

## **Equality Impact Assessment – Food system trials to encourage healthy, sustainable diets**

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) is committed to promoting equality and participation in all its activities, whether this is related to the work we do with our external stakeholders or whether this is related to our responsibilities as an employer. As a public body, we are also required to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations when making decisions and developing policies. To do this, it is necessary to understand the potential impacts of the range of internal and external activities on different groups of people.

What is an Equality Impact Assessment and why does UKRI use it?

When developing a new scheme, or considering changes to an existing one, UKRI will carry out an equality impact assessment to review how it may affect particular groups or individuals and will take the findings into account. We expect that very rarely our actions will create barriers to participation. The assessment may however flag issues that are not of UKRI's making but we will, where it is in our remit to do so, recommend actions and adjustments. Some impacts are not exclusive to the scheme or change that is being evaluated and need to be addressed throughout our organisation. In some cases we may not have enough expertise and we will consult with others.

Our leadership and building on good practice

It is our ambition to be recognised as a leader in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and to build on our record of achievements to date, following on from the RCUK, Innovate UK and HEFCE Action Plans. These Plans are updated from time to time and Equality Impact Assessments will help us to prioritise actions.

Current good practice that is relevant to the 'Food system trials to encourage healthy, sustainable diets' funding activity includes our:

- Grant terms and conditions, including recognition for sick leave and all forms of parental leave
- EDI in Panel Meetings Guidance for all panel members.

There are multiple dimensions/aspects to this Equality Impact Assessment:

- 1) Ensuring that the eligibility criteria are clear and objectively justified
- 2) Ensuring that the submission, peer review and awarding processes are free from unintentional bias
- 3) The identification of any potential barriers to attendance and participation in the call and the assessment and awarding process as below
  - a. Meeting duration – Appropriate duration to facilitate good environmental conditions for assessment and inclusion
  - b. Venue location and arrangements to accommodate needs
  - c. Broad ranging panel membership
  - d. Meeting management/Chair/robust assessment criteria

Question	Response
<b>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</b>	Food system trials to encourage healthy, sustainable diets
<b>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</b>	<p>ESRC, in partnership with Defra, the Food Standards Agency (FSA), the Department for Education (DfE), the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), and the Department for of Health and Social Care (DHSC), wish to appoint a research team to develop an ambitious programme of controlled evaluations in the food system in England that will test the effectiveness of interventions aimed at encouraging and enabling healthier, more sustainable diets.</p> <p>Our funding decisions for this call are outlined on the UKRI Funding Finder. There are several criteria including fit to the opportunity's objectives, knowledge of the UK food system and expertise designing and delivering research trials, plans for stakeholder collaboration and value for money.</p> <p>This funding opportunity is a two-stage process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An initial co-design phase of five months to support a research team in working with government partners and developing a:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• detailed proposal for an innovative programme of robust research trials in the food system to encourage and enable the take up of healthier and more sustainable diets</li> <li>• consortium of delivery partners for the programme.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The research team will then be invited to apply for funding in March 2023 to proceed to the delivery phase of the programme.</li> </ul>
<b>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</b>	Defra, supported by ESRC, DHSC, FSA, DfE and DLUHC, submitted a proposal to the Evaluation Accelerator Fund, which supports evaluation across government to transform our understanding of the impact of activity in priority policy areas. The bid was successful.

	<p>Defra, in partnership with ESRC developed the call opportunity, drawing on evidence from the Independent Review of the Food System by Henry Dimbleby which set out the damage the current food system is doing to the environment and the health of the population in England.</p>
<p><b>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants to the call</li> <li>• Webinar attendees</li> <li>• Panel Members</li> <li>• ESRC staff attending the meetings</li> <li>• Government departments who will use the research evidence base</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</b></p>	<p>The likely impact of each proposal's planned activities will be scrutinised during the Assessment Panel and Interviews.</p> <p>There is an expectation that the investment will ensure research findings are shared as rapidly and effectively as possible to inform policymaking and contribute to the national and international research community.</p> <p>It will be a requirement of the successful application to regularly report, and carry out monitoring and evaluation on the investment, that will include the impact of the investment.</p> <p>Defra and other supporting departments, along with ESRC, will have a high degree of ongoing interaction with the investment.</p>

## GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

ESRC's research commissioning processes are designed with fairness in mind.

### Eligibility and criteria

- The 'Food system trials to encourage healthy, sustainable diets' call is open to all eligible research organisations (RO). Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of a recognised RO, but applicants who are not an established member of a recognised RO must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research.

## **Standard Grant Terms and Conditions:**

- UKRI standard Grant Terms and Conditions comply with UK equality legislation and include provisions designed to mitigate against potential negative impacts (e.g. sick pay, parental and adoption leave, the possibility of part-time and flexible working, and grant extensions).
- Research Organisations are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. RGC 8 states that 'The Research Organisation must assume full responsibility for staff funded from the grant and, in consequence, accept all duties owed to and responsibilities for these staff, including, without limitation, their terms and conditions of employment and their training and supervision, arising from the employer/employee relationship.' Universities are therefore required to make reasonable adjustments as required to support their staff.

## **Process**

- We will aim to ensure that all activities relating to the 'Food system trials to encourage healthy, sustainable diets' funding activity are inclusive and take account of diversity.
- We anticipate at this time that the majority of meetings in relation to this funding activity will be held virtually. We will therefore take account of access needs and review this continuously. Should any meetings be planned in-person, this EIA will be reviewed and updated accordingly.
- This call will be open over the summer holidays. There was limited scope to change the timeline for this funding activity due to timelines associated with the Evaluation Accelerator Fund. We have factored this timeframe into the submission requirements of the call and offered both a streamlined application process and a funded period for the successful applicant to co-design their programme rather than requiring a comprehensive proposal at the application stage.

## **Panel recruitment and membership:**

- We will aim to ensure that the composition of the commissioning panel is diverse, with at least a 60:40 gender balance.
- We will ensure (if possible) that the chair and vice chair of the commissioning panel are not the same gender.
- Whilst panel members are appointed, first and foremost, based on expertise, we will aim to appoint a diverse panel covering both membership and disciplines. Final decisions take into account trying to balance the panels by gender and geography and seek to ensure a diversity of career stage and institutions. We will only make recruitment decisions which compromise diversity when it is objectively justified by the necessity to ensure the required breadth of subject expertise with high quality candidates.
- A tool has been developed which allows ESRC staff to assess the EDI characteristics of commissioning panels, and this will be used when appointing panels.
- All panel members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
- The proposals will be assessed by an assessment panel, and shortlisted proposals will be invited to attend an interview. members will be briefed on unconscious bias and encouraged to feel empowered to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it. The Panel Chairs and Panel Secretaries play a particularly important role in this respect. An implementation intention statement will be read out at the

beginning of the assessment panel meeting and interview panel meeting which sets the tone for discussions and requires that panel members pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions.

<b>Protected Characteristic Group</b>	<b>Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?</b>	<b>Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used</b>	<b>Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)</b>
<b>Disability (both mental and physical)</b>	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Je-S does not currently comply with disability accessibility schemes. This will be picked up by The Funding Service.</p> <p>Applicants should seek support from their own institution's research support office.</p> <p>Although we are no longer in lockdowns, we recognise the ongoing impact of the pandemic may present additional challenges for those intending to apply and/or attend meetings. We recognise that due to the shift to increased homeworking during the pandemic, people with disabilities may find the current circumstances particularly</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Solicit information from online meeting participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have in order to fully participate.</p> <p>Online meeting platforms offer an accessible and inclusive environment for participants. Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The chat function and closed captioning can be enabled, and volume adjusted, to support those with hearing requirements.</li> <li>• Adequate lighting, alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers (ensure any images are well described so that text-to-speech applications can recognise them) for the visually impaired.</li> <li>• Provision of documents in sans-serif dyslexia-friendly fonts; and dyslexia-friendly formats.</li> <li>• Avoiding colours, lighting etc. that may</li> </ul>

		<p>challenging for a variety of reasons.</p> <p>There may be barriers for disabled people to benefit from any online events associated with the funding activity.</p> <p>Participants with visual and hearing disabilities may have difficulties if virtual activities cannot cater for their needs.</p> <p>Panel meeting attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during panel assessments</p>	<p>trigger migraines, epilepsy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the length of any online meetings, shorten if necessary, and ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda.</li> <li>• Ensure that staff have had sufficient EDI training so they can respond effectively to the requirements of all participants.</li> <li>• When we promote the event on a web site, we will need to check it is accessible and compatible with the range of specialist hardware and software that people with disabilities use to access electronic information.</li> <li>• Recording of the online webinar so that it can be made available for access at any time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gender reassignment</b></p>	<p>Potential negative</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>There could be potential discrimination against a panel member, an applicant or an event/research participant due to their perceived or actual experience of gender reassignment.</p> <p>Trans people may be absent from work as</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>We will work to ensure the use of gender neutral language where possible in our documents.</p> <p>Reflect in unconscious bias briefing for panel.</p> <p>UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature and absence as a result of medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be covered by the Research Organisation's sick policy and strongly encourage ROs to treat</p>

		a consequence of transition and UKRI records may show the wrong gender.	absence relating to transition like any other medical absence.  Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted.
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	Probably not		
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Childcare responsibilities may be a barrier to attending events, meetings, and interviews.</p> <p>Completion of the grant may be affected by maternity and parental leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions.</p> <p>We should ensure the use of gender-neutral language – parental leave, irrespective of sexual orientation.</p> <p>Dates will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow potential attendees to make arrangements to attend.</p> <p>The costs of additional childcare for grant-holders, beyond that required to meet the normal contracted requirements of the job, and that are directly related to the project, may be requested as a directly incurred cost if the institutional policy is to reimburse them. However, childcare costs associated with normal working patterns may not be sought.</p> <p>Reimbursement of additional childcare costs if the meeting</p>

			<p>participant is otherwise unable to attend</p> <p>Ensure there are sufficient breaks in any online meeting to provide breaks for breastfeeding/expressing mothers if necessary.</p>
<b>Race (including ethnicity)</b>	Potential negative	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations (particularly in relation to panel composition and mitigations against unconscious bias)
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Potential negative	<p>See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>There could be potential discrimination because it is known that somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) has a particular faith or belief.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations (particularly in relation to panel composition and mitigations against unconscious bias)</p> <p>Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning panel meetings. Considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals; (if impossible to avoid then consider mitigations – i.e. during Ramadan ensuring that meetings finish early so that participants are able to get home to break their fast, awareness of the sensitivities around offering Muslims meals during periods of fasting);</li> <li>• Not scheduling meetings such that they would require travel late on Friday evenings (Jewish Sabbath) or on Fridays (Friday prayer, Islam)</li> <li>• Allowing prayer breaks if requested</li> </ul>



<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.
<b>Sex (gender)</b>	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Use of non-gender neutral language can present a barrier to participation.</p> <p>Potential for some attendees to have caring responsibilities affecting ability to attend meetings and interviews.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Ensure use of gender neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc.</p> <p>Reflect in unconscious bias briefing for panel.</p> <p>Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation (aim for at worst 60:40 split)</p> <p>Dates for events will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow potential attendees to make arrangements to attend.</p>
<b>Age</b>	Potential negative	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.
<b>Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act</b>	<p>Potential negative.</p> <p>ESRC is committed to go above and beyond bare compliance with Equalities legislation to ensure that our processes are as fair and equitable as they can be. For instance, we wish to ensure that</p>		<p>ROs need to be clear of their responsibilities. The Research funding guide states: ‘The Research Organisation is responsible for compliance with the terms of the Equality Act 2010 including any subsequent amendments introduced while work is in progress; and for ensuring that the expectations set out in the RCUK statement of expectations for equality and diversity are met’.</p> <p>Call specifications should draw attention to ESRC’s aspirations around ED&amp;I. Applicants should be alerted to the fact that if they wish to participate in an</p>

	potential applicants and stakeholders are not disadvantaged by geography, institutional status etc.		<p>ESRC-led activity but find that they are barred from doing so as a consequence of ED&amp;I considerations they should contact the office (defrafoodtrials@ukri.org) for advice.</p> <p>We work to ensure that panels are balanced as far as possible (within the constraints of quality and appropriateness) across the range of protected characteristics, and across broader characteristics, including participation from post-1992 and Russell Group institutions, ensuring that we have a good geographical spread of panel members across the four nations of the UK, and across a diversity of career stages and paths.</p>
--	---	--	---

### Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	See the potential negative impacts outlined above.	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will <b>proceed</b> .		
2. You can decide to <b>stop</b> the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
3. You can <b>adapt or change</b> the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias	✓	See the mitigations outlined above.
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there		

<p>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 <b>proceed with caution</b> with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.</p>		
---	--	--

<p><b>Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required</b>  (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>Date completed:</b></p>	<p>04/07/2022</p>
<p><b>Review date</b> (if applicable):</p>	<p>Annually, or if any significant changes are made to the scheme.</p>