CASE STUDY

Royal Academy of Engineering

A retained recruitment partnership for newly defined roles and key replacements

EIGHT POLICY ROLES IN EIGHT WEEKS FOR THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF ENGINEERING.

Trusted by a charity uniting engineering leaders

In 2023, the Royal Academy of Engineering (RAE) needed to fill eight policy roles of mixed seniority at the same time. Murray McIntosh was its exclusive retained recruitment partner for the large hiring project.

We delivered

- Head of Enterprise Hub
- Programme Officer, Systems Approach in Government
- Policy Advisor, Digital and Physical Infrastructure
- Senior Policy Advisor, Climate and Sustainability
- Programme Officer, Policy Fellowships
- Policy Officer, Health and Resilience
- Senior Policy Advisor, Health and Resilience
- Senior Programme Manager, Future Dialogues

Results

8 OF 8
Roles filled, all with first-choice candidates

8 WEEKS
Time to placement for all roles

6:1
CVs sent for every successful placement

100%
Offer acceptance

"Anna and colleagues took time to understand our needs overall, and the specific skills and experience associated with each role. They thought through how to pitch the roles and where good candidates might be found. They delivered on all of these vacancies, 8 in total, within our tight timeframe and we now have an even more brilliant and diverse team with a wide range of experience."

Dr Natasha McCarthy, Associate Director, Policy, Royal Academy of Engineering

THE CHALLENGE.

As a charity delivering public benefit, the Royal Academy of Engineering brings together an unrivalled community of leaders across every part of engineering and technology. With 100+ staff, it was building its National Engineering Policy Centre and needed to recruit for innovative new roles as well as replace a few who had moved on.

- **Newly defined roles.** Several roles had no precedent, including a brand new policy area. Systems thinking in government was a new concept for RAE, as was the Head of Enterprise Hub.
- **Expanding capacity.** Two policy areas needed more people, and a new digital and physical infrastructure programme needed junior support for its senior lead.
- **Volume and timing.** Eight roles of mixed seniority, all London-based, were briefed at once and needed filling in eight weeks.
- **Niche roles.** Nuanced job titles meant low application numbers, so candidates would rarely find the roles on their own.

RAE wanted a fluid and accessible recruitment process, rather than a prescriptive approach, while encouraging a diverse talent pipeline to apply.

THE SOLUTION.

As exclusive recruitment partner, the Murray McIntosh team adopted their unique and robust retained solution, with a goal to fill all eight roles in an eight-week period.

About our retained method

Our retained engagement solution is a three-part process based on the key milestones of an assignment: commencement, shortlist and appointment. Clear timeframes and deliverables manage expectations and promote accountability, driving guaranteed results. We committed to finding the best talent in the market, not on the market. To support RAE's D&I agenda, all candidates were funnelled through the same retainer process, ensuring a consistent and unbiased approach.

Each stage draws on our heavily invested tech-stack and personnel expertise, including:

- Stakeholder briefings
- Market mapping
- Campaign media
- Search
- Candidate management
- Video interviewing
- Reference validity

RUNNING EIGHT ROLES AS ONE PROJECT.

- **Project team.** Anna Kelly ran and managed the project, supported by Lauren Maddocks, Associate Director, Policy, Public Affairs, Communications & Economics, and a recruitment consultant. Anna reviewed every CV.
- **Concurrent, prioritised delivery.** All eight roles ran at once, in priority order, so the most important were progressed first.

- **Weekly updates.** A shared project tracker, updated weekly, showed the Academy progress on every role. We reviewed the process with them once the project was complete.

UNDERSTANDING THE BRIEF.

We began with a single two-and-a-half-hour online briefing with the hiring managers and talent manager, then went deeper, role by role.

- **Culture and projects.** We learned about the Academy's cultural refresh, its benefits and the work each policy area was delivering, and researched its history, so we could describe it accurately to candidates.
- **Challenging and refining.** Where a brief needed sharpening, such as the Digital and Physical Infrastructure roles, we went back to the hiring manager to clarify it.

DEFINING ROLES WITH NO PRECEDENT.

For the Programme Officer, Systems Approach in Government, the Academy could not yet define the capabilities it needed. We stripped the role back with targeted questions on its main components, its non-negotiable skills, what the appointee should achieve first, and which academic or extracurricular experience would show an understanding of systems thinking. The appointee combined a high-level degree from a leading university with a placement where they developed an innovative idea and mapped its delivery. We took the same approach for the Head of Enterprise Hub.

ALIGNING EXPECTATIONS WITH THE MARKET.

With so many roles briefed at once, we shared early market insight on salary. After the first week of market mapping, we showed the Academy the profiles available at different salary levels, so it could make informed decisions on each role.

SOURCING AND ENGAGING CANDIDATES.

Headhunting was key. We combined referrals from our network with wide-ranging market mapping, approaching people in institutes, universities, think tanks, consultancies and charities. Appointees included a Policy Advisor whose humanities-centred degree covered both the infrastructure and the human side of the role, and a Senior Policy Advisor from a political research consultancy.

Running so many roles at once meant far more candidate engagement than normal, with regular check-ins to confirm continued interest. Every role was filled first time and none returned to market.

THE OUTCOME.

All eight roles were filled in eight weeks, with six CVs sent for every successful placement and every offer accepted. Six of the eight appointees remain in post.

MORE ABOUT MURRAY MCINTOSH.

Founded in 2015, Murray McIntosh was established to offer a research-led, specialist recruitment service. Since then, we've earned a reputation as a trusted partner, working with clients ranging from innovative start-ups to global multinationals to secure the talent needed to deliver.

Our Policy, Public Affairs, Strategic Comms & Economics team deliver highly targeted support, backed by genuine insight and sector knowledge.

We also offer strategic, complementary advice across recruitment process design, employer branding, and workforce planning. Our services cover both permanent and contract recruitment, tailored to meet the specific needs of each client.

We remain embedded in our markets by actively participating in industry events, panels, and working groups, keeping us informed, engaged, and always one step ahead.

HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

If you are planning your next policy, public affairs or communications hire and want to see how this approach could work for you, we would be glad to talk it through.



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