

## Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
<b>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</b>	<p>The transition of EPSRC's always open Opportunities from Je-S to The Funding Service (TFS). This EIA covers the following Opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>EPSRC Standard Research Grant</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>EPSRC New Investigator Award</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>EPSRC Overseas Travel Grant</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>EPSRC Network Grant</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>EPSRC Discipline-Hopping in ICT</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>EPSRC Working with Overseas Scientists</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>EPSRC Open Fellowship</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>EPSRC Synthetic Biology Postdoctoral Fellowship</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>EPSRC Postdoctoral Fellowship</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>Stephen Hawking Postdoctoral Fellowship</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>Strategic Equipment Grant</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>Mathematical Sciences Small Grants Scheme</u></a></li><li>▪ <a href="#"><u>EPSRC Programme Grant</u></a></li></ul>

<b>2. Council/department/project team</b>	EPSRC, Business Improvement Team.
<b>3. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</b>	<p>This EIA covers the transition of standard mode opportunities from Je-S to The Funding Service (TFS). This will be a change in application system, format, and certain policies in line with the Simpler and Better Funding Programme's (SBF) aims to harmonise across UKRI.</p> <p>This EIA will cover aspects of the transition to The Funding Service managed by EPSRC. These aspects include the timelines for the transition of the above listed always open Opportunities from Je-S to The Funding Service and how/when we communicate these timelines.</p>
<b>4. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</b> <i>Provide a brief summary of the consultation, methods and outcomes. Detailed Outcomes for each group can be detailed in under the protected characteristic table.</i>	<p>Consultation on aspects of the transition have been conducted with various groups. The SBF programme have managed external user testing, AbilityNet accessibility testing, and consultation with advisory groups covering stakeholder groups. EPSRC have consulted the Mathematical Sciences SAT, Council, stakeholders who attended the Autumn 2022 EPSRC Key Partners Event, and an external communications advisory group covering key stakeholder groups.</p>
<b>5. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ All applicants.</li> <li>○ University research support staff.</li> <li>○ EPSRC reviewers (college and non-college)</li> <li>○ EPSRC panel members (college and non-college)</li> </ul> <p>All these groups will be affected from 2023 onwards.</p>
<b>6. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Feedback gathered during user testing, pilots and roll-out over 2023.</li> <li>● The SBF programme's monitoring and evaluation of the programme's success against a defined baseline. This includes the impact on the volume of applicant enquiries, applications, and the time taken to process them.</li> <li>● The monitoring of application rates across all demographic groups.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The monitoring of reviewer response rates and engagement of Peer Review College members with The Funding Service.</li> <li>• An inbox for EPSRC applicants, research support staff, reviewers, and panel members to ask questions related to timelines for transition between Je-S and The Funding Service: <a href="mailto:TFSchangeEPSRC@epsrc.ukri.org">TFSchangeEPSRC@epsrc.ukri.org</a></li> <li>• Panel feedback questionnaire</li> <li>• Dialogue with senior leaders and research support staff through our strategic partner university relationships</li> <li>• Monitoring of award rates across all demographic groups.</li> </ul>
--	--

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain the impact including details of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
<b>Disability</b>	Potentially negative and potentially positive impacts.	<p>The number of changes by The Funding Service is likely to be more challenging for neurodiverse applicants, research support staff, reviewers, and panel members. The funding system is moving from Je-S to The Funding Service, and EPSRC will also move to round-based Opportunities. Application questions and assessment criteria will also change but will be comparable to our existing core criteria.</p> <p>EPSRC's external communications about The Funding Service will be published on the website, which could have an impact on the information's accessibility.</p>	<p>We will give eight weeks' notice, excluding major religious festivals, public holidays, and holiday periods, before Opportunities close in Je-S and reopen in The Funding Service. At this point, we will provide timelines for change and information about what to expect after the transition to The Funding Service. This will enable individuals to access information well in advance of any actual changes and prepare. If we cannot give this notice, this will be a red line for the transition.</p> <p>All communications will be published in line with <a href="#">UKRI's accessibility standards</a></p>

		<p>The Funding Service is being developed in an agile way, which means that new functionality and features for different funding types will be introduced and refined after we start using the new system. When EPSRC transition to The Funding Service, there are therefore likely to be some workarounds in place for aspects of the application.</p> <p>A potentially positive impact for The Funding Service transition is that the system's accessibility has been reviewed by AbilityNet to enable the system to become fully accessible.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p>so that as many people as possible can use and understand the website.</p> <p>All workarounds will be clearly signposted and explained on the Funding Finder under 'How to Apply' for each individual opportunity. All will be designed in line with <a href="#">UKRI's accessibility standards</a>. Guidance will also be embedded into The Funding Service.</p>
<b>Gender reassignment (Trans identity)</b>	No known negative impact	Questions related to protected characteristics in The Funding Service will be in line with ONS guidance. <sup>2</sup>	
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	No known negative impacts	At no point in the application process will applicants declare their marital or civil partnership status. Reviewers and panel members would only be required to declare their marital or civil partnership status if it creates a conflict of interest in the assessment process, and in line with EPSRC's Conflict of Interest policy. <sup>3</sup>	
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Potentially negative	There is the potential that those on leave for pregnancy or maternity related reasons during the transition will miss	We will give eight weeks' notice, excluding major religious festivals, bank holidays and holiday periods, before

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/accessibility-statement/ukri-funding-service-accessibility-statement/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/councils/epsrc/guidance-for-reviewers/peer-reviews/epsrc-conflicts-of-interest-policy/>

		<p>vital communications about the move to The Funding Service as a result.</p> <p>If grant processing timelines over the transition period are delayed due to high demand on Je-S before closing to applications for the majority of always Open Opportunities on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023, this could disproportionately impact applicants who are pregnant or on maternity leave. Individuals may receive invitations to PI response during their maternity leave period on Je-S at a time sensitive point during the transition to The Funding Service. Individuals may also receive a funding decision during their maternity leave period and therefore may have difficulties meeting deadlines.</p> <p>Applicants who work part time due to maternity related reasons, may be disadvantaged compared to full time applicants as they will have fewer working hours to prepare for the transition.</p>	<p>Opportunities close in Je-S and reopen in The Funding Service. At this point, we will provide timelines for change and information about what to expect after the transition to The Funding Service. This will enable individuals to access information well in advance of any actual changes and prepare. If we cannot give this notice, this should be a red line for the transition.</p> <p>Delays in grant processing timelines are always a risk, and there are mitigations in place that can be applied to accommodate leave related to pregnancy or maternity. PI response deadlines can be extended for EDI reasons to ensure all applicants have adequate time to respond. Most proposals will only be transitioned to the new system after a decision has been made, however, there may be the possibility of transferring a grant to the new system at a different stage in the assessment process (in very exceptional circumstances) to allow for extended leave.</p> <p>If individuals receive a funding decision during their maternity leave period and are on leave for the start date of the grant, they can, as per UKRI's Grant Terms and Conditions RGC 6.1 extend the grant period by up to 12 months</p>
--	--	---	--

			without additional funding subject to our prior written approval. <sup>4</sup>
<b>Race</b>	No known negative impacts	Questions related to protected characteristics in The Funding Service will be in line with ONS guidance.	
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Potentially negative	If key transition dates (e.g. opening and closing rounds in The Funding Service or closing Opportunities in Je-S) coincide with major religious festivals, then this could disadvantage applicants.	We will give eight weeks' notice, excluding major religious festivals, bank holidays and holiday periods, before Opportunities close in Je-S and reopen in The Funding Service. At this point, we will provide timelines for change and information about what to expect after the transition to The Funding Service. This will enable individuals to access information well in advance of any actual changes and prepare. If we cannot give this notice, this will be a red line for the transition.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	No known negative impacts.	Questions related to protected characteristics in The Funding Service will be in line with ONS guidance.	
<b>Sex (gender)</b>	Potentially negative	The Royal Society of Chemistry report on barriers to retention for women in Chemistry states that a major barrier is that caring and family responsibilities are seen as being 'the primary responsibility of women'. <sup>5</sup> If women are the primary carers, then there is the potential that	We will give eight weeks' notice, excluding major religious festivals, bank holidays and holiday periods, before Opportunities close in Je-S and reopen in The Funding Service. At this point, we will provide timelines for change and information about what to expect after

<sup>4</sup> Full guidance can be found here: <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UKRI-021122-fECGrantTermsAndConditionsGuidance.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> [Breaking the barriers women's retention RSC.pdf](#)

		they may be more likely to work part-time and therefore have less time to prepare for the transition to The Funding Service.	the transition to The Funding Service. This will enable individuals to access information well in advance of any actual changes and prepare. If we cannot give this notice, this will be a red line for the transition.
<b>Age</b>	No known negative impact.	Questions related to protected characteristics in The Funding Service will be in line with ONS guidance.	

<b>Additional diversity characteristics</b>	<b>Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?</b>	<b>Please explain the impact including details of any evidence/data used</b>	<b>Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)</b>
<b>Geographical location (consider UK and international offices)</b>	Potentially negative	EPSRC maintains strategic relationships with the top 36 universities in our portfolio, who account for approximately 90% of EPSRC funding. <sup>6</sup> These institutions have the strongest links with EPSRC and have access to other information streams as a result, including meetings with senior EPSRC contacts and the strategic partner quarterly briefing. There are 164 HEIs in the UK, so there is potential for information to reach only limited geographical areas where strategic partners are based.	Information will be published on publicly accessible webpages so that all applicants, reviewers, research support staff and panel members have access to the same level of information regarding the transition as strategic partners. <sup>7</sup> We will also include updates in our Research Communities Update. Anyone can subscribe <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Socio-economic status</b>	Potentially negative	Those nearing the end of short-term contracts may perceive the transition period as non-compatible with transition	Commitments specified in EPSRC's Strategic Delivery Plan will remain the same and there are no plans to change

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/epsrc/relationships/working-with-universities/>

<sup>7</sup> Current webpages for information on The Funding Service transition: <https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/improving-your-funding-experience/our-pathway-for-change/> and <https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/improving-your-funding-experience/council-transition-to-the-new-the-funding-service/>

		<p>between short-term contracts and therefore there may be concern from this group about their employment.</p> <p>Applications will only be processed after round deadlines, which means we will aim to reach a decision on applications 6 months after each round closes on The Funding Service. This differs from our current model where we process applications when they come in and aim to reach a decision 6 months after submission. This means that if applications are submitted before a round ends, they will not receive a decision within 6 months, which will delay outcomes for staff on non-permanent contracts.</p>	<p>our financial commitments because of the transition to the Funding Service. The period in which applicants will not be able to submit an application has been timed to include the Easter, Eid and Early May Bank Holiday periods to minimise the number of working days affected.</p> <p>6 months to process applications after a closing date is standard across EPSRC's strategic calls. Therefore, processing proposals after the closing date for rounds for responsive mode will mean we are following a standard procedure used for other Opportunities. Applicants will continue to be able to submit applications well in advance of contracts ending.</p>
<b>Education background</b>	No known negative impact.		
<b>Parent/guardian responsibilities</b>	Potentially negative	Those with parent/guardian responsibilities may be more likely to work flexibly or part time and could therefore be more likely to be affected by transition timelines and have less time to prepare.	We will give eight weeks' notice, excluding major religious festivals and holiday periods, before Opportunities close in Je-S and reopen in The Funding Service. At this point, we will provide timelines for change and information about what to expect after the transition to The Funding Service. This will enable individuals to access information well in advance of any actual changes and prepare. If we cannot give this notice, this should be a red line for the transition.



<b>Carer/parent carer responsibilities</b>	Potentially negative	Those with carer/parent carer responsibilities may be more likely to work flexibly or part time and could therefore be more likely to be affected by transition timelines and have less time to prepare.	We will give eight weeks' notice, excluding major religious festivals and holiday periods, before Opportunities close in Je-S and reopen in The Funding Service. At this point, we will provide timelines for change and information about what to expect after the transition to The Funding Service. This will enable individuals to access information well in advance of any actual changes and prepare. If we cannot give this notice, this should be a red line for the transition.
<b>Political opinion (Northern Ireland)</b>	No known negative impact.		

**Evaluation:**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Explanation / justification</b>	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	EPSRC has mitigations in place to limit possible disadvantages due to the transition to The Funding Service. However, our final decision about the appropriateness of the proposed transition and how it will impact the EPSRC community will be made in communication with the SBF team and in the context of the findings of their accessibility work for The Funding Service and changes to policies and processes. This next decision point is in March 2023.	
<b>Final Decision:</b>	<b>Tick the relevant box</b>	<b>Include any explanation / justification required. (See Annex 1 for template action plan)</b>

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	<b>X</b>	Prior and during the transition to The Funding Service, if the transition plans, communications, or timelines inappropriately disadvantage certain groups, we will adapt and change policies, processes and guidance to 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.		

<b>Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required</b> (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events. Consider whether data might need to be redacted before publication)	Yes
<b>Person completing EIA</b>	Hannah Lilley, Senior Portfolio Manager, EPSRC

<b>Responsible owner (e.g. project board, committee):</b>	Neil Viner, EPSRC's Deputy Executive Chair and Chief Operating Officer
<b>Date signed off by owner:</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
<b>Review date</b> (if applicable): (An EIA is a live document and should regularly be reviewed throughout the life cycle of an activity)	1 <sup>st</sup> March 2023

#### Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
	When published	1	

**Annex 1:**

Action Plan If you have identified a need to adapt your activity, use the table below to define the actions you intend to take (or have you taken) to address the indications of negative impact you have identified. NB: Actions should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound), highlighting reasonable adjustments you will take within the scope of your activity.

<b>Action</b>	<b>To be completed by when?</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>How will it be monitored?</b>	<b>What is/will be the impact/outcome?</b>

