or impact measurements? For example, relating to growth in membership? Try to capture both qualitative and quantitative information. Ask members to consider what types of evidence they would find valuable.

> Taking a sprint like approach can help avoid perfectionism and achieve a usable product in a short space of time. This can then be iteratively developed after the output is made available (launched/published) as evaluation occurs and findings shared to inform the next iteration.



Example of Sprint/Agile approach

5. Operating and delivering

It is important to consider how the group will operate and deliver, to align with your answers to the 'questions before you start.' You may wish to consider the operational factors below. Ensure that your approach maintains momentum and reflects the principles and parameters you set up.

- Create and protect a safe space to enable honest conversations about the challenges being faced and what has or hasn't worked in the past. Use trusted roles, such as the secretariat, to view or hold sensitive/ non-public materials. This role is empowered and supported by the Chair.
- Who will provide Chair and secretariat support and what do these roles look like? The secretariat's role could involve drafting the initial terms of reference, drafting agendas, Chairs' briefs and papers, setting pre/ post-meeting discussions, minute-taking, recording actions, inviting other stakeholders to join discussions etc.

> This is an opportunity to do things differently. People in roles such as those of the secretariat can be empowered and supported by the Chair and the group to be active contributors and ambassadors for the group's work. For example, they could present at conferences, lead on communications and be rewarded and recognised for this work.

- Build connections and working relationships. Each group member (and new members) should be introduced and share their motivations for being part of the group.

> Provide an opportunity for new members to meet with the Chair/Secretariat before joining. This is helpful to get new members up to speed on what's been done, and what's coming next, integrate them in any active work in development and the culture of the group.

- Commit to consistent attendance and set expectations. How many people per group or organisation can be part of the group? Will you allow deputising (will that be disruptive or jeopardise safe spaces)? Highlight that members are responsible for debriefing their deputies accordingly. Will the lead and the deputy contact both receive diary invitations and access to sites?
- Will it be useful to invite a Subject Matter Expert to discuss a certain topic/item?
- Collaboration. How can you nurture a collaborative ethos and personal relationships? Will you be sharing files? Where (Teams/ SharePoint/ Google docs)? Consider sending agendas or papers via email, as not all members may have access to your file-sharing sites. Where possible, find one method that works for everyone. Ensure that there is adequate time for members to review the agenda and papers, especially if you are asking for comments.
- Consider the purpose of sharing documents. Are you asking for input, decision, review or sign-off? Are you sharing in confidence within the group only (as individuals), or with the secretariat? Will/ when will you make any files public, and what are the criteria for this?
- How many documents should be shared per meeting to achieve the appropriate level of focus? This might also depend on the document length, or the level of details required in terms of feedback. Try to avoid asking for detailed inputs near/ during key non-working dates.

> Consider working on the document as a group within the meeting. Members of the group will be busy people and sometimes this is a useful means to get focus and a cultivates a greater sense of achievement in the group by freeing up time/commitments outside of the group – bit like when you got to do homework in class!

- Agree and commit to the timeline for activity/ actions to be completed. Be honest on capacity, resource and capability. Consider using the meeting time to get quick inputs.
- Set clear expectations/ responsibilities of members from the outset, during and outside of meetings. For example, will cameras be on for meetings?
- Agree who is needed to sign-off an output (all group members, or just a majority?).

- Consider having standing items for your meetings, e.g. to approve meeting minutes/ notes, discuss and sign-off any outputs, any other business.
- Consider whether a particular meeting is required – can it be done by correspondence?
- Will the meeting be recorded? Ensure that all members are aware and have consented. Reasons for recording include note-taking, for members not in attendance, or for publishing. Consider the impact that this may have if you are trying to cultivate a safe space.
- Post-meeting: Will the minutes and actions be circulated? If not, consider ahead how members not in attendance can input.
- Chair or secretariat changes: ensure that members are informed. Set up a handover with the new Chair or secretariat to exchange knowledge without losing momentum.
- Consider sharing your progress and developments with the wider community. Recognise that others may not have the capacity to be involved, but may still benefit from the group's activities/learning/progress

> Communicating the groups aims, activities Communicating the groups aims, activities and resources help others helps identify others on a similar journey, minamises potential duplication and can help reassure others. For example, at the start of this programme members issued a statement about working together to find alignment in adoption wherever possible. This helped reassure the community efforts would be coordinated and confusion minamised.

- Communication and engagement activities. For example will you encourage blogs from members on their experience working in the group, or use webinars or videos to signpost your work to other people, internally or externally? Will it be useful to create a master slide deck that members can use to advocate for the programme within their own organisation/ networks?

> In the programme we used a powerful sub-group model. These were formed organically as needs were identified. Volunteers drafted resources for the main group's review/sign off. The sub-group approach really helped move thing forward outside of the main group and a number could be run in parrallel with different leads.

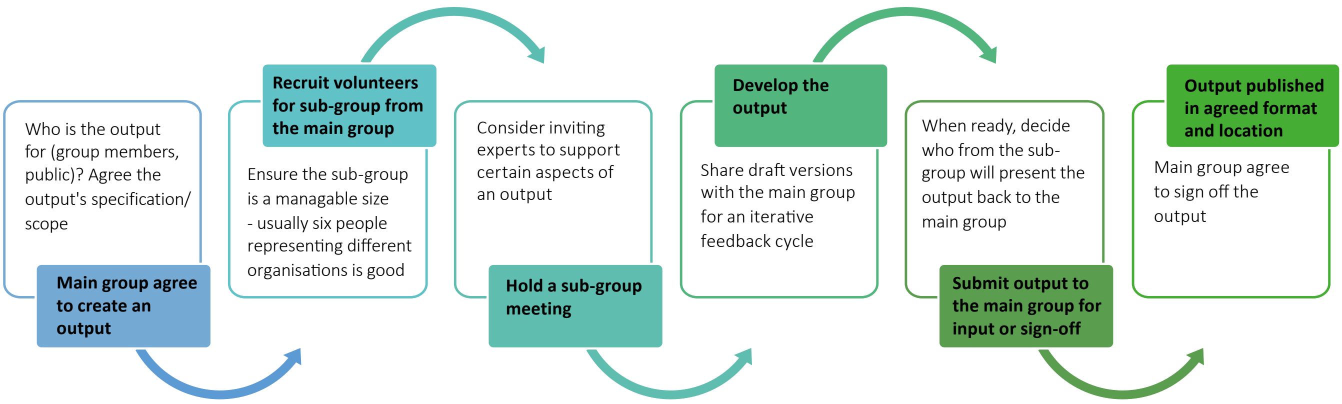


Figure 3 An example of how a sub-group model works in this programme

6. Closing the group

Before closing the group you may wish to consider where you are now, the valuable things you have learnt which are helping you, and the people impacted by the intractable challenge you set out to improve. Consider the maintenance of any activity, possibly by the creation of a legacy group, and the potential for the programme's evolution.

- **Review:** has the group achieved what it set out to do? Did it achieve any unanticipated outcomes? What you have learnt and how is that helping you now?
- **Reflect:** celebrate your successes and achievements and acknowledge any surprises, disruptions and challenges.
- **Share:** communicate your learning so that others can develop, grow and improve the culture.
- **Evolve:** do you want to evolve the group into a new phase – with an evolved or different ambition/ objective – or do you want to create a mini sub-group or complete closure? Or does the group need to be reconstituted?
- **Reunite:** do you anticipate bringing the group back together in the future? Consider saving membership details and contacts for future reference or connection.

7. History of the programme and additional resources of interest

The R&I community roll-out of R4RI-like narrative CVs delivers the Tier 1 commitment of the UK Government's People and Culture Strategy; to 'drive adoption of the 'Résumé for Researchers' narrative CV, which broadens the range of experiences and accomplishments that are recognised'. The programme was developed to reassure the R&I community that aligned approaches would be taken wherever possible, helping minimise confusion and unnecessary bureaucracy, while maximising shared learning, best practice and responsible research assessment. In July 2021 a statement to this effect was published by seven UK funders, and the Joint Funders Group (JFG) was formed.

The JFG explores shared approaches towards using a R4RI-like narrative CV in funding decision-making, and develops a range of resources that accompany its use. Its membership has grown to 18 funders, national and international, of varying sizes and disciplines. The group's inaugural event in March 2022, *Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI), a Narrative CV Approach; the what, why and how organisations can engage with it* was attended by c800 people, with 85% of attendees reporting that they now have a good understanding of why R4RI-like narrative CVs are useful.

UKRI is a member of the JFG and has acknowledged the best practice and learning shared in the adoption of R4RI-like narrative CVs in its own funding calls.

In December 2021 the Alternative Uses Group (AUG) was co-developed in partnership with Universities UK (UUK) to complement the efforts of the JFG and explore the alternative applications of R4RI-like narrative CVs in the assessment of people (for example, in hiring and promotion). Among the 34 organisations that comprise it, across the UK and Europe, there are a diverse range of universities, learned societies and funders.

Both groups have been co-creating resources to support the widespread adoption of narrative CVs across the R&I community. These are hosted in the Résumé Resources Library, and include training materials and a Shared Evaluation Framework (SEF) to help monitor for unintended consequences and iterative development of the resources accordingly. An Evidence Platform, the first of its kind, is being developed to share data from the SEF with the R&I sector, inform the iterative development of resources, and act as a research-on-research resource.

The combination of both groups' efforts has enabled a more efficient, cohesive and comprehensive approach to shifting what's visible and valued in research and innovation.

For more information visit:

- 500 Women Scientists Guide to Organising Inclusive Scientific Meetings: Where to begin
- Royal Society of Chemistry Quick guide to running an inclusive event
- Diversity Calendar – The Diversity and Inclusion Calendar 2023 | Inclusive Employers

Version Number	Status	Revision Date	Author(s)	Summary of Changes
1.0	May 2023		Joint Funders Group and Alternative Uses Group[2]	New resources created

2 The materials created for the Résumé Resources Library have been co-developed by the Joint Funders Group and the Alternative Uses Group. The use of any material(s) from the Résumé Resources Library is shared under the Creative Commons — Attribution 4.0 International — CC BY 4.0 and requires that the Joint Funders Group and the Alternative Uses Group be acknowledged in any work which has benefitted or borrowed from the resources in replicated or adapted works.