



**EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment**

Question	Response
<b>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</b>	Develop a UK digital twinning research community with a NetworkPlus
<b>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</b>	This funding opportunity intends to support 1 NetworkPlus grant to establish a diverse research community interested in digital twinning. The NetworkPlus is expected to engage with a variety of stakeholders, determine what the UK needs to develop a national capability in digital twinning, undertake thought leadership and run open opportunities for small projects
<b>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</b>	The NetworkPlus opportunity was developed following consultation with government, academia, industry and cross-UKRI stakeholders throughout the development of this programme, including BEIS and advisors who sit on related Advisory Boards.
<b>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals eligible to apply for EPSRC funding are scientific and others who may be employed using funding awarded as a result of this call.</li> <li>• Research office/institutions and staff</li> <li>• Research councils and staff</li> <li>• External expert panel members</li> <li>• Early and mid-career academic researchers are most likely to be involved as a co-investigator</li> <li>• There will be significant interaction with government, industry, academia and the wider innovation landscape.</li> </ul>
<b>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</b>	<p>The funding opportunity and all associated documents will be available on UKRI website and available to all interested parties to support their application.</p> <p>Contact details will be provided to support queries related to the call.</p> <p>A collaboration tool 'MeetingMojo' will be provided for interested parties to engage and form collaborations and partnerships.</p> <p>The assessment process has been designed to ensure unconscious bias is minimised and managed.</p>

	<p>All panel members will receive an unconscious bias briefing.</p> <p>The successful NetworkPlus grant holder will establish an Independent Advisory Board with an EPSRC Project Officer on the Board.</p> <p>The successful NetworkPlus grant will be required to submit annual progress report to EPSRC detailing their progress against agreed non-financial performance metrics. The activity of the NetworkPlus will be monitored by the Digital Security and Resilience Theme in EPSRC.</p> <p>Research outcomes will be collected through Researchfish and additional data through an annual data return.</p> <p>The impact of this funding opportunity will be monitored and reviewed at the conclusion of the grant (5 years).</p>
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As a funder of research, EPSRC remains committed to attracting the best potential researchers from a diverse population into research careers. For policy changes, funding activities and events EPSRC will aim to:

- Select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation. This includes for applicants, reviewers, panel members and staff. Included in the interview invitation letter is a request for any access issues to be notified.
- All participants in the process are asked to inform staff if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation.
- Offer support for people with caring responsibilities, further details are available [here](#).
- Clearly communicate the timeline and key milestones for funding activities, advertise these widely to reach the largest possible audience.
- Support and encourage panel members to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. Staff will work closely with the Panel Chair(s) to agree approaches that are designed to minimize opportunities for bias and improve transparency of the decision making process. This includes managing environmental conditions, such as providing appropriate breaks.
- Support flexible working of stakeholders.
- Ensure diversity of peer review assessment and interview panels. Staff will adhere to a mixed panel policy and endeavor to achieve the minimum 30% for the underrepresented gender on the panel.
- Abide by the principles of peer review
- Provide EPSRC staff with tailored unconscious bias training for Peer Review processes and clear guidance for assessors.
- Handle personal sensitive information in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

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.
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			<b>adjustment to the policy)</b>
<b>Disability</b>	Potential negative	<p>Applicants should seek support from their own institution's research support office, where possible.</p> <p>There will be an expert panel and interview panel. Panel members and applicants with physical disabilities may experience difficulties if meeting venues cannot cater for their needs.</p> <p>Funding opportunity document and assessment materials may be difficult for visually impaired applicants or panel members to read. Also, applicants or panel members with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration,</p>	<p>Both panel meetings are likely to be held virtually.</p> <p>If the meetings are held in-person, to solicit information from panel participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have in order to fully participate. Reasonable adjustments will be made, where requested.</p> <p>Ensure the venue offers an accessible and inclusive environment for participants.</p> <p>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>• 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</li> </ul>

			<p>trigger migraines, epilepsy;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda</li> <li>• Ensuring sufficiently bright and spacious rooms</li> <li>• Ensure that venues are easily accessible to main transport links. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider 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> </li> <li>• Where there are particular constraints consider opportunities for participants to engage in a different way (via video-link, teleconference for instance)</li> </ul>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Potential negative	<p>Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage individuals who have undergone gender reassignment or whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth, if an applicant's possession of such protected characteristics is known to the panel.</p>	<p>Panel members and EPSRC colleagues will safeguard the integrity of the assessment process by watching for bias. Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation.</p> <p>Applicants are not asked to disclose whether they have undergone gender reassignment. Anonymity is not practical at interview, but standard EPSRC policies will be followed at all stages of the process.</p>

		Interview locations may not have gender neutral facilities available.	Where possible, EPSRC will select venues with gender neutral facilities but this cannot be guaranteed.
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	No known negative impact		Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation. Applicants are not asked to disclose their marital status. Standard EPSRC policies will be followed
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Potential negative	Panel members may not be able to participate in panels due to accessibility issues or maternity leave. Relatively short timescales for the call may affect ability to participate e.g. if on parental leave.	<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>The call is open for an extended time to facilitate planning and participation.</p> <p>Timetable of key dates will be made available to applicants and panellists in advance, as early as possible. All applicants invited to interview will be asked to inform EPSRC if they have specific requirements and reasonable adjustments will be made (e.g. additional time).</p> <p>The costs of additional childcare for grantholders, beyond</p>

		<p>Unconscious bias by panel members may disadvantage pregnant people, if this status is known to the panel.</p>	<p>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>Reimbursement of additional childcare costs if the panel 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>Applicants are not asked to disclose pregnancy. Anonymity is not practical at interview, but standard EPSRC policies will be followed at all stages of the process.</p>
<b>Race</b>	Potentially negative	<p>Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage specific racial or ethnic groups, where applicant ethnicity is known to the panel.</p>	<p>Anonymity is not practical at interview, but standard EPSRC policies will be followed at all stages of the process.</p> <p>Unconscious bias</p>

		<p>Individuals for whom English is their second language could be negatively impacted</p>	<p>briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation.</p> <p>EPSRC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>Ensure all information within issued documents are clear and provide opportunities to request clarifications or ask questions from EPSRC.</p>
<p><b>Religion or belief</b></p>	<p>Potentially negative</p>	<p>Key dates (call opening and closing dates and panel dates) coinciding with specific religious festivals/events could disadvantage specific religious groups</p>	<p>A full timeline is provided in the call document. EPSRC endeavours to select dates that a cognisant of major holidays (e.g. deadlines have been extended to avoid full proposal closure over Easter, Passover, Ramadan.)</p> <p>Allowing prayer breaks if requested and provision of prayer area if the meeting is held in person</p> <p>Applicants are not asked to disclose their religious beliefs. Anonymity is not practical at interview, but standard EPSRC policies will be followed at all stages of the process.</p>

			All panel members will be asked to highlight any personal circumstances that may affect their ability to participate and how this can be accommodated.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias by panel members could disadvantage individuals of specific sexual orientations, if this is known to the panel.	Applicants are not asked to disclose their sexual orientation.  Anonymity is not practical at interview, but standard EPSRC policies will be followed at all stages of the process.
<b>Sex (gender)</b>	Potentially negative	Gender bias may be perceived.  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.	Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation.  In line with EPSRC policies, the assessment panel will have balanced gender representation  Ensure use of gender neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc.  EPSRC can provide support to those with caring responsibilities to facilitate their attendance.
<b>Age</b>	Potentially negative	Researchers that appear younger may be disadvantaged at interview. It may be incorrectly assumed they do not have the	Anonymity is not practical at interview, but standard EPSRC policies will be followed at all stages of the process.

		<p>necessary experience and required track record.</p>	<p>Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation. EPSRC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>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 network.</p>
<p><b>Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)</b></p>	<p>None identified</p>		

**Evaluation:**

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	A number potential negative impacts have been identified and considered as part of the call design. Reasonable adjustments will be made and by adhering to the standard peer review principles the risks have been/will be mitigated as far as possible	
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		
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.	✓	Barriers have been identified but all actions to address negative impact have been highlighted above and all alternative options have been carefully considered. Possible risks and bias associated with this activity have been identified, particularly for the interviews, and activities adapted accordingly.  ED&I aspects will be considered throughout the activity and EPSRC will review this EIA accordingly. Reasonable adjustments will also be made wherever possible

<b>Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required</b> (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Date completed:</b>	<b>09/01/2023</b>
<b>Review date (if applicable):</b>	

**Change log**

Name	Date	Version	Change
Afia Masood	09/01/2023	1	