Equality Impact Assessment: 2021 – 2022 UKRI-BBSRC Strategic Longer and Larger Awards (sLoLas)

Version history

Version	Date	Change
1.0	13 September 2021	

	Question	Response
1.	**Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed**	The UKRI-BBSRC strategic Longer and Larger awards (sLoLas) is an annual call which supports fully integrated research projects focusing on Frontier Bioscience Understanding the Rules of Life that require typically longer timescales than standard responsive mode proposals, extensive resources (over £2M) and multidisciplinary approaches.
2.	**Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event**	The aim of the sLoLa scheme is to support frontier bioscience: leading-edge discovery research that addresses significant fundamental questions in bioscience. The call has an indicative budget of £16 million, subject to the quality of the applications received and it is anticipated that between 3-5 grants will be awarded in the 2021-2022 round. This EIA covers the application and assessment process for this funding opportunity. The application process consists of three mandatory stages - a registration stage (Expression of Interest) via an online survey, an outline stage and a full stage (complete with interview). • The registration stage Expressions of Interest are assessed internally by the UKRI-BBSRC office to assess fit to scope of the call and UKRI-BBSRC remit • Outline applications are assessed by a bespoke assessment panel (Strategic LoLa Committee - SLC) with representatives from the Chairing teams of the four Responsive Mode Research Committees, A – D. Shortlisted outline applicants will be invited to submit full applications • Full applications will be externally peer reviewed followed by assessment by a multidisciplinary panel consisting of SLC members and representatives from UKRI-BBSRC's Core Committees and Pool of Experts. Panel members use their own knowledge and experience to evaluate the

		proposal against set assessment criteria. Following this assessment meeting and based on the recommendations made by the multidisciplinary panel, UKRI-BBSRC will invite the Principal Investigator (PI) and up to two Co-Investigators (Co-Is) to an interview with the SLC. • The SLC panel will make the final recommendations for funding.
3.	**What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?** *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)*	• Consultation with a member of UKRI-BBSRC's Equality and Inclusion Policy Group to review the sLoLa process • Consultation with UKRI-BBSRC Heads of Sectors and Directors to gain advice, assess and agree the revised scheme and guidance • Consultation with panel meeting attendees to understand potential barriers and take action, where possible, to enable attendance and participation • Consultation with external advisers to gain advice, assess and agree the revised scheme and guidance • Consultation with Chairing teams of the four Responsive Mode Research Committees A – D • Consultation with UKRI-BBSRC Council members and UKRI-BBSRC Appointments Board • Consultation with the Chairs of the SLC • 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 the sLoLa call, external peer reviewers, panel members of both SLC and multidisciplinary panels, UKRI-BBSRC Council members and UKRI-BBSRC employees who are taking part in the assessment process.
5.	**What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?**	UKRI-BBSRC is committed to ensuring that the processes for sLoLa funding are open and inclusive. Those engaged in the processes endeavor to conduct each stage in a fair manner and without prejudice or bias.

There are three aspects to this equality impact assessment:

- Ensuring that the submission, peer review and awarding processes are free from unintentional bias
- Ensuring the process enables rigorous assessment of this investment
- Identifying and addressing any potential barriers to attendance and participation by a diverse range of people

In line with this we adopt the following principles:

For applicants:

- The call is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience
- A series of webinars are held prior to call launch and the closing date of the Registration Stage to inform potential applicants of the opportunity
- The call text and guidance clearly state the eligibility and assessment criteria and the key dates for applications and panel assessment
- 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 provides support and advice to applicants both before and after submission, to assist them in the application and assessment process

For reviewers

- Reviewers are drawn from as wide a pool as possible
- Reviewers are provided with guidance, which clearly states the expectations of reviewers
- UKRI-BBSRC provides support to reviewers as much as possible, to assist them in the assessment process
- Data are collected about the gender identity (self-declared) of reviewers

For assessors (panel members):

	- UKRI-BBSRC ensures that the membership of the panel is diverse and is representative of relevant stakeholders and regions - Everyone involved in the decision-making process will receive training in Unconscious Bias to raise awareness of conditions that may impact on their decision-making - UKRI-BBSRC provides briefing to panel members throughout the assessment process about good practice in objective and safeguarding decision making - UKRI-BBSRC ensures that the format, duration and location of the assessment meeting and the venue itself (if face-to-face) are conducive to participation by a diverse range of people - Assessment meetings and interviews are structured and managed to ensure that the approach is consistent with appropriately scheduled breaks - Virtual meetings are arranged using an appropriate platform that can be accessed by all panel members (Teams, Zoom) - UKRI-BBSRC provides a geographic spread of meeting locations as much as possible - Where possible, UKRI-BBSRC aims to have at least 35% of the under-represented gender on its panels - UKRI-BBSRC is committed to enabling participation for people with alternative work patterns, including reduced working hours - Panel members are asked to inform UKRI-BBSRC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation - UKRI-BBSRC provides regular training and guidance on new or revised ways of working, such as webinars, induction training, one-to-one training, Zoom/Teams functionality UKRI-BBSRC will review this Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) annually to identify any further actions or interventions that are required to improve the diversity and inclusion

of the sLoLa call.

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 panel members. Panel membership for each meeting is published on the website after the funding decisions have been made.

Further information:
https://www.ukri.org/our-work/supporting-healthy-research-and-innovation-culture/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/

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 neurodisabilities may find it difficult to access and view electronic documentation/experience difficulties with concentration Panel members and interviewees with physical disabilities may find it difficult to access the meeting venue and / or participate in the meeting if the assessment venue cannot cater for their needs.	UKRI-BBSRC will: • consider the use of a virtual meeting and the platforms used to facilitate this • 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 in order to fully participate • ensure that the venue is easily accessible to main rail/air links • ensure that the room is light and airy • 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	• Consider the use of a virtual meeting • UKRI-BBSRC consults with all participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation. • As a general principle, venues are easily accessible to main rail/air links and easy to move around. • Meeting rooms are comfortable and meetings are timetabled to allow for adequate breaks. • UKRI-BBSRC aims to ensure that the venue is able to provide childcare/babysitting services if requested. • 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,etc.
Race	Potential for negative impact	It is important that selection of panel members is from a diverse community	UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of panel members to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion
Religion or belief	Neutral	Neutral	• UKRI-BBSRC ensures that religious observances are taken into account 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. There is an uneven gender split in the community of applicants and Panel members.	• UKRI-BBSRC ensures that school holidays are taken into account where possible when timetabling the Outlines and Full Stage Panel meetings for the sLoLa call. • 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
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 deputy to attend briefing meeting, where unconscious bias will be covered
• Panel to receive a briefing on Methods of Working and objective decision making (e.g. by webinar)
• Note regarding unconscious bias included in the Chair's brief.

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**.	X	
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 September 2021
Review date (if applicable):	Annually