People at the Heart of ICT: What does this mean for me?

Introduction

The People at the Heart priority asks us to consider the needs of anyone who will interact with and/or be affected by the information and communication technology throughout the research process. Too often this is only considered as part of the series of impact activities carried out towards the end of an award. People at the Heart of ICT looks for researchers to consider these relationships and impacts throughout the research process from the planning stage of your proposal through to the implementation.

The following set of questions is designed as a potential framework for you to use when developing your proposal and suggestions of how to articulate the People at the Heart throughout your proposal.

Questions

People

The 'people' in this policy refers to all those who will interact with and/or be affected by the technology throughout the research process. A potential first step in addressing the People at the Heart priority is to identify all the relevant type of people or organisations by asking the following:

- Who beyond the immediate beneficiaries of your research up or down the supply chain of your work could be affected?
- Who could make use of the developments knowingly such as businesses and consumers?
- Are there specific subsets of the public, for example the elderly people that you could include?

Having identified the groups of people, articulate how they could be affected by the research outputs, the potential benefits and risks of your technology and the realistic timescales of this impact/effect.
- How has consideration of the people who will benefit from the ICT research affected the design of the research proposed?
- Have any risks or negative consequences been identified now?
- How have these consequences been considered in the research design?
  (NOTE: This is not about making a list of scenarios and predicting the future but about setting out your approach to your research with these in mind.)
- Have you considered how people might be impacted by the research, both positively and negatively. Use of the Responsible Research Innovation framework will help here and the EPSRC-funded Orbit service is available inform decision making?[1]

Implementation

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[1] The Research Responsible Innovation (RRI) framework comprises: Anticipate, Reflect, Engage and Act (AREA). Look for those who will be impacted in any way by your research either directly or indirectly, unwittingly or without consent. You may wish to have (advisory) mechanisms in place along the way to looking for these. For more information see: https://www.orbit-rri.org/

You will need to demonstrate within the research programme how it has been developed, either in methodology or vision, to consider people.

To fit the People at the Heart Priority, the EPSRC ICT theme is looking for project-specific activities, either bespoke or built into existing relevant activities of your group or external organisations. These activities can overlap with the Pathways to Impact; however EPSRC would expect a feedback route into the research within the lifetime of the grant.

- How exactly and at what stages of project development will different groups of people identified above (stakeholders) be engaged?
- Have they been involved in the co-creation of the proposal?
- When and how will these stakeholders be able to further shape developments of the proposal once started?
- How has the governance and structure of the proposal been designed to ensure appropriate stakeholder input will have a meaningful impact on the research direction?

Leadership and advocacy

You will need to describe how you will continue to take people into account as you make future decisions on your research direction.

- What structures/interventions are in place within your proposal's governance structure that will ensure the potential impact on people is considered?
- How will you be an advocate for the ethos of putting people at the centre of all we do in ICT?
- What routes (new or existing) will you use to influence others to consider People at the Heart of ICT?