

UK Research and Innovation

Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	<p>The UKRI Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Interdisciplinary Research Hubs 2021 review ‘Deep-dive’ panels.</p> <p>The panels were part of a four-step independent review process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- ‘Deep-dive’ Value for Money (VfM) external expert panel- ‘Deep-dive’ Progress to Date and Forward Plans external expert panel- Strategy review by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)- Final high-level independent recommendation panel <p>Following the completion of the first two years of the Hubs’ work and the reduction in ODA expenditure at the 2020 Spending Review, this formal review was carried out to inform decisions on future funding for the programme from April 2022 onwards. The review provided an independent assessment informed by a wide range of evidence and inputs.</p> <p>From the outset of the Hubs programme, a mid-grant review had been planned to ensure that each Hub was making appropriate progress and managing the award effectively. However, due to the impact of the pandemic and the reduction in UKRI’s ODA budget, the context of the review expanded to also assess the Hubs’ strategic alignment to local, national, and international strategies and policies (including FCDO priorities); value for money; and their forward plans.</p> <p>There is a separate EIA reviewing the overall Hubs review.</p> <p>The outcome of the formal review has been reported to BEIS and has fed into their planning for the next Spending Review process and will play a key role in determining future funding for the programme.</p> <p>As outlined above, the review followed a four-step process with two ‘deep-dive’ expert panel reviews, a strategic review completed by BEIS and the FCDO and culminated in a final high-level independent recommendation panel. The overarching assessment criteria for the four steps within</p>

	<p>the Hub Review can be found in Annex 1, with the related FCDO priorities outlined in Annex 2.</p>
<p>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</p>	<p>UKRI commissioned a formal review in order to secure ongoing and future funding for the Hubs as outlined above.</p> <p>This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) assesses the methodology UKRI used for the two ‘Deep-dive’ panels in the revised process.</p> <p>The aims and objectives of these panels were:</p> <p>‘Deep-dive’ Value for Money external expert panel held on 28 and 29 July:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to implement a robust, transparent and independent review to support an evidence-based decision on the future of individual Hubs and the programme as a whole and to evidence the value to date and the ongoing potential of the Hubs - to assess the value for money of each Hub using methodology developed and piloted by BEIS. This assessment was made by an external expert panel comprising individuals who had experience applying the methodology and who had expertise aligned to the Hubs’ thematic areas <p>‘Deep-dive’ Progress to Date and Forward Plans external expert panel held on 3 and 4 August:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to implement a robust, transparent and independent review to support an evidence-based decision on the future of individual Hubs, the programme as a whole and to evidence the value to date and the ongoing potential of the Hubs - to review the evidence relating to each Hubs’ progress to date and whether it met the programme requirements and expectations. The panels also reviewed the proposed forward plans for each Hub considering relevance, feasibility, potential for impact and value for money. The external expert panel was comprised of academic and non-academic members from the UK and overseas <p>Assessment criteria for the four steps within the independent Hubs review can be found in Annex 1.</p>

	<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) observers attended both panel meetings to provide comments on how the decision-making process complied with EDI and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirements.</p> <p>The outcome of the formal review was reported to BEIS and informed their planning for the Autumn 2021 Spending Review process, it will play a key role in determining future funding for the 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>UKRI had to negotiate a review process for the Hubs with BEIS and was able to mutually agree on the process outlined in this EIA.</p> <p>UKRI was notified at the end of April of the requirement to develop the review process and obtain sign-off from BEIS before implementation. A working group was established in mid-May to develop and implement the review. The plan was submitted to BEIS on 19 May 2021 and sign-off was obtained on 21 May by BEIS officials, and required final ministerial sign-off for the final panel (obtained in late June).</p>
<p>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>UKRI has given consideration as to how its application of the government's decision on funding cuts impacts on UKRI's ability to comply with the PSED.</p> <p>UKRI is committed to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and to equitable partnerships.</p> <p>UKRI suggested and included additional criteria and evidence on gender and inclusivity and equitable partnerships in both panels, in addition to BEIS criteria for VfM. In particular, panellists were asked to review aspects of gender and inclusivity and consider policies and guidance relating to equitable partnerships.</p> <p>Given that all the Hubs are funded through Official Development Assistance (ODA), this means that they are 'administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as the main objective'. Necessarily therefore, they must benefit disadvantaged communities. Moreover, in accordance with section 1(1A) International Development Act 2002 due regard must be given to gender equality.</p>

	The UKRI International Development Team set out with the intention to convene panels with balanced membership as regards to gender, countries on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Development Assistance Committee (DAC) List of ODA Recipients ¹ and both academic and non-academic backgrounds. Given the tight timeframes over the summer, short notice, and the work involved for panelists, the diversity of the panel is good, however an optimal balance was not fully achieved. Although this might potentially have had an effect on the scoring, feedback from the EDI Observers of the panels provided reassurance on the panel process. The lists of panelists will be published on the UKRI website once the process has been completed.
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>EDI observers attended both panel meetings and provided comments on how the decision-making process complied with EDI and PSED requirements.</p> <p>UKRI has carried out continuous checks throughout the process and added to this live and evolving document.</p>

All the GCRF Hubs are ODA funded and therefore it should be expected that *all* of the projects will have positive impacts on the following groups with protected characteristics: gender, race and ethnicity (given that they must have their primary impact in a developing country). Therefore, the reduction or cessation of funding to *any* of these projects will have an EDI impact. This is unavoidable given the level of funding cuts; however, UKRI is trying to minimise the impact of these changes, reduce any possible harm and support future learning. Below is shown further analysis of projects that have an additional specific focus on targeting groups with protected characteristics.

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	No evidence of positive or negative impacts		Given the limited timeline in which the decisions had to be made and, for the reasons set out above, consultation was limited to requesting that grant holders and panelists identify any specific EDI issues.
Gender reassignment			
Pregnancy and maternity			
Race			
Religion or belief			
Sexual orientation			

¹ [The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\), Development Assistance Committee \(DAC\) -List of ODA Recipient Countries](#)

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)
Sex (gender)	Negative	The International Development Act 2002 (as amended) requires that all ODA spend has regard to gender equality. Grant competition applicants are required to take gender equality into account (exemplified through their gender equality statements) when applying to UKRI grant competitions funded through ODA. Therefore, UKRI would expect all projects to be sensitive and inclusive to gender throughout the project lifecycle where gender equality is applicable. The implication is therefore that reducing or terminating funding <i>could</i> have an impact on this group.	
Age	No evidence of positive or negative impacts		

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	As outlined above, it is possible that the proposed methodology for cutting ODA funding will have a considerable impact on those with a number of protected characteristics: most notably sex, race, disability and age. The best way to mitigate against this was to identify the projects affected, and to monitor the impact of the policy on those with a protected characteristic to minimise any disproportionate impact on a particular group.

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		
<p>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.</p>	X	<p>As outlined above, it is likely that the cuts to ODA funding will have significant negative impacts of groups of people with protected characteristics.</p> <p>However, given: the significant number of projects which are delivering benefits to groups with protected characteristics; the very short timeline in which to make decisions (as dictated by the overall level of funding and necessary notice periods); and the very significant size of the total savings that must be found; there appeared to be no other proportionate ways to carry out this process.</p> <p>As such, UKRI proceeded to use the proposed methodology with caution.</p>

<p>Will this EIA be published* Yes (* Alongside the EIA for the 2021 Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Hubs Review process.)</p>	
<p>Date completed:</p>	
<p>Review date (if applicable):</p>	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
	16/12/2021	1	

Annex I: Overarching Assessment Criteria for the Review

Using the original programme objectives as a framework (Annex 1a), the following assessment criteria will be used:

Progress against programme and Hub level objectives

- Development impact
 - o Progress towards development impact, including how the project is ensuring the Hubs overarching goals are achieved, and the reach and significance of development outputs, outcomes delivered to date
 - o Steps taken to strengthen capacity both in the UK and overseas at the individual, organisational and institutional level
- Interdisciplinary research excellence
 - o How the project has facilitated and promoted collaborative and interdisciplinary ways of working
 - o Progress of the project to date, in delivering high-quality research outputs, outcomes and impacts
- Global partnerships and leadership
 - o Measures and approaches in place to facilitate equitable partnerships, including the management of any challenges and changes
 - o The balance of advice sought, mechanisms for identifying and engaging stakeholders and how these have been implemented
 - o How the project has demonstrated global leadership, including evidence of international recognition
 - o Steps taken to facilitate and promote global networks to address the development challenge(s) relevant to the Hub
- Effective governance and project management
 - o Implementation of data, finance and risk management arrangements and overall approach to managing challenges and changes.
 - o Implementation of the projects monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy
- Flexible Funding
 - o The strategic rationale behind any flexible fund allocations and their contribution to the overall aims of the Hub
- Research practices
 - o The approach to considering, identifying and mitigating relevant dimensions of gender equality
 - o The approach to addressing ethical issues and compliance with the relevant frameworks

Strategic alignment

- The strength of the alignment to relevant local, national and international strategies and priorities (including SDGs and FCDO priorities)

Value for Money to date

- Relevance
- Equitable partnerships and collaborations
- Progress on activities and outputs
- Capacity-strengthening
- Positioning for achieving project/programme outcomes
- Likelihood of contributing to fund-level impact

Strength of forward plans

- The strategic rationale behind the response to the ODA review
- The alignment of proposed plans to relevant local, national and international strategies and policies
- Appropriate consideration of gender equality and inclusivity within each activity
- The feasibility of proposed plans given the time and funds currently available and any changes to partnerships
- The breadth, scale and likelihood of the proposed outputs, outcomes and impacts being achieved

Annex 1a: Original Hub Programme Objectives

Challenge and impact focus

- Challenge-led and impact-focussed, generating excellent and novel research and translating this into measurable real-world outcomes.
- A clear vision and integrated plan for the translation of the proposed research into measurable international development impact.
- The potential to deliver a broad range of impacts and scalable solutions at the local, national and/or international level.
- Developing a sustainable programme that has a legacy beyond the initial investment, with potential to leverage further support from development agencies, as well as financial or in-kind contributions including from universities and the private sector.

Interdisciplinary research excellence

- Excellent research capacity to conduct meaningful, well integrated and robust interdisciplinary research, including an appropriate range of research skills required to address the challenge(s).
- A demonstrable capacity to think across and between as well as within the thematic areas covered by the various SDGs, and a clear understanding of the way different disciplines working together contribute to the overall objectives of the Hub.
- Taking an interdisciplinary approach that assembles new knowledge and insight from across different research communities - transcending traditional disciplinary boundaries by integrating ground-breaking research with a better understanding of the social, political, economic, historical and cultural contexts.

- Commitment to build strategically on previous ODA and non-ODA investments (RCUK, DfID and other delivery partners) to add value to international efforts and improve co-ordination and ensure the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

Global partnerships

- An indispensable feature will be co-development with international partners and substantial, genuine and meaningful collaboration between UK and developing-country researchers, as well as relevant development agencies, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), industry and other private sector organisations, policy makers, and other relevant local and international partners.
- An appropriate strategy for deep engagement with users, intermediaries and beneficiaries of research throughout the duration of the Hub.
- Full consideration of the relevant developing country context (e.g., languages, cultures, faiths, public engagement, legal frameworks, political and regulatory systems), ethical issues in the planning and conduct of research, and implementation of an ethical innovation and 'do no harm' approach.

Organisation and leadership

- Shared values and goals within the Hub and its partnerships.
- Ensuring strong research and operational leadership, including robust financial and risk management, assurance and governance.
- Implementing appropriate and effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks.
- The ability to learn and adapt, including demonstrating the agility to respond to opportunities arising over the lifetime of the award.

Annex 2: UK Cross- Government ODA Priorities

In November 2020, Dominic Raab, the then Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, announced a new strategic framework for ODA, which will replace the 2015 UK aid strategy. In order to ensure that all there is a consistent and joined up approach across Whitehall, all aid will be focused on seven global challenges where the UK can make the most difference. These are:

Climate Change and biodiversity: A greener and cleaner path to growth in developing countries. This will include maintaining our five-year commitment to spend £11.6 billion on climate change, investing in research and science, and supporting countries to develop their own climate action plans.

COVID and global health security: Combat Covid-19 and support healthier and more resilient populations in developing countries. We will do this through major investments in global initiatives such as the GAVI vaccine alliance, core funding to the World Health Organisation, and by supporting fragile health systems in developing countries.

Girls' education: A global commitment to get 40 million girls into education and 20 million more girls reading by the age of 10.

Science, research, technology: Deliver cutting edge technology and research-led solutions in health, education, resilience, low carbon technologies, agriculture and economic development, conflict and poverty. This includes leveraging global science partnerships, drawing on the UK's own science expertise.

Open societies and conflict resolution: Strengthen democratic institutions, human rights, free media and effective governance. This includes international campaigns on democracy, human rights and media freedom, and maintaining an independent UK sanctions regime to tackle global corruption.

Humanitarian preparedness and response: Lead stronger collective international response to crises and famine. This includes reforming the international humanitarian system, maintaining a minimum FCDO crisis aid reserve, and promoting science and digital technology to offer faster and cheaper delivery to those affected by crises.

Trade and economic development: Build trading and investment partners of the future. This includes helping countries to trade, create better investment environments, infrastructure and access to finance, backed by investment from CDC and UK Export Finance.

Annex 3: BEIS Value for Money Assessment Rubric

Criterion	Poor/1	Adequate/2	Good/3	Excellent/4	Certainty
Relevance	Evidence suggests that the project does not align with partner country (national, regional or local) or wider ODA priorities or challenges	Evidence suggests that the project aligns with partner country (national, regional or local) or wider ODA priorities or challenges	Evidence suggests the project aligns well with partner country or wider ODA priorities or challenges	Evidence suggests that the project is very well-targeted to partner country (national, regional or local) or wider ODA priorities or challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low • Med • High
Equitable partnerships and collaborations	Evidence suggests no or limited equitable partnerships or collaborations. This could include project resources being use in an inequitable fashion, limited evidence of co-design, fair opportunity, fair process, and fair sharing of benefits, costs and outcomes.	Evidence suggests an acceptable degree of equitable partnerships or collaborations. This could include project resources not being used to encourage equitable partnerships but not being used in an inequitable way, evidence of some co-design and some fair opportunity, fair process, and fair sharing of benefits costs and outcomes.	Evidence suggests positive equitable partnerships or collaborations. This could include project resources being used in a way that encourages equitable partnerships or collaborations, evidence of some co-design, fair opportunity, fair process, and fair sharing of benefits, costs and outcomes.	Evidence suggests highly equitable partnerships or collaborations. For example, project resources are being used in a way that encourages strong equitable partnerships or collaborations, evidence of significant co-design, fair opportunity, fair process, and fair sharing of benefits, costs and outcomes for all partners. The partnership/collaboration has done/or is likely to lead to further collaborations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low • Med • High
Progress on activities and outputs	The project is not showing acceptable progress with regards to expected activities and outputs.	Although not meeting progress with activities and outputs, the project is showing acceptable progress bearing in mind external circumstances.	Progress thus far generally met with regards to activities and outputs.	Progress thus far met or exceeded with regards to activities and outputs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low • Med • High
Capacity-strengthening (where applicable)	Evidence suggests little or no enhancement of the ability and resources of individuals, institutions, and/or systems to undertake, communicate, and/or use high quality research efficiently, effectively, and sustainably.	Evidence suggests some enhancement of the ability and resources of individuals, institutions, and/or systems to undertake, communicate, and/or use high quality research efficiently, effectively, and sustainably.	Evidence suggests positive enhancement of the ability and resources of individuals, institutions, and/or systems to undertake, communicate, and/or use high quality research efficiently, effectively, and sustainably.	Evidence suggests significant and sustainable enhancement of the ability and resources of individuals, institutions, and/or systems to undertake, communicate, and/or use high quality research efficiently, effectively, and sustainably.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low • Med • High

Positioning for achieving project/programme outcomes	Evidence suggests the project is not positioned to achieve its outcomes. E.g. the project is not on track to meet its objectives, no evidence of engaging key stakeholders or user groups, no uptake of research outputs, or no positioning for influence on policy or practice, or evidence of catalytic effects for other research and innovation.	Evidence suggests the project is doing some positioning to achieve its objectives. E.g. the project is not on track to meet its objectives or is on track to partially complete objectives, but outcomes are still likely to be reasonable considering circumstances. There is some evidence of engaging key stakeholders or user groups, some uptake of research outputs, or some positioning for influence on policy or practice, or evidence of catalytic effects for other research and innovation.	Evidence suggests the project is positioning well to achieve its objectives. E.g. It is likely to meet most of its objectives. There is evidence of positively engaging key stakeholders or user groups, positive uptake of research outputs, or positive positioning for influence on policy or practice, or evidence of catalytic effects for other research and innovation.	Evidence suggests the project is positioning very well to achieve its objectives. E.g. There is evidence of some outcomes already achieved, significant engagement of key stakeholders or user groups, significant uptake of research outputs, or strong positioning for influence on policy/practice, or evidence of significant catalytic effects for other research and innovation, or evidence of securing further funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low • Med • High
likelihood of contributing to fund-level impact	Evidence suggest outcomes are unlikely to lead to a contribution to fund-level impact, as detailed on the Theory of Change	Evidence suggests that outcomes might lead to a contribution to fund-level impacts, as detailed on the Theory of Change. E.g. significant contextual barriers limit potential for impact.	Evidence suggests outcomes are moderately likely to lead to a contribution to fund-level impacts, as detailed on the Theory of Change.	Evidence suggests outcomes are very likely to lead to a significant and/or sustainable contribution to fund-level impacts, as detailed on the Theory of Change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low • Med • High
Average Score					

Final score for project: (average score from the rubric x worthwhileness of investment multiplier):

How worthwhile was/is the investment?	Poor Multiplier of 0.875	Reasonable Multiplier of 1	Good Multiplier of 1.125	Excellent Multiplier of 1.25
	Given the project's quality (as indicated by the above scores), the relative cost of the project seems excessive and it may not be a worthwhile investment.	Given the project's quality (as indicated by the above scores), the relative cost of the project seems reasonable and it seems a worthwhile investment	Given the project's quality (as indicated by the above scores), the relative cost of the project seems economical and it seems a worthwhile investment	Given the project's quality (as indicated by the above scores), the relative cost of the project seems highly economical and it seems a very worthwhile investment

		There is not enough evidence to justify changing the multiplier		
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After applying the cost-effectiveness multiplier, the Value for Money scores translate to the following categories:

Final score <2
POOR

Final score 2 – 2.9
ACCEPTABLE

Final score 3 – 3.9
GOOD

Final score ≥ 4
EXCELLENT

Annex 4: Example Using the BEIS Value for Money Assessment Rubric

The below (fictional) example demonstrates how the scoring process worked.

Project X:

	1 (Poor)	2 (Acceptable)	3 (Good)	4 (Excellent)	Score
Relevance					3
Equitable partnerships and collaborations					3
Capacity-strengthening					1
Progress on activities and outputs					2
Positioning for project outcomes					4
Likelihood of fund-level impact					3
Average rubric score:					2.67

Panel members were then asked to apply a cost-effectiveness multiplier to the average rubric score.

	Poor Multiplier of 0.875	Reasonable Multiplier of 1	Good Multiplier of 1.125	Excellent Multiplier of 1.25
How worthwhile was/is the investment?	Given the project's quality (as indicated by the above scores), the relative cost of the project seems excessive and it may not be a worthwhile investment	Given the project's quality (as indicated by the above scores), the relative cost of the project seems reasonable and it seems a worthwhile investment There is not enough evidence to justify changing the multiplier	Given the project's quality (as indicated by the above scores), the relative cost of the project seems economical and it seems a worthwhile investment	Given the project's quality (as indicated by the above scores), the relative cost of the project seems highly economical and it seems a very worthwhile investment

In this fictional example, the panel members selected *Good* for the cost-effectiveness multiplier. Therefore, the final Value for Money score for the project is:

$$\text{Average rubric score} \times \text{worthwhileness multiplier} = 2.67 \times 1.125 = \mathbf{3.00}$$

After applying the cost-effectiveness multiplier, the Value for Money scores translate to the following categories:

Final score <2
POOR

Final score 2 – 2.9
ACCEPTABLE

Final score 3 – 3.9
GOOD

Final score ≥ 4
EXCELLENT

Therefore, Project X would have received a **GOOD** for Value for Money.

Annex 5: 'Progress to Date and Forward Plans' Assessment Criteria

The Hubs will be reviewed against the following criteria with the accompanying questions to guide the review assessment.

Progress against programme and Hub level objectives:

- Development impact
 - Progress towards development impact, including how the project is ensuring the Hubs overarching goals are achieved, and the reach and significance of development outputs, outcomes delivered to date
 - Steps taken to strengthen capacity both in the UK and overseas at the individual, organisational and institutional level
- Interdisciplinary research excellence
 - How the project has facilitated and promoted collaborative and interdisciplinary ways of working
 - Progress of the project to date, in delivering high-quality research outputs, outcomes and impacts
- Global partnerships and leadership
 - Measures and approaches in place to facilitate equitable partnerships, including the management of any challenges and changes
 - The balance of advice sought, mechanisms for identifying and engaging stakeholders and how these have been implemented
 - How the project has demonstrated global leadership, including evidence of international recognition
 - Steps taken to facilitate and promote global networks to address the development challenge(s) relevant to the Hub
- Effective governance and project management
 - Implementation of data, finance and risk management arrangements and overall approach to managing challenges and changes.
 - Implementation of the projects monitoring, evaluation and learning strategy
- Flexible Funding
 - The strategic rationale behind any flexible fund allocations and their contribution to the overall aims of the Hub
- Research practices
 - The approach to considering, identifying and mitigating relevant dimensions of gender equality
 - The approach to addressing ethical issues and compliance with the relevant frameworks
- Strategic alignment
 - The strength of the alignment to relevant local, national and international strategies and priorities (including SDGs and UK Cross-Government ODA priorities)
- Strength of forward plans
 - The strategic rationale behind the response to the ODA review
 - The alignment of proposed plans to relevant local, national and international strategies and policies
 - Appropriate consideration of gender equality and inclusivity within each activityThe feasibility of proposed plans given the time and funds currently available and any changes to partnerships
 - The breadth, scale and likelihood of the proposed outputs, outcomes and impacts being achieved