

**EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment**

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| **Question** | **Response** |
| 1. **Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed** | Build a network to enable resilient solutions for future UK systems |
| 1. **Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event** | This NetworkPlus will convene and support a research agenda that addresses security threats and challenges facing us in the future (circa 2050) by building relationships between the UK defence sector, industry, and academic community. |
| 1. **What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?** *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)* | Consultation has been undertaken with the Defence Academic Pathways Steering Group to set up this specific call. This is a key stakeholder group which represents the user/problem holder perspective. We plan to run engagement activities in November/early Dec to encourage applications from a wider-than-typical audience. |
| 1. **Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?** | Academic community, industrial stakeholders, and any others who might be drawn into a proposed network. |
| 1. **What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?** | Get feedback about the process from review panel and applicants.  Portfolio monitoring to ensure the grant holder aheres to best practice and grant conditions with respect to EDI. |

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](https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/basics/caringresponsibilities/).
* 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.

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| **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 negative impact | Panel members may not be able to participate in panels dependent on location selected.  Timescales for the call may affect ability to participate e.g. if on sick leave or reduced hours. | We are planning to run the interview panel entirely virtually.  Where meetings are not held remotely via Zoom, all venues selected will be accessible and reasonable adjustment made to logistics to support participation.  Additional care requirements could occur if individuals are required to: Participate in events on what would normally be a nonworking day, work extended hours on a normal working day, attend meetings with overnight stays and/or travel overseas. Further details on the support EPSRC will offer for those with caring responsibilities can be [found here](https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/basics/caringresponsibilities/). |
| **Gender reassignment** | No known negative impact |  |  |
| **Marriage or civil partnership** | No known negative impact |  |  |
| **Pregnancy and maternity** | Potential negative impact | Panel members may not be able to participate in panels due to accessibility issues or maternity leave.  Timescales for the call may affect ability to participate e.g. if on parental leave or childcare. | In order to provide as much time as possible for applicants, a detailed pre-announcement was put online 3 weeks ahead of call open date. Total time from pre-announcement to call deadline is 11 weeks.  We are planning to run the interview panel entirely virtually.  Where meetings are not held remotely via Zoom, all venues selected will be accessible and reasonable adjustment made to logistics to support participation.  Additional care requirements could occur if individuals are required to: Participate in events on what would normally be a nonworking day, work extended hours on a normal working day, attend meetings with overnight stays and/or travel overseas. Further details on the support EPSRC will offer for those with caring responsibilities can be [found here](https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/basics/caringresponsibilities/). |
| **Race** | Potential negative impact | Potential for unconscious bias in panel process. | EPSRC have undertaken analysis to better understand the disparity of gender and race in our funding portfolio. Our aim is to ensure that the ethnic diversity in our grant portfolio and of those who engage in our peer review, advisory and governance processes is at least as representative of the engineering and physical sciences academic researcher population and our award rates across different ethnicities show no disparity. More information is available at <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/edi-at-epsrc/ethnicity-and-race-equality/>. |
| **Religion or belief** | Potential negative impact | Potential for unconscious bias in panel process.  Participation could be affected by religious holidays. | EPSRC colleagues will safeguiard the integrity of the assessment process by wataching for unconscious bias.  In order to provide as much time as possible for applicants, a detailed pre-announcement was put online 3 weeks ahead of call open date. Total time from pre-announcement to call deadline is 11 weeks. |
| **Sexual orientation** | No known negative impact |  |  |
| **Sex (gender)** | Potential negative impact | Potential for unconscious bias in panel process. | EPSRC colleagues will safeguiard the integrity of the assessment process by wataching for unconscious bias. |
| **Age** | Potential negative impact | Potential for unconscious bias in panel process. | EPSRC colleagues will safeguiard the integrity of the assessment process by wataching for unconscious bias. |
| **Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)** | Potential negative impact | Possible discrimination based on nationality. This call is funded by DST (part of MOD) and relates to UK security, so there may be Trusted Research considerations. Additional scrutiny may be applied (consciously or subconsciously) by reviewers. | Apply Trusted Research considerations and recommendations, including a link to the cpni website in the call spec.  Clear guidance for reviewers about how to appropriately assess proposals which might raise concerns in this area. |

**Evaluation:**

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| **Question** | **Explanation / justification** | |
| Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people? | This call is similar to other NetworkPlus calls and aims to build a network of diverse expertise to better address challenges facing future UK safety and security. The call actively encourages an inclusive network of diverse groups and individuals. It is therefore unlikely that the funding activity will lead to a funded activity which will discriminate or unfairly disadvantage any particular groups with protected characteristics.  In addition to this we are ensuring a reasonable amount of time for applicants to apply, and we are running the interview panel virtually. | |
| **Final Decision:** | **Tick the relevant box** | **Include any explanation / justification required** |
| 1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will **proceed**. |  |  |
| 1. You can decide to **stop** the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups |  |  |
| 1. You can **adapt or change** the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias |  |  |
| 1. 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. | Yes | Further to comments in the section above we will make adjustments as described. |

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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:** | **22/11/2021** |
| **Review date** (if applicable): | **n/a** |

**Change log**

| **Name** | **Date** | **Version** | **Change** |
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| J Fitzgerald | When published | 2 | EIA completed |