



**UK Research  
and Innovation**

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

### **UKRI Innovation and Research Caucus**

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 **UKRI Innovation and Research Caucus** includes our:

- Grant terms and conditions, including recognition for medical 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
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	UKRI Innovation and Research Caucus
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>Overview:</p> <p>The UKRI Innovation and Research Caucus call is a competitive funding opportunity for a Director(s) to lead a network of experts in innovation and research support from across the social sciences, other disciplines, and sectors.</p> <p>The Caucus is designed to support the funders to meet their aims of catalysing and supporting the UK's research, business, and innovation communities, in order to help make the UK a global leader in innovation and research. As set out in our strategy, this will be achieved not only through direct funding, but also by ensuring business investment is driving UK economic growth, and research and innovation addresses national and global challenges.</p> <p>The Caucus will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• act as a trusted expert that supports UKRI in the development of evidence-led research and innovation policies, strategies, and decision-making.</li> <li>• create an inter-disciplinary network of business innovation and research funding policy experts.</li> <li>• champion the role of social sciences in building UK innovation and research and increase capacity and capability to use evidence.</li> <li>• work closely with key UKRI stakeholders to co-develop an agile governance approach and a set of flexible and responsive work packages.</li> </ul>

	<p>This funding opportunity is a two-stage process. UKRI will contribute £100k (80% fEC) for one successful applicant to undertake a 3-month co-design and scoping phase with UKRI to co-develop a responsive programme of activity and an agile governance structure for the programme delivery stage.</p> <p>Subject to submitting a satisfactory report, which includes a flexible programme of work with an appropriate and agile governance structure, at the end of the scoping period, UKRI will contribute at least an additional £5.9 million for programme delivery over a further 35 months.</p>
<p><b>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</b></p>	<p><b>Internal consultation</b> has taken place with UKRI, ESRC and Innovate UK Senior Leadership Teams</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 UKRI Innovation and Research Caucus call.</li> <li>• Attendees at the online webinar, hosted by ESRC.</li> <li>• Commissioning Panel Members for the UKRI Innovation and Research Caucus.</li> <li>• UKRI staff attending the Panel meeting(s) for the Caucus.</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>Proposals will be assessed by peer review and shortlisted applicants will be invited to attend an interview. Final recommendations for progression to the co-design stage will be made by the Panel based on the written proposal, peer reviews and interview.</p> <p>Progression from the co-design stage to the programme delivery stage will be via a scoping report, which must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>robust governance</b> through the co-design of an effective agile governance structure with the funders to manage the broader Caucus activities and</li> <li>• <b>a focus on impact</b> demonstrating an ability to co-design activities, create actionable insights for different users and a commitment to learn from activities, to increase effectiveness in achieving the Caucus aims.</li> </ul>

	The scoping report will be assessed by a sub-section of the Panel, who will provide funding recommendations to ESRC.
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## GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

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

### Eligibility and criteria

- UKRI Innovation and Research Caucus 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.*

Proposals must be led by an academic(s) who is based at an eligible UK research organisation.

As we support a Co-Director model, applications are welcomed from those who:

- Job share
  - Have a part-time contract, or
  - Need flexible working arrangement
- Research Organisation support is required and transparent decision-making processes should be put in place for the award of any activity based, grant or devolved funding. Support from the host Research Organisation will be essential in ensuring the budget is appropriately administered – as such a letter of support is required from a named senior contact supporting the application. This must detail the willingness of the institution to administer the devolved budget in a clear and transparent manner which meet ESRC expectations.
  - Panels are instructed to assess the application in front of them and not to 'read between the lines' or give the benefit of the doubt based on the reputation of the individual applicant or team, as this would be a form of confirmation bias.

### 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.

### Panel recruitment:

- 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 membership. 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.

## Process

- Funders will hold a webinar for potential applicants. This will be in an online format allowing for virtual attending and recording. Live transcription will be enabled.
- Those who are unable to attend can request to be sent the webinar materials and/or recording by email after the event.
- Applications will be reviewed by both academic specialists and those with expertise in innovation and research funding policy, and knowledge exchange.
- The ESRC Peer Review College should be the first source of academic peer reviewers consulted by ESRC staff. Where it is not possible to secure the necessary peer review from within the college membership ESRC case officers will look beyond the college membership. All members of the ESRC community are encouraged to complete the ESRC peer review training tool which is mandatory for Peer Review College members. The training tool outlines the ESRC's standard peer review process and emphasises the importance of timely, objective, fair and informed peer review.
- The membership of the Peer Review College aims to reflect the community it represents, and efforts are made to achieve an appropriately balanced membership in terms of gender, age, ethnic origin etc.
- Peer reviewers are required to evidence their views and scores. ESRC staff conduct usability checks on all peer review comments and where there is evidence of bias or a reviewer has failed to provide evidence for their scores the review will be marked as 'unusable'.
- All panel members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
- It is the role of panel members to moderate and assess the quality of peer review and to agree final scores for each proposal. Panel 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 commissioning panel meeting which sets the tone for discussions and requires that panel members pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions.

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 (both mental and physical)	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>Panel meeting/interview attendees with physical disabilities may have difficulties if meeting venues cannot cater for their needs</p> <p>Panel meeting/interview attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during panel assessments</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Solicit information from panel meeting participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have in order to fully participate.</p> <p>Meetings may be held online (with use of closed captions for people who have impaired hearing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On request, black and white versions of guidance documents and other materials can be provided to candidates with accessibility requirements, and these can be attached to emails rather than provided as GoogleDoc links.</li> <li>• The webinar will be recorded and available afterwards for applicants. Captions are added to webinar. Materials can be requested in advanced where required. Any images used will be described.</li> <li>• Applicants may dial into Zoom calls via telephone as an alternative to attending via video call.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extra time can be given to applicants with accessibility requirements for their interview. UKRI will ask all involved to inform them of access requirements in advance of interviews to ensure adjustments can be made.</li></ul> <p>For face-to-face meetings, ensure that venues offer an accessible and inclusive environment for participants. Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accessibility for wheelchair users and people with impaired mobility;</li><li>• Induction loops for the hearing impaired;</li><li>• Adequate lighting, alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers for the visually impaired;</li><li>• Dietary restrictions for those with coeliac, diabetes etc.</li><li>• Provision of documents in sans-serif, dyslexia-friendly fonts; and dyslexia-friendly formats;</li><li>• Avoiding colours, lighting etc. that may trigger migraines, epilepsy;</li><li>• Ensuring that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda;</li><li>• Ensuring sufficiently bright and spacious rooms;</li></ul>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that venues are easily accessible to main transport links.</li> <li>• Consider (on a case by case basis) paying T&amp;S for carers or support workers to attend alongside the participant, where this is required and not covered by the Individual's own employment contract.</li> </ul> <p>Where there are particular constraints consider opportunities for participants to engage in a different way (via video-link, tele-conference for instance).</p>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Trans people may be absent from work as a consequence of transition.</p> <p>UKRI records may show the wrong gender.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</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 absence relating to transition like any other medical absence.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted.</p>
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	Probably not.		Panel members/reviewers are required to declare a conflict



			if they are assessing their partner.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>People may be absent from work due to parental leave.</p> <p>Childcare and other factors may need to be considered, for applicants and panellists to be able to attend the online panel.</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>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>As the commissioning panel meeting is due to take place virtually using an online platform, we will endeavour to provide adequate breaks in the proceedings to support breastfeeding/expressing mothers if required.</p> <p>Reimbursement of additional childcare costs on a case-by-case basis, if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend (this could include additional hours of childcare in the child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel</p>

			to care for school age children).
<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).  Restate considerations of unconscious bias by briefing the panel at the start of the meeting.
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Potential negative	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  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.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations (particularly in relation to panel composition and mitigations against unconscious bias)  Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning panel meetings. Considerations might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals; (if impossible to avoid then consider mitigations – ie. during Ramadan ensuring that meetings finish early so that participants are able to break their fast).</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> Restate considerations of unconscious bias by briefing

			the panel at the start of the meeting.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Restate considerations of unconscious bias by briefing the panel at the start of the meeting.
<b>Sex (gender)</b>	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Use of language can present a barrier to participation and it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged.  Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Ensure use of gender neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc.  Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation (aim for at worst 60:40 split)  Ensure that the meeting can be attended virtually using an online platform at a convenient time of the day.  Reimbursement of additional childcare costs if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend (this could include childcare at the venue, additional hours of childcare in the child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel to care for school age children)
<b>Age</b>	Potential negative or positive depending on scheme eligibility requirements	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Early career researchers* may be disadvantaged as they don't have the same track	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Track record is an explicit criterion, given likely relationship to career stage and hence (indirectly) age. Panel members are briefed to make clear that they should be assessing the application in

		<p>record to draw on as an experienced researcher.</p> <p>(*It is assumed that early career researchers are generally younger than their more experienced peers, although this by no means always the case. This is why this point has been included under 'age').</p>	<p>front of them and not reading between the lines. They should assess an individual's capability to deliver their proposed research.</p> <p>Use of a variety of different communication strategies including social media to ensure that our messages reach the widest possible target audience.</p>
<p><b>Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act</b></p>	<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 potential applicants and stakeholders are not disadvantaged by geography, institutional status etc.</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 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 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</p>

			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.
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### 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 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.		

<b>Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required</b> (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes
<b>Date completed:</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> July 2022
<b>Review date</b> (if applicable):	To be reviewed if any significant changes are made to the scheme.