Local Policy Innovation Partnerships Equality Impact Assessment

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 Local Policy Innovation Partnerships 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 minimise 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**	Local Policy Innovation Partnerships – Programme Local Policy Innovation Partnerships (Phase 1)

Question	Response
	Local Policy Innovation Partnerships (Phase 2) Strategic Coordination Hub (Single Phase)
2. **Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event**	Overview: The programme will fund a network of Local Policy Innovation Partnerships (LPIPs) to address social, community, economic and environmental priorities. LPIPs will connect local policy and research partners, providing research, evidence, data and expertise to take advantage of opportunities and find place-based solutions to challenges that matter to local people and communities. Partnerships will be equitable and sustainable with co-creation and co-delivery at their heart. Programme Objectives In support of UKRI's strategic priority to strengthen clusters and partnerships as part of its world-class places objective, LPIPs will deliver the following programme objectives: **Connecting and catalysing:** Strengthening partnerships and collaborations between researchers, policymakers and other relevant local stakeholders, attracting resource and capability for research and innovation, knowledge exchange and skills to address local public challenges. **Local insight and understanding:** Identifying and understanding the opportunities and challenges in different places and their relationship to the national context. **Solutions focused:** Working with stakeholders to implement evidence-informed, actionable solutions that reflect local opportunities and challenges and supporting local leaders to test and trial innovative interventions to drive inclusive and sustainable growth.
3. **What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?** *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)*	An extensive consultation exercise was undertaken capturing academic and user communities. We captured the third sector, private sector, local and national policy and the academic community through workshops, research (including relevant ESRC investments) and 1:1 engagement – 85 organisations and 145 individuals.

Question	Response
	The summary of our external research report, Prosperous Places can be found here. The work was also supported by a cross UKRI advisory group consisting of ESRC, AHRC, Innovate UK and Research England and the AHRC external Places Advisory Group (academic, public policy and cultural organisations) Our engagement extended substantially beyond ESRCs traditional pool of stakeholders with a particular focus on locally based policy makers.
4. **Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?**	• Consultees • Applicants to the LPIP Programme. • Attendees at the online webinar, hosted by ESRC. • Peer reviewers • Commissioning Panel Members • UKRI staff attending the Panel meeting(s). • Existing UKRI investments • User communities/policy stakeholders
5. **What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?**	• Proposals will be assessed by peer review and shortlisted applicants will be invited to attend an interview. • Progress will be monitored through regular reporting and meetings with funders • There will be an interim review during the lifecourse of the programme • Researchfish for capturing information on achievements • Evaluation and key performance indicators agreed as part of the commissioning process

GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

Eligibility and criteria
- LPIPs stage 1 call is open to organisations eligible to receive UKRI funding. Other types of organisations can be involved in collaborative bids led by eligible organisations.
- Strategic Coordination Hub call is open to organisations eligible to receive UKRI funding. Other types of organisations can be involved in collaborative bids led by eligible organisations

- LPIPs stage 2 call is open to organisations eligible to receive UKRI funding that were successful at stage 1. Other types of organisations can be involved in collaborative bids led by eligible organisations

Timeline
- The calls have been designed taking into account academic holidays and religious holidays ensuring that they are open for an acceptable number of weeks around the seasonal breaks.
- The LPIPs call has been designed in two phases to support research teams to engage effectively with a diverse range of stakeholders including communities traditionally excluded from participation in research and innovation activity.

Communication (across all three calls)
- Ensuring we utilise the communications function within UKRI effectively to reach potential applicants though the funding burst and social medial channels.
- Utilising our own stakeholder engagement channels to reach beyond UKRI and ESRC's core audience.
- Using multiple forms of communication to capture wider audiences including collaborating with high interest organisations to reach a more diverse audience.
- 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.

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.' Research Organisations are therefore required to make reasonable adjustments as required to support their staff.

Panel recruitment:
A single panel will review each stage of the LPIP competition (LPIP stage 1, LPIP stage 2, Strategic Coordination Hub). We may include additional panel members for the Strategic Coordination Hub assessment if additional expertise on running national capability functions is not captured in the primary panel.
- 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
Pre-Call LPIP Phase 1 and Strategic Coordination Hub
- Precalls for LPIP Phase 1 and Strategic Coordination Hub to allow applicant teams to begin conversations with stakeholders in advance of full call information becoming available.

LPIP Phase 1
- Applications are for up to £50,000 (80%FEC) and will be go straight to panel members for review without a separate peer review stage.
- 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.

LPIP Phase 2
- Applications will be peer reviewed prior to panel assessment.
- 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 and diverse membership.

- Where user reviewers are required ESRC's LPIP team will consult the stakeholder engagement framework for the programme and ESRC colleagues to ensure appropriate user reviewers are identified.
- 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.

Strategic Coordination Hub
- Applications will be peer reviewed prior to panel assessment.
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- The membership of the Peer Review College aims to reflect the community it represents and effort are made to achieve an appropriately balanced and diverse membership.
- Where user reviewers are required and cannot be generated from the peer review college ESRC's LPIP team will consult the stakeholder engagement framework for the programme and ESRC colleagues to ensure appropriate use reviewers are identified.
- 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.
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requires that panel members pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions.

<u>Panel meeting</u>

- Due to the need to ensure a balanced user and academic panel and the challenges user panel members in particular can often experience in dedicating the time to travel and attend panel meetings over multiple days we will run a virtual two-day panel. This supports panel members with personal and work commitments to participate reducing the impact on the 'time out' on those commitments. We will follow the developing guidance to virtual panel meetings and take the mitigating actions below to support participation by all panel members.

UKRI reserves the right to modify the assessment process as needed, any adjustments will be considered in the context of the equality impact assessment which will be updated if required.

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	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Je-S does not currently comply with disability accessibility schemes. This will be picked up by The Funding Service. Applicants should seek support from their own institution's research support office. Panel meeting will be virtual. Prolonged screen time can cause	Solicit information from panel meeting participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have in order to fully participate. Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include: • Suitable measures in place for the hearing impaired; • alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers for the visually impaired; • Provision of documents in sans-serif, dyslexia-friendly fonts; and

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)
		problems for persons with particular conditions or working preferences. Panel meeting attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during panel assessments	dyslexia-friendly formats; • Avoiding colours, lighting etc that may trigger migraines, epilepsy; • Ensuring that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda;
Gender reassignment	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Trans people may be absent from work as a consequence of transition and UKRI records may show the wrong gender.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. 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 health related absence. Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted.

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)
Marriage or civil partnership	None		
Pregnancy and maternity	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. People may be absent from work due to parental leave. Childcare and other factors may need to be considered, for applicants and panellists to be able to attend the online panel.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions. We should ensure the use of gender neutral language – parental leave, irrespective of sexual orientation. 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. Ensure sufficient breaks during the virtual panel meeting to support breastfeeding/expressing people if necessary.

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)
			Reimbursement of additional childcare costs 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 to care for school age children)
Race	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.
Religion or belief	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: Scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals; (if impossible to avoid then consider mitigations – ie. during Ramadan ensuring that

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)
			meetings finish early so that participants are able to get home to break their fast, awareness of the sensitivities around approaches to meals during periods of fasting); • 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.
Sex (gender)	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.	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)

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)
		Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities	Ensure that the meeting location is suitable to allow easy return home 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)
Age	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Early career researchers* may be disadvantaged as they don't have the same track record to draw on as an experienced researcher. (*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').	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. 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 or team's capability to deliver their proposed research. Use of a variety of different communication strategies including social media to ensure that our messages reach the widest possible target audience.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	Yes, but steps described above have been taken to mitigate the likelihood of this in the areas covered.	
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	*	Yes, but steps described above have been taken to mitigate the likelihood of this in the areas covered.
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.		