Equality Impact Assessment – BBSRC Standard Research Grant (Responsive Mode)

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	UKRI-BBSRC Responsive Mode - a highly competitive funding mechanism available to the bioscience research community.
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	The aim of the Responsive Mode scheme is to advance excellent bioscience across the UKRI-BBSRC remit. It does this by supporting and delivering: • frontier bioscience research • strategic research • collaborative research and development • policy relevant research • International research partnerships • next generation research leaders Research grant applications can be submitted at any time for assessment by one of the Research Committees, on any topic within our portfolio. Research Committees meet three times a year. Committee members use their own knowledge and experience to evaluate the proposal, reviewer's comments, and PI response against set assessment criteria. Following this they rank the proposals in that round to make funding recommendations.
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? *(e.g., with relevant groups and stakeholders)*	• Consultation with the UKRI-BBSRC events management team to ensure that the committee meetings allow attendance and participation from a diverse range of people • Consultation with a member of UKRI-BBSRC's Equality and Inclusion Policy Group to review the EIA and the responsive mode process • Consultation with Committee meeting attendees to understand potential barriers and take action, where possible, to enable attendance and participation • Maintenance of two-way channels of communication between UKRI-BBSRC and stakeholders • Learning from good practice in objective decision making and interview processes from across UKRI, supported by external independent advice
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	Applicants to Responsive Mode, external peer reviewers, Committee members and Chairs the UKRI-BBSRC secretariat and employees working on the call.

5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	UKRI-BBSRC will review this equality impact assessment annually to identify any further actions or interventions that are required to improve the diversity and inclusion of Responsive Mode.
	UKRI-BBSRC monitors, analyses and publishes data to better understand the diversity of our applicant and assessor community.
	UKRI-BBSRC is proactive in increasing the diversity of our reviewers and Committee members. Panel membership for each meeting is published on the website after the funding decisions have been made.
	Further information: https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/equality-diversity/
	UKRI-BBSRC is dedicated to ensuring that the processes for Responsive Mode funding are open and inclusive. Those engaged in the processes endeavour to conduct each stage in a fair manner and without prejudice or bias. In line with this we adopt the following principles:
	For applicants • The call is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience • Applicants can submit proposals at any time • The call text and guidance clearly state the eligibility and assessment criteria • The UKRI-BBSRC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites, including the ability to adjust the text size or use a text reader on the page • UKRI-BBSRC supports applicants as much as possible, both before and after submission, to assist them in the application and assessment process.
	For assessors: reviewers • Reviewers are drawn from as wide a pool as possible • The guidance clearly states the expectations of reviewers • UKRI-BBSRC provides support to reviewers as much as possible, to assist them in the assessment process.
	For assessors: Committees • Everyone involved in the decision-making process has had training in Unconscious Bias to raise awareness of conditions that may impact on their decision-making • UKRI-BBSRC is committed to enabling participation for people with alternative work patterns, including reduced working hours • UKRI-BBSRC provides a geographic spread of meeting locations as much as possible when face-to-face meetings are held, rather than virtual meetings • Committee members are asked to inform UKRI-BBSRC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation • UKRI-BBSRC consults with Committee members on a regular basis regarding business improvements including a questionnaire sent after each meeting for feedback • UKRI-BBSRC consults with the Committee chairs informally throughout the panel meeting period and formally via a Committee chairs meeting at the end of each round • UKRI-BBSRC provides regular training and guidance on new or revised ways of working.

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g., adjustment to the policy)
Disability	Potential for negative impact	Applicants, reviewers and panel members with neuro-disabilities may find it difficult to access and view electronic documentation/experience difficulties with concentration	UKRI-BBSRC will: • use a virtual meeting format and Discussion boards during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic • consider a return to accessible face-to-face meetings in the future

	Potential for negative impact	Panel members and interviewees with physical disabilities may find it difficult to access a physical meeting venue and / or participate in the meeting if the assessment venue cannot cater for their needs.	• respond to individual support needs on a case-by-case basis. • ensure that electronic information is accessible • gather information from meeting participants about any additional requirement they may need to fully participate • ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda • allow for potential use of screen readers for participants who are visually impaired • ensure that colours chosen, and other visual stimuli do not trigger migraines or affect those with colour blindness; different colours may assist with this if participants do not bring their own laptops
Gender reassignment	Neutral	Neutral	N/A
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral	Neutral	N/A
Pregnancy and maternity	Potential for negative impact	Panel members and interview candidates who are pregnant/ on maternity or have child or other caring responsibilities may be discouraged from participating in Panel meetings. Career breaks in applicant track records due to parental leave or caring responsibilities may be seen as negative by the panel	• UKRI-BBSRC will use a virtual meeting format and Discussion boards during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic • UKRI-BBSRC consults with all participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation • UKRI-BBSRC allows committee members to claim expenses for reasonable childcare costs during the panel meeting • Guidance to be provided to the panel to ensure appropriate assessment of applicant track record without bias against career breaks due to parental leave/caring responsibilities and others • UKRI-BBSRC extends Pool of Experts membership period if Maternity leave is taken during their appointment
Race	Potential for a negative impact	It is important that selection of panel members and peer reviewers is from a diverse community which represents the community and UK as a whole.	UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of panel members to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion
Religion or belief	Potential for negative impact	Committee members may be unable to participate in Committee meetings due to religious observances.	• UKRI-BBSRC ensures that religious observances are considered as much as possible when timetabling major activities. • When applicable, UKRI-BBSRC ensures that the venue caters for all dietary requirements
Sexual orientation	Neutral	Neutral	N/A
Sex (gender)	Potential for negative impact	Panel members and interview candidates may find it difficult to participate if they have caring responsibilities.	• UKRI-BBSRC ensures that school holidays are considered where possible when timetabling discussion boards and virtual meetings.

		There is an uneven gender split in the community of applicants and the Pool of Experts.	- Expectations and dates for all aspects of the process are set out as far in advance as possible, allowing for preparation for participants to cover any caring responsibilities. - Where possible, UKRI-BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours. - UKRI-BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on UKRI-BBSRC business. - UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of panel members to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion - To avoid potential unconscious bias, first names and titles of applicants will not be used during virtual meeting discussions
Age	Neutral	Neutral	N/A

Unconscious bias

In addition to the above, steps have been taken to minimise the potential impact of unconscious bias on the assessment processes. These include:

- Chair and deputies to attend briefing meeting, where unconscious bias will be covered
- Panel to receive a briefing on Methods of Working and objective decision making (by webinar and documentation)
- Note regarding unconscious bias included in the Chair's brief
- Safeguarding decision making and unconscious bias are explained again at the beginning of the Virtual Meeting, and prior to the ranking session.
- No applicant names are shown on the ranking list during the ranking session.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification		
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	Potential for discrimination or negative impact has been assessed and actions to address negative impacts are being implemented		
Final Decision:	**Tick the relevant box**	**Include any explanation / justification required**	
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will **proceed**.	✓		
2. You can decide to **stop** the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups			
3. You can **adapt or change** the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias			
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g., in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore, you are going to **proceed with caution** with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.			

Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g., calls and events:	Yes
Date completed:	13/12/2021
Review date (if applicable):	13/12/2022

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
	When published	1	