



Biotechnology and
Biological Sciences
Research Council

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

Research and innovation
by everyone, for everyone



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Foreword

Excellence in research and innovation requires a culture that values and supports different people, ideas and perspectives. Embracing the widest possible range of exceptional talent and skills will strengthen research and innovation and the ability to improve lives, helping to create a knowledge economy that benefits everyone and supports growth and prosperity.

In 2022, UKRI ran a consultation on our draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. We received a broad range of feedback and views. We have used this feedback, together with our long-term work across UKRI and extensive engagement across the research and innovation sector, to help us refine the strategy and develop a suite of action plans.

It is clear that a variety of approaches and interventions will be needed to create a more inclusive research and innovation system, where people, creativity, and ideas can flourish. The UKRI EDI strategy serves as a unifying framework, to which our suite of action plans are directly linked.

These action plans enable us to test, pilot and evaluate approaches in different contexts – some will be system-wide, while others will be more

focussed. The plans are informed by data, insight and engagement with our communities. The action plans are living documents that will continue to evolve as we learn from ourselves and others. We will use our People, Culture and Talent portfolio approach to connect work across these action plans and actively share learning as we make progress.

Through this approach, we are giving greater visibility of the work happening across UKRI to foster a research and innovation system 'by everyone, for everyone'. We will continue to share our experiences, successes, and challenges as we develop and evolve our plans.

The publication of our EDI strategy and BBSRC's action plan are significant milestones, demonstrating our commitment to strengthening the UK's research and innovation system so that everyone feels able to contribute and benefit. As BBSRC's current Executive Chair, and UKRI Executive Champion for People, Culture and Talent, I am committed to ensuring we deliver against our ambitions.

Professor Melanie J Welham,
BBSRC Executive Chair

Introduction

This publication presents the BBSRC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan 2022–2025. BBSRC’s vision for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is:

“As part of UKRI, BBSRC will be pioneering in its approach to enhancing the equality, diversity and inclusion of talented individuals within the bioscience research and innovation community, through all its strategies, programmes and processes.”

EDI is embedded within the BBSRC Strategic Delivery Plan, including within our ambitions to support World-Class People and Careers and a World-Class Organisation.

Our EDI Action Plan links directly to the UKRI EDI Strategy and its four strategic objectives:

1. Foster a world-class research and innovation system, ‘by everyone, for everyone’.
2. Include and support a diversity of people and ideas through our funding and partnerships.
3. Create a more inclusive and fair organisational culture, where everyone can contribute and participate, and feels valued and respected.
4. Advance and grow knowledge and capability to support a thriving research and innovation system by being a creative, evidence-based and evidence-informed organisation.

How we’ve developed our Action Plan

The BBSRC EDI Action Plan has been developed in consultation with the BBSRC EDI Expert Advisory Group, BBSRC Council and others. It builds on an evidence base which is helping us to understand where EDI challenges lie within the bioscience research and innovation sector and how the

bioscience community differs from wider populations, including [UKRI](#) and others. Our evidence-based approach enables us to identify those activities with the highest priority and impact.

The BBSRC EDI Action Plan will be reviewed and updated regularly (at least annually).

“EDI is embedded within the BBSRC Strategic Delivery Plan.”

Examples of recent progress

We are working as part of UKRI to deliver the UKRI Strategy and Action Plan for EDI,

working collaboratively to build on our collective knowledge and practice in this area resulting in greater efficiency. In parallel, we are working towards activities which enhance EDI in the biosciences in support of a diverse and productive research and innovation system. In 2022 this has included:

- Establishing the EDI Expert Advisory Group (EAG), which reports to BBSRC's People and Talent Strategy Advisory Panel. The EAG met four times during 2022, with discussion topics including:
 - BBSRC EDI Action Plan development, prioritisation of activities and progress review
 - Review of BBSRC EDI Data
 - Consideration of how to improve ethnic diversity in the bioscience research and innovation community
 - Consideration of how to improve under-representation of disabled researchers in the bioscience research and innovation community
 - Role of targets and benchmarks in improving EDI in the biosciences
- BBSRC's role in facilitating the sharing of best practice
- Consulting BBSRC colleagues about their day-to-day activities and how these support our vision for EDI, for example by raising awareness, building an evidence base and increasing the use of Equality Impact Assessments.
- Promoting opportunities for participation in BBSRC panels, committees and other parts of the peer review system through engagement with our strategically-funded Institutes and Strategic Partner Universities, and through wider marketing of opportunities to target under-represented groups.
- Widening eligibility to programmes by removing barriers to support for applicants from diverse backgrounds, resulting in increased diversity of thought and innovation in the biosciences; recent examples include:
 - Removal of time restriction for eligibility to the New Investigator scheme
 - Removal of requirement for a Doctoral qualification for eligibility to Discovery Fellowships

- Widening eligibility for technical staff on International Partnering Award and ALERT calls
- Inclusion of EDI statements in applications for International Partnering Awards
- Co-funding an ESRC-led [EDI caucus](#) as a platform for generating rapid research-based evidence to underpin future actions and activities.
- Consideration of inclusivity in future approaches to hybrid and remote working for panels and committees.
- Consideration of the role of Early Career Researchers and technicians in BBSRC processes and programmes, for example by widening participation to peer review and strategy development. In general, these groups are more diverse and have the potential to bring a wider range of ideas and perspectives into processes.
- Inclusion of EDI, including sharing of good practice, as significant discussion topics in the Training Partners Forum and Fellows Conference.

Links to other work

Our EDI activities also complement other work which aims to improve research culture more broadly in the biosciences. For example, we are:

- Including Research Culture Statements as part of the BBSRC Institute Assessment Exercise for the first time. We are also establishing a Research Culture forum with our sponsored Institutes to promote networking and sharing of good practice, increasing efficiency and effectiveness to processes.
- Establishing a Technicians Advisory Group, which will feed into our developing strategy in this area.
- Undertaking activities identified in the Technicians Commitment and Researcher Development Concordat Implementation Plan.
- Creating more opportunities to support research and innovation teams through grants and fellowships with a strong focus on supporting diverse teams and ideas.

“Our EDI activities also complement other work which aims to improve research culture more broadly in the biosciences.”

1.

Foster a world-class research and innovation system, 'by everyone, for everyone'

This objective underpins all activities within the workplan and aims to stimulate innovative approaches to making positive change.

BBSRC will lead by example to advance inclusion and create the conditions and incentives for a more inclusive research and innovation system.

We will use targets, benchmarks and effective community engagement to stimulate tangible, positive change in our processes and activities.

We anticipate that our open and honest approach will facilitate progress within both our processes and our communities.

How we will do this	Examples of activities	Anticipated outcomes
Developing realistic but ambitious diversity targets for specific under-represented groups.	We will set time limited targets where the need to accelerate change is identified and supported by robust data.	<p>Increased diversity of our portfolio of funded researchers, resulting in a more productive system.</p> <p>Demonstration of BBSRC's support for challenging and changing the status quo.</p> <p>Demonstration of the value of setting targets in driving positive change.</p>
Sharing information about specific processes and communities.	<p>We will include more detailed EDI data, for example peer review participation statistics, in annual letters to Research Organisations alongside the success rates already provided.</p> <p>We will use EDI data as the basis for ongoing dialogues with strategic partner universities and institutes to explore areas for further work and/or collaboration.</p> <p>We will promote the value of the peer review process, communicate any policy changes and clarify guidance (for example in relation to reasonable adjustments for disabled staff) with Research Organisations, to encourage participation.</p>	<p>Improved understanding of how individuals can be supported, encouraged and recognised when involved in our processes.</p> <p>Increased participation in BBSRC activities by people who have not done so in the past.</p>
Regularly publishing EDI community statistics relating to specific BBSRC programmes and activities, alongside research, interventions and case studies.	<p>We will identify what information is required, for whom, and which avenues for communication will have the most impact, following legal obligations around data collection and handling.</p> <p>We will publish EDI statistics relating to specific BBSRC programmes and activities, along with appropriate benchmarks, proposed interventions and case studies which showcase role models from minority groups. Priority will be given to those programmes where existing data point to a known lack of diversity.</p>	<p>Improved communication of our current situation will increase transparency of our processes and policies, actively enable engagement of, challenge from, and increased accountability to, the biosciences community.</p> <p>Individuals will feel supported and empowered to drive change in their discipline.</p>

2.

Include and support a diversity of people and ideas through our funding and partnerships

BBSRC will embed inclusion into all that we do, using our investments to advance equality and diversity.

We will implement change by revising criteria, language and opportunities in our programmes; improve our support for inclusive peer review; and invest in research to ensure that we address EDI challenges at the stage where most impact can be gained.

By taking a holistic approach to improving EDI across our portfolio of activities and programmes, we will facilitate changes across our processes, policies and spheres of influence.

How we will do this	Examples of activities	Anticipated outcomes
<p>Using all available levers (including targeted activities) to make necessary step-changes in our processes.</p>	<p>We will pilot the use of focused marketing and action around targeted recruitment to stimulate change in the memberships of our Committees, Panels and Boards, within the context of wider UKRI policy, building on the evidence of under-representation.</p> <p>We will develop good practice guidelines and internal training for colleagues involved in building committees and panels, in collaboration with the UKRI Leadership and Learning team.</p>	<p>BBSRC committees, panels and boards will have increased diversity and are more representative of the wider population.</p>
<p>Reviewing and refreshing our support for inclusive peer review.</p>	<p>We will continue to introduce EDI statements and wider eligibility for suitably experienced research and technical staff.</p> <p>We will develop guidance for panels involved in interviewing applicants (e.g., for studentships, fellowships and large grants).</p> <p>We will review the language used in funding calls, panel guidance and other published text to ensure diversity is incorporated at the design phase of the programme, and provide support to panel managers and chairs on the use of inclusive language during committee/panel meetings.</p> <p>We will continue to influence the development of the UKRI Funding Service to be as inclusive as possible and ensure appropriate functionalities are included within the system.</p> <p>We will fund or co-fund research programmes to build research-based evidence on which to underpin future actions and activities.</p> <p>We will build on the previous investments we made to our Training Partners and support the roll-out of good practice in widening participation and accessibility strategies, including socio-economic diversity and under-representation.</p> <p>We will collaborate with our strategic partner universities, institutes and others (e.g. learned societies) to further understand EDI issues within specific areas of our remit, such as career stage or specific bioscience area where there are examples of under-representation.</p>	<p>Increased diversity of reviewers, Pool of Experts, Committee and Panel members, increasing diversity of thought whilst retaining necessary scientific expertise.</p> <p>Improved community perception of the value of these roles, thereby encouraging participation from a wider group.</p>
<p>Investing in research projects to understand EDI challenges, the underlying causes of under-representation and identify opportunities for action.</p>	<p>We will fund or co-fund research programmes to build research-based evidence on which to underpin future actions and activities.</p> <p>We will build on the previous investments we made to our Training Partners and support the roll-out of good practice in widening participation and accessibility strategies, including socio-economic diversity and under-representation.</p> <p>We will collaborate with our strategic partner universities, institutes and others (e.g. learned societies) to further understand EDI issues within specific areas of our remit, such as career stage or specific bioscience area where there are examples of under-representation.</p>	<p>Increased understanding and improved evidence and intelligence to underpin future interventions.</p>

How we will do this	Examples of activities	Anticipated outcomes
<p>Removing barriers to participation in our programmes and processes.</p>	<p>Building on our evidence base of under-representation in specific areas, we will address under-representation of (i) black researchers and (ii) disabled researchers in BBSRC programmes, peer review and policy groups. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding non-disclosure • understanding barriers to participation • sharing best practice, particularly in relation to recruitment practices • providing clear communication of reasonable adjustments available • ensuring investments do not inadvertently prevent access or usage by individuals from minority groups • developing targets for change <p>We will create opportunities for technical specialist staff to engage with BBSRC activities and decision-making processes, including through clarifying eligibility criteria, broadening our communication channels, establishing networks and widening the eligibility of participation in committees and panels.</p> <p>We will investigate the potential to include more Early Career Researchers in the peer review process as reviewers, observers on panels, or in other capacities.</p> <p>We will evolve our existing schemes and integrate ‘diversity by design’ into future funding programmes to ensure they are as inclusive as possible and do not inadvertently restrict access to groups or individual researchers, irrespective of their career path.</p> <p>We will continue to explore and test alternative approaches to peer review, including the use of online systems to support inclusion in meetings, rather than relying solely on in-person participation.</p>	<p>Increased diversity of reviewers, Pool of Experts, Committee and Panel members, increasing diversity of thought whilst retaining necessary scientific expertise.</p> <p>Improved community perception of the value of these roles, thereby encouraging participation from a wider group.</p>
<p>Refining how we work.</p>	<p>We will embed the consideration of EDI issues into all our investment programmes and strategy development, as part of our ambition to be a World Class Organisation.</p> <p>We will continue to test, refine and improve tools such as Equality Impact Assessments and Resumé for Researchers in funding programmes and other aspects of our work, as part of our collective working across UKRI and contributions to the Workforce EDI Action Plan.</p>	<p>EDI will be demonstrably important in all aspects of our business, towards our ambition of a research and innovation system “by everyone, for everyone”.</p> <p>When designing calls and other activities, BBSRC employees will be supported in their consideration of the barriers associated with the activity and the reasonable adjustments that can be made to mitigate them, thereby widening participation and leading to enhanced productivity and innovation.</p>

How we will do this	Examples of activities	Anticipated outcomes
Investing in early career programmes and pilots to support under-represented and disadvantaged groups.	Through our Training Partnerships, we will use undergraduate research exchange programmes and summer schools to provide research insight and experience to individuals from under-represented groups, and encourage their pursuit of doctoral training.	Increased diversity of participants in our programmes by providing opportunities for the most under-represented and disadvantaged.

3.

Create a more inclusive and fair organisational culture, where everyone can contribute and participate, and feels valued and respected

BBSRC will work with its stakeholders and communities, as well as our own staff, to embed improvements to EDI.

We will become a more diverse and inclusive organisation through effective leadership and management.

We will stimulate discussion on the causes and consequences of EDI in our community and facilitate sharing good practice across the bioscience research and innovation sector.

How we will do this	Examples of activities	Anticipated outcomes
Sharing and promoting good practice by facilitating networking and collaboration.	<p>We will develop a strategy for collating and sharing issues and good practice in bioindustry, building on initial interviews conducted.</p> <p>We will facilitate sharing of good practice with BBSRC's Training Partners and Fellows.</p> <p>We will commission analyses of health and wellbeing of students, fellows and others; publish examples of good practice; and promote these across our community.</p> <p>We will establish a forum of Institute research culture leads to provide opportunities for cross-institute learning and collaboration.</p>	Increased sharing of best practice and collaborative working across BBSRC investments, resulting in a more efficient system.
Developing and supporting BBSRC colleagues in embedding EDI within their normal activities.	We will develop guidance and tools for colleagues, so they are confident in embedding EDI within all aspects of BBSRC activity, sharing knowledge and working with colleagues across UKRI as part of a collective contribution to the UKRI Workforce EDI Action Plan.	BBSRC colleagues will feel confident in discussing EDI issues and will be able to embed BBSRC policies within their own work.
Consulting BBSRC colleagues on the development of the EDI workplan.	We will regularly liaise with employees across BBSRC to support them in improving the EDI aspects of their business, including for example identifying potential topics for research studies; supporting changes to language in calls; and identifying routes for effective communication with different stakeholder groups.	An understanding of EDI challenges and concerns within specific aspects of BBSRC business, further embedding EDI into all that we do.
Stimulating discussion with our community.	<p>We will use online and in-person routes to stimulate discussion, ideas and challenge from our community on new ways of working that are as inclusive as possible whilst delivering core business functions.</p> <p>We will catalyse discussion and collaborations with key bioscience sector bodies and EDI sector experts.</p>	<p>Community-driven change and challenge.</p> <p>Collaborative working to improve EDI across the whole biosciences sector, including beyond BBSRC's direct influence, resulting in collective efficiency and increased productivity and innovation.</p>

4.

Advance and grow knowledge and capability to support a thriving research and innovation system by being a creative, evidence-based and evidence-informed organisation

BBSRC will contribute to advances in how EDI data are collected, used and analysed, and how change is measured and evaluated.

We will use our increasing understanding of our community to make improvements to data definitions, data management, analysis and interpretation.

We will use EDI data to embed evidence-based policy making into our work and to measure the effectiveness of our interventions.

How we will do this	Examples of activities	Anticipated outcomes
<p>Routinely gathering and analysing EDI data across our funding programmes and processes.</p>	<p>As part of UKRI, we will continue to improve and standardise data collection and analysis methods across our programmes and processes, enabling large datasets to be produced and analysed regularly in a time-efficient manner.</p> <p>We will create interactive dashboards as a way to routinely communicate information about our community with groups as required.</p>	<p>A thorough understanding of the demographics and diversity of our community, including where in the funding system disadvantage may occur and to whom, enabling effective targeting of further research and interventions.</p> <p>An understanding of the bioscience community in comparison to the wider research and innovation population.</p> <p>Monitoring progress and the impact of interventions.</p>
<p>Encouraging institutional-level data gathering and analysis. Comparing these data with BBSRC data.</p>	<p>We will facilitate two-way data sharing to enable comparison of institutional demographics versus BBSRC applicants.</p>	<p>An institutional understanding of our community. Improved collaborative working on EDI with Research Organisations.</p>

Acknowledgements

Developing our first EDI strategy has drawn on expertise across UKRI and from interactions with many people, organisations and partners across the research and innovation sector.

We appreciate and value the insight, expertise and commitment from many people, which has shaped the development of our strategy.

Accessibility

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