

Equality Impact Assessment

| Question | Response |
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| 1. Name funding opportunity being assessed | Embedding Methodological Development in Research Practice 2022 (Highlight Notice, ESRC Standard Grants Call) |
| 2. Summary aims and objectives of the funding opportunity | <p>This call provides the opportunity for researchers to refine methodological approaches developed since March 2020 to enable them to be fully embedded in research practice, maximising their contribution to social science research.</p> <p>The call is for applications ranging from £350,000 to £1 million (100 per cent full economic cost (fEC)) for a period of up to three years.</p> <p>The call will open in early August and close late October.</p> |
| 3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this funding opportunity? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders) | The Research Methods Advisory Group 2022 and the ESRC Data and Infrastructure expert Advisory Group have been consulted in the scoping of this funding opportunity. |
| 4. Who is affected by the funding opportunity? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants to the Research Grants scheme (Social Science Researchers across the academic life-course are eligible to apply). • Grant Assessment Panel members • Grant Development Group members • ESRC staff supporting and attending the GAP and GDG meetings. |
| 5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the funding opportunity? | The Research Grants Scheme is monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Grants Delivery Group which meets three times a year following Grants Assessment Panel meetings to make funding decisions, scrutinise panel outcomes and discuss policy issues relating to the schemes it is responsible for. |

GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

ESRC's standard Grant Assessment Panel process is designed with fairness in mind.

Eligibility and criteria

- The Research Grants scheme 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.
- Track record is not a funding criterion for the scheme, and panels are briefed that they should not pay particular attention to track record of applicants. Whilst track record should play into panel decisions it should not be emphasised to the extent that innovative / potentially high impact work by less established researchers is disadvantaged. 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:

- Panel members are appointed, first and foremost, based on expertise. Our shortlisting process looks only at expertise/fit to vacancy and track record. We do not know the ethnicity/race, disability status or other protected characteristics for applicants as equal opportunities monitoring forms are detached from the applications and remain anonymous. Final decisions take into account trying to balance the panels by gender and geography (to ensure UK-wide representation) 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.
- We aim to ensure that the composition of the panels are diverse, with each panel having at least a 60:40 gender balance, and if this is not possible we seek to ensure that there is a 60:40 gender balance across the GAPs as a whole.
- Where possible we ensure that the chair and vice chair of each panel are not the same gender.

- Every effort is made to ensure that Panel Members are from different Research Organisations.
- We encourage applicants across the full range of protected characteristics, and following each recruitment round we look at panel composition by race/ethnicity and disability status and consider if we need to take additional action at the subsequent recruitment round (for instance, targeted advertising). We do not impose quotas.

Process

- The ESRC Peer Review College should be the first source of peer reviewers consulted by ESRC staff. 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 effort are made to achieve an appropriately balanced membership in terms of gender, age, ethnic origin etc.
- 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.
- 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 participate in an induction and training session 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 are 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 is read out at the beginning of each meeting which sets the tone for discussions and requires that panel members pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions.
- For each proposal we appoint two academic panel introducers who formally assess and score the proposal, and three readers (two academics and one user member) who are asked to participate in discussions in order to ensure that a diverse range of views are represented.

| 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) |
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| <p>Disability (both mental and physical)</p> | <p>Potential negative</p> | <p>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 Research and Innovation Funding Service (RIFS) project.</p> <p>Applicants should seek support from their own institution's research support office.</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>Ensure that venues offer an accessible and inclusive environment for participants.</p> <p>The call will close on 25th October 2022 to give applicants as much time as possible to submit a proposal (12 weeks). This is the latest possible date proposals can be received and processed for consideration at the March GAs.</p> |
| | | <p>Panel meeting attendees with physical disabilities may have difficulties if meeting venues 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>Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility for wheelchair users and people with impaired mobility; • Induction loops for the hearing impaired; • Adequate lighting, alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers for the visually impaired; • Dietary restrictions for those with coeliac, diabetes etc. • Provision of documents in sans-serif, dyslexia-friendly fonts; and dyslexia-friendly formats; |

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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding colours, lighting etc that may trigger migraines, epilepsy; • Ensuring that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda; • Ensuring sufficiently bright and spacious rooms; • Ensure that venues are easily accessible to main transport links. • Consider paying T&S for carers or support workers to attend alongside the participant (supplementing, not replacing, their employer’s contractual obligations). • Where there are particular constraints consider opportunities for participants to engage in a different way (via video-link, tele-conference for instance). |
| Gender reassignment | 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 and 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 sick 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> |

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| Marriage or civil partnership | Impact unlikely | | |
| Pregnancy and maternity | Potential negative | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. | <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.</p> <p>However, childcare costs associated with normal working patterns may not be sought.</p> <p>Consider whether the venue for the GAP meeting is able to provide facilities for breastfeeding/expressing mothers if necessary.</p> <p>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</p> |

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| | | | child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel to care for school age children). |
| Race (including ethnicity) | 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) |

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| Religion or belief | 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"> • 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 get home to break their fast, awareness of the sensitivities around offering Muslims meals during periods of fasting); • Accommodating dietary restrictions (ensuring that there is sufficient choice to allow all participants to eat – recognising that some groups cannot eat pork or beef or shellfish, that others avoid caffeine, ensuring that vegetarian food is available if Kosher or Halal food is not provided) etc.; |
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not scheduling meetings such that they would require travel late on Friday evenings (Jewish Sabbath) or on Fridays (Friday prayer, Islam) • Allowing prayer breaks if requested |
| Sexual orientation | Potential negative | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. |

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| <p>Sex (gender)</p> | <p>Potential negative</p> | <p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Use of language can present a barrier to participation and it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged.</p> | <p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Ensure use of gender neutral language in call documentation, panel guidance, etc.</p> <p>Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation (aim for no higher than 60:40 split)</p> |
| <p>Age</p> | | <p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Early career researchers* may be disadvantaged as they don't have the same track 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 is always the case. This is why this point has been included under 'age').</p> | <p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Track record is not 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 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> |

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| <p>Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act</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 and duty of care to their employees. 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&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&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 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> |
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| <p>Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act (continued)</p> | <p>Potentially negative</p> | <p>Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities</p> | <p>Ensure that the meeting location is suitable to allow easy return home</p> <p>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)</p> |
| <p>Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act (continued)</p> | <p>Potentially negative</p> | <p>Applicants could potentially be disadvantaged as the call will open during August 2022. This is a time in the calendar year when researchers traditionally take extended periods of leave. Those with children may have to take additional leave to cover school holidays.</p> | <p>The call will close on 25th October 2022 to give applicants as much time as possible to submit a proposal (12 weeks). This is the latest possible date proposals can be received and processed for consideration at the March GAs.</p> |

Evaluation:

| Question | Explanation / justification | |
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| 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 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 | ✓ | 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 proceed with caution with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision. | | |

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| Will this EIA be published* *EIAs should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events. | Yes |
| Date completed: | 07/07/22 |

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| Will this EIA be published* *EIAs should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events. | Yes |
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| End date of activity: (if applicable) | 25/10/22 |
| Review date (if applicable): | n/a – one-off funding opportunity |