



EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
<p>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</p>	<p>Strategic Priority Fund (SPF) ExCALIBUR Cross-cutting Research call. This activity is a call for proposals.</p>
<p>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</p>	<p>EPSRC on the behalf of UKRI, plan to allocate up to £5million for standard grants which will deliver knowledge integration, address common issues for software and algorithm development on the route to exascale. This call is part of the SPF ExCALIBUR programme.</p>
<p>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</p>	<p>This is one of two calls ExCALIBUR calls, EPSRC is leading this call and the Met Office has launched another. The ExCALIBUR Steering Committee were consulted on themes within this call and recommended the early engagement with the research communities. A market engagement event was held in November 2020 to consult the community on the themes which form the scope of these calls and to prepare them for the funding opportunities that would follow. Correspondence regarding the market engagement and current calls were sent via the ExCALIBUR mailing list, EPSRC Strategic Advisory Teams to be promoted within their communities and to research councils involved with the ExCALIBUR programme – STFC, MRC, NERC and BBSRC – to be distributed amongst their networks.</p>
<p>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>This call is open to institutions with SPF eligibility; the research community within UKRI’s remit, Public Sector Research Establishments and industry will be affected. UKRI staff, the Met Office staff and UK Atomic Authority staff who are managing the ExCALIBUR programme.</p>
<p>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>Contact details will be provided alongside the call document to applicants interested in this call. EPSRC will engage with all funded grants to monitor the projects and learn about the challenges and successes.</p> <p>The assessment process has been designed to ensure unconscious bias is minimised and managed. All panel members will receive an unconscious bias briefing. UKRI will pay special attention to</p>

applicants that can demonstrate multi-disciplinary, collaborative teams and approaches.

As a funder of research, EPSRC remains committed to attracting the best potential researchers from a diverse population into research careers. For policy changes, funding activities and events EPSRC will aim to:

- Select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation. This includes for applicants, reviewers, panel members and staff. Included in the interview invitation letter is a request for any access issues to be notified.
- All participants in the process are asked to inform staff if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation.
- Offer support for people with caring responsibilities, further details are available [here](#).
- Clearly communicate the timeline and key milestones for funding activities, advertise these widely to reach the largest possible audience.
- Support and encourage panel members to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. Staff will work closely with the Panel Chair(s) to agree approaches that are designed to minimize opportunities for bias and improve transparency of the decision making process. This includes managing environmental conditions, such as providing appropriate breaks.
- Support flexible working of stakeholders.
- Ensure diversity of peer review assessment and interview panels. Staff will adhere to a mixed panel policy and endeavor to achieve the minimum 30% for the underrepresented gender on the panel.
- Abide by the principles of peer review
- Provide EPSRC staff with tailored unconscious bias training for Peer Review processes and clear guidance for assessors.
- Handle personal sensitive information in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

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	Both potentially negative and positive	As the panel will be held virtually, the accessibility of a venue may have a positive impact. However, this may also have a negative impact on those with dyslexia or hearing impairments.	Panel will be held virtually. Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that any circumstances which could affect the participation can be accommodated wherever possible. Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation. EPSRC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews

			acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.
Gender reassignment	None identified		
Marriage or civil partnership	None identified		
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially negative on those with caring responsibilities		Support will be offered for people with caring responsibilities, and reasonable adjustments will be made wherever possible.
Race	Potentially negative	Racial bias may be perceived.	Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation. EPSRC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.
Religion or belief	Potentially negative		We have tried to avoid major religious holidays when setting dates. All panel members will be asked to highlight any personal circumstances that may affect their ability to participate and how this can be accommodated.
Sexual orientation	None identified		
Sex (gender)	Potentially negative	Gender bias may be perceived.	In line with EPSRC policies, the assessment panel will be mixed gender.
Age	Potentially negative	Age bias may be perceived.	Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel

			<p>guidance and panel presentation. EPSRC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.</p>
<p>Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)</p>	<p>Potentially negative</p>	<p>The timings of this call are limited by the constraints of the SPF spend profiles; the research community may be negatively impacted by this.</p> <p>The timing of this call also coincided with a national lockdown due to Covid-19 which resulted in restrictions to ways of working and the re-introduction of home-schooling. Those with caring responsibilities and the wider research landscape may be negatively impacted by this.</p>	<p>A market engagement event was held in November 2020. This was to enable the community to contribute to developing the cross-cutting themes which would be basis of the forthcoming calls. Correspondence relating to the market engagement was shared via the ExCALIBUR mailing list and UKRI networks to be distributed amongst the community.</p> <p>Consideration was giving to the call timescales, but we concluded the only way to extend the duration that the call is open would be to reduce the time available to assess the eventual proposals. As a result the timings of the call were extended by one week and the dates for when peer review comments will be sent out to applicants and when they are expected to be returned have been included in the funding opportunity to ensure a fair and</p>

			<p>transparent assessment process takes place.</p> <p>These learnings will be taken on board for future ExCALIBUR funding opportunities, acknowledging that, where possible, more time is required by the community to develop proposals.</p>
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Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	A number of risks and potential negative impacts have been identified and considered as part of the call design. Reasonable adjustments will be made and by adhering to the standard peer review principles and the risks have been mitigated as far as possible.	
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	X	Possible risks and bias associated with this activity have been identified and activities adapted accordingly. ED&I aspects will be considered throughout the activity and EPSRC will review this EIA accordingly. Reasonable adjustments will also be made wherever possible.
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.		
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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:	11/02/2021
Review date (if applicable):	N/A

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Elizabeth Bent	When published	1	Final version created
Elizabeth Bent	12/03/2021	2	Updated following community query, this includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update to section 3 to reflect involvement of stakeholders in the development of the funding opportunity. • Update to additional aspects to capture the constraints of the call timings due to SPF spend profiles and to acknowledge the restrictions brought about by the national lockdown. • Minor updates to section 1, 4 and 5.