

# The Data Lab Governance Board: Application Pack

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# Introduction from The Data Lab Chair of The Governance Board



Dear Board Applicant

Thank you for your interest in joining The Data Lab Governance Board. This is a pivotal moment for us. As Scotland's Innovation Centre for Data and AI, our purpose is clear: to transform how data and AI are used to drive a more prosperous and equitable society where the responsible use of data and AI empowers everyone to thrive. We do this by bringing together industry, academia, the public sector and an increasingly global community, creating the connections, skills and collaborations that turn ideas into real impact.

Over the past decade, The Data Lab has helped thousands of organisations and students accelerate their data and AI journeys, supported the creation of jobs and new revenue for the Scottish economy, and championed responsible innovation across sectors. As we refresh our Governance Board, we are looking for people who share our values: innovate, support, grow, respect, and who can help us shape the next phase of our ambition. Diverse perspectives and fresh thinking matter; they strengthen our ability to lead responsibly and deliver meaningful change in Scotland and beyond.

We are now seeking to refresh our Governance Board as existing members complete their tenure. If you share our vision, values and excitement, I would encourage you to apply. It is vital that we have a diverse range of applicants, as we recognise the need for fresh ideas, different perspectives, and approaches as we take The Data Lab forward and scale our impact in Scotland and across the world.

I hope you will consider joining us on that journey.

Yours sincerely,

Nic Granger, Chair, The Data Lab [Governance Board](#)

# An Introduction to The Data Lab

The Data Lab is Scotland's Innovation Centre for Data and Artificial Intelligence. Our mission is to transform the use of data and AI by enabling innovation, fostering connection and collaboration, and developing skills to change lives and drive economic growth, creating a more productive and sustainable society in Scotland and beyond.

We are helping to create a highly skilled workforce and a closely connected business, academic, public, and third-sector community. Our vision is to foster a more prosperous and equitable society where the responsible use of data and AI empowers everyone to thrive.

This is an exciting opportunity to help us drive responsible, ethical innovation in data and AI across Scotland and beyond. We were established in 2014 and are one of [four national innovation centres](#) funded by the Scottish Funding Council.

Since our launch 11 years ago, our team have helped accelerate the data and AI journey for many organisations by fuelling innovation through collaboration, building skills and growing talent, and strengthening Scotland's thriving data and AI community. We act as a catalyst, using our expertise, network, funding and platforms to change how Scotland, and the world, innovates with data and AI.

Our activities have supported the generation of £212m in additional revenue and the creation of over 1,500 new data and AI jobs contributing to the Scottish economy.

We've funded over 1,000 students through their studies at Scottish universities in a range of data and AI-related MSc programmes, providing them with a programme of employability and industry skills training, placements and industry connections.

We're very proud to have supported over 3,000 organisations across the private, public and third sectors in harnessing their data and adopting AI. [The Data Lab Community](#) - our online community platform - continues to scale globally with more than 8000 members from over 100 countries, and we run a year-round programme of events in-person and online.

[DataFest](#) is our flagship event, attracting over 10,000 participants over the last few years. It brings Scotland's Data and AI community together and draws an international audience to learn, share, network, showcase innovation, and connect with talent. The event attracts high profile global speakers and showcases Scotland's progress as an innovative nation in this data and AI revolution.

We believe that collaboration is the key to success in data and AI, and we work as a catalyst, connecting organisations with world-leading expertise in Scotland's universities and colleges, to ensure that Scotland remains a global leader in data and AI innovation.

## The Data Lab Values

Our values define the culture and underlying beliefs of The Data Lab, and we believe that how we deliver on our mission is equally important to the aims themselves. This is why our culture and values are at the heart of everything we do.

### **INNOVATE. SUPPORT. GROW. RESPECT.**

We are a team and community of innovators, driven to deliver The Data Lab's mission. We do this by committing to grow and learn, supporting each other to deliver our best work and respecting everyone on the journey.

These values are designed to support our mission.



## Valuing Diversity

The Data Lab is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion.

We value having members with different points of view, skills and experience on our Governance Board. We encourage applications from a wide range of talented people, irrespective of their religion or belief, gender, gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, political belief, relationship status, or caring responsibilities.

The appointment process promotes, demonstrates, and upholds equality of opportunity for all applicants.

The Data Lab warmly welcomes applications from groups currently under-represented in Scotland's public bodies and technology sector, including women, people with disabilities, and individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds.

# Our Governance

The Data Lab is an Innovation Centre funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). SFC awards funding to the University of Edinburgh to administer The Data Lab and act as the host organisation. In terms of its funding conditions, SFC require the University of Edinburgh to create a Governance Board to manage the funding in accordance with the grant award letter and approved business plan.

Our governance structure comprises two main elements:

1. Governance Board. Chaired by Nic Granger, responsible for formulating, directing and guiding the implementation of the policies and strategies.
2. The Data Lab Executive Team. Led by CEO Heather Thomson, responsible for implementing the policies and strategy as well as day-to-day management, reporting to the Governance Board.

The Terms of Reference, which set out the responsibilities and decision-making arrangements of the Governance Board, are currently under review and will be finalised following completion of the recruitment cycle. The updated Terms of Reference will be issued to successful applicants alongside their offer letter.

## Board Recruitment

### Person Specification

#### **What skills, experience and personal qualities are desirable for The Data Lab Board members?**

It is important that we have people with a variety of different skills and experience to enable the Governance Board to work effectively. It is also important that we have representation from across industry, the public and third sectors in addition to universities and colleges.

We are also keen to have broad sector and geographical representation across the Governance Board, with particular interest in the following areas:

- Manufacturing
- Agriculture/Rural Industry
- Health
- Fintech
- Energy (Net Zero/renewables)
- Digital Sector
- Infrastructure

There are some general skills and personal qualities that are essential criteria for all Governance Board members. These are listed in the 'General skills and personal

qualities' section, and we have explained exactly what we will be looking for and how they will be assessed.

### General skills and personal qualities

Applicants should be able to evidence **all** these skills and qualities

Skill/Quality	What does this mean?	How will this be tested?
Working collaboratively and constructively with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• appreciating the knowledge/skills of colleagues</li> <li>• supporting &amp; respecting colleagues &amp; stakeholders</li> <li>• sharing knowledge at every opportunity</li> <li>• striving to achieve consensus, even if it goes against a personal view</li> </ul>	During the interview, we will ask you to provide practical examples of situations where you have worked collaboratively and constructively with others.
Challenging the views of others in a constructive and supportive way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being confident in questioning proposals and debating issues</li> <li>• putting forward your views in an objective way</li> <li>• helping others to consider their own position in a non-confrontational way</li> </ul>	During the interview, we will ask you to provide practical examples of situations where you have challenged the views of others in a constructive way.
Seeing the 'bigger picture'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• able to look ahead and consider issues/topics within different timeframes</li> <li>• identifying relevant implications from what is being discussed, such as challenges, risks, etc.</li> <li>• seeing beyond your own personal experience or specialism and considering other information and perspectives</li> </ul>	During the interview, we will ask you to provide practical examples of situations where you have taken a broader and more holistic view.
Analysing information and making decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using information which is available to reach conclusions and make decisions</li> </ul>	During the interview, we will ask you to provide practical examples of situations where you have analysed information and used this

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clearly explain how conclusions and decisions have been reached</li> <li>identifying some of the implications associated with what you are considering – priorities, risks, opportunities, etc</li> </ul>	information to reach conclusions.
Managing Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An understanding of what The Data Lab and the board are required to do</li> <li>able to explain the different responsibilities of executive staff and board members</li> <li>an appreciation of the board's responsibility for ensuring effective governance</li> <li>personal experience of 'change' with an understanding of how it should be implemented and the critical factors for success</li> </ul>	<p>During the interview, we will ask you some questions about your knowledge and understanding of what The Data Lab does, as well as the role &amp; responsibilities of executive staff and the board. You do not need any specific experience to answer these questions, but you will need to do some background research before the interview.</p> <p>We would like you to tell us about your personal experience of leading and managing 'change'.</p>
Communicating Effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>being focused and succinct in your communication with good listening skills</li> <li>confident in expressing views and opinions in a group setting</li> <li>persuasive, able to influence others to your own perspective</li> <li>able to adapt your style appropriately for different situations</li> </ul>	<p>We will assess your written skills from the completion of your covering letter and CV.</p> <p>We will assess your oral skills based on your responses during the interview.</p> <p>During the interview, we will ask you to provide examples of when you have had to adapt your communication style and when you have influenced others</p>
Enthusiastic and passionate about Data and AI, and the importance of this	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>knowledge/understanding of data and AI use and appreciation of how data</li> </ul>	We want you to tell us about your personal interest in and enthusiasm for using

capability to drive economic and social benefit for Scotland	<p>and AI can be used to drive innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• able to explain how the use of data and AI can benefit organisations across the private, public and third sectors</li> <li>• can enthuse others about data and AI and our capability in Scotland</li> </ul>	<p>data and AI in your written application and interview.</p> <p>During the interview, your knowledge/understanding of the opportunity for and landscape in Scotland will be assessed through responses to questions.</p>
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There are also some very specific skills and experience required on the Governance Board, and assessment and consideration of these will take priority during the appointment process. These skills and experience are listed in the 'Priority experience and skills' section, and we have explained what we will be looking for and how they will be assessed.

It is very important that there is the right balance of skills and experience, and the panel will be taking into account which 'priority' skill each applicant is able to demonstrate when selecting applicants for appointment. It is also important that The Data Lab has board members from across Scotland's geographic regions, so this will be a factor in decisions made at all stages of the appointment process.

There are several priority experience/skill areas listed, but you only need to demonstrate **one** of these in your application. If you believe you can demonstrate more than one, then you will have the opportunity to tell us about this during the interview process.

### Priority experience and skills

Applicants should demonstrate skills and experience in **one** of these areas.

Experience/Skill	What does this mean?	How will this be tested?
Knowledge and understanding of how data and artificial intelligence can be leveraged for industry competitiveness	You may be employed in industry or the public sector, leveraging data and AI to create new products or services, or optimise productivity and improve processes. You may have gained an understanding of the impact of data and AI in a specific industry vertical, the public sector or academia.	We would like you to tell us about your knowledge and understanding, and how you have gained this, in your CV or covering letter. We will discuss this with you during the interview.
A practical knowledge and understanding of data analytics, data science/engineering and artificial intelligence	You have day-to-day involvement in data science, data engineering, analytics, and artificial intelligence. You may work in an organisation which creatively uses data and	We would like you to tell us about your knowledge and understanding, and how you have gained this, in your CV or covering letter. We will

AI to solve business challenges or in the creation of new products or services. You may have knowledge or involvement in educational & skills development programmes / digital content development for data topics.

discuss this with you during the interview.

Industry Business Leader

You have experience working in a senior role within a business or industry relevant to Scotland (experience can be from outside Scotland). These industry verticals include Energy (Net Zero and Renewables), Manufacturing, Health, Finance, Agriculture and Rural industry, Venture Capital, Infrastructure, and the Digital Sector across start-ups, SMEs and large organisations.

We would like you to tell us about your experience and how you have gained it in your CV or covering letter. We will discuss this with you during the interview.

We are particularly interested in applicants with skills and experience in the following areas: Commercial, Transformation, Marketing, Relationship Management, Technical, People and Culture, Funding, and Internationalisation and would expect strengths to be highlighted in your application.

Public Sector Business Leader

You have experience working in a senior role in the public sector in Scotland or the UK (with a connection and strong interests in Scotland).

We would like you to tell us about your experience and how you have gained it in your CV or covering letter. We will discuss this with you during the interview.

We are particularly interested in applicants with experience in Economy, Digital, from both policy and delivery areas.

<p>Third Sector Business Leader</p>	<p>You have experience working in a senior role in the third sector in Scotland or the UK (with a connection and strong interests in Scotland).</p> <p>We are particularly interested in applicants with an understanding and experience of the opportunities and challenges faced in the sector in relation to data and AI.</p>	<p>We would like you to tell us about your experience and how you have gained it in your CV or covering letter. We will discuss this with you during the interview.</p>
<p>Universities, colleges, research councils and agencies</p>	<p>You have experience of working in a senior academic or professional services role in a university, college, research council or other agencies and can bring a breadth of skills and experience in relation to the sector, not solely your institution. We welcome applications from related supporting, membership, and funding organisations who can demonstrate experience in within the innovation and/or skills landscape in relation to data and AI.</p>	<p>We would like you to tell us about your experience and how you have gained it in your CV or covering letter. We will discuss this with you during the interview.</p>

## Expected Commitment

- Around 8 days per year contribution to The Data Lab.
- Attending quarterly Governance Board meetings held in-person at venues across Scotland in February, May, August and November each year and other meetings of the board as deemed necessary. The Data Lab aims to meet accessibility requirements and, where necessary, ensure online participation in Governance Board meetings. However, we encourage in-person participation when possible.
- Representing and supporting The Data Lab at public and private events and attending meetings with key industry stakeholders, academic partners, funders and Scottish and UK Ministers.
- Providing strategic advice and network connections to the CEO and wider Team.
- These roles are not remunerated; however, travel and expense costs incurred in connection with the role will be reimbursed in line with the University of Edinburgh (our host organisation) protocols.
- Governance Board Members will normally serve on the Governance Board for a period of two years, with the option to extend this by an additional year at the request of the Chair, after which they will be required to retire from the Governance Board. They may offer themselves for re-election thereafter. Governance Board Members will normally serve no more than two terms.

## How to Apply

Please forward your CV and covering letter to [hr@thedatalab.com](mailto:hr@thedatalab.com) detailing:

- Why you have applied
- What you bring to the role through your experience, knowledge and networks, providing evidence of both the General and Priority Skills and Experience criteria detailed in this pack

Applications close at **5pm on Thursday 28th May 2026**.

Please see [our privacy notice](#) for information on how The Data Lab processes personal information.

**Late applications will not be considered.**

If you have any questions about the role or appointment process, please email [hr@thedatalab.com](mailto:hr@thedatalab.com).

## Selection Process

The selection panel will include Nic Granger (The Data Lab Chair), Heather Thomson (The Data Lab CEO) and one other representative from the Governance Board.

To ensure the process is transparent and the appointments are made on merit, the selection panel will declare whether they know anyone who has applied for these appointments.

### Nationality

If you're a non-British national, you can apply for and be appointed to the boards of Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs). However, you must be legally entitled to work in the UK.

### Telling you about progress

If you are not invited to interview, you will be told about the outcome of your application in writing.

If you are invited to interview, you will be offered feedback. It will be based on:

- The assessment of your merit in relation to the skills, knowledge and experience required by the Person Specification.
- Any relevant feedback from the interview process.

### Expenses for attending interview

If you're invited for an interview, you can claim reasonable expenses involved in attending. This includes childcare and dependent carer expenses. We expect you to use the most efficient and economical means of travel, and the amount we reimburse will normally be restricted to this. If you are invited for an interview, these rates and a claim form will be included in the invitation letter. You must provide receipts to support all claims in line with the University of Edinburgh protocols.

## Conflicts of Interest

Conflicts may relate to situations where there's a clash between your role on this board and your professional or personal interests. Any potential conflicts of interest should be disclosed during the application process and outlined in your covering letter.

If you have a connection to any of the interview panel members, the panel chair can decide that the panel member shouldn't be involved in your assessment, and may ask the panel member not to take part in the appointment round.

## Appointment

If your application and interview are successful, you will be issued an offer letter and the updated Terms of Reference for the Governance Board for review. Your appointment will be subject to the signature of our standard board member confidentiality agreement.

Following your acceptance of the offer, some of the information that you've given us will be made public in a media release about your appointment and included on our website. It will include:

- your name
- a short description of The Data Lab
- a summary of the skills, knowledge and experience you bring to the role
- how long you've been appointed for and the time commitment
- details of any other private or public appointments you hold that are relevant to this role