



**UK Research  
and Innovation**

## **Equality Impact Assessment – ISCF Healthy Ageing Catalyst Awards Round 4**

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.

The draft UKRI EDI Strategy is out for consultation at the time of writing and is expected to be published in 2023.

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 ISCF Healthy Ageing Catalyst Awards includes our:

- Grant terms and conditions, including recognition for sick leave and all forms of parental leave
- EDI considerations in the application and assessment process, Panel Meetings, and 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 are free from 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. Meeting format 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	ISCF Healthy Ageing Catalyst Awards (Round 4)
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>Overview:</p> <p>The ISCF Healthy Ageing Catalyst awards are a competitive funding opportunity to translate early-stage research ideas into products and services for healthy ageing. This is a UKRI-wide funding opportunity. Funding is awarded via ESRC on behalf of UKRI and the ISCF Healthy Ageing Challenge.</p> <p>Projects must develop innovative, high risk and high reward ideas to help people remain active, productive, independent, and socially connected across generations for as long as possible and narrow the gap between the experiences of the richest and the poorest.</p> <p>Funding decisions will be based on several criteria including the potential impact on healthy ageing and the transformative potential of the idea, the quality of proposed activities to get the idea closer to market, and the readiness of the applicant to take the idea forward. We are seeking projects which have the potential to be sustained through a commercial spin-out, social enterprise, IP licensing or other sustainable models. We are looking for design solutions which solve significant problems and take a human-centred approach through a deep understanding of the people who are affected and the stakeholders involved.</p> <p>The grant duration is 12 months, and the threshold of funding is £50,000 (or £62,500 fEC). Applicants also benefit from a 9-month programme of support from the delivery partner, Zinc.</p>

<p><b>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?</b> (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</p>	<p><b>Internal consultation</b> has taken place with the Healthy Ageing Challenge Director, the Deputy Director of ESRC's Innovation &amp; Impact team and the ISCF Strategic Lead from ESRC.</p> <p><b>External consultation</b> has taken place with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ISCF Healthy Ageing Programme Board and Advisory Group</li> <li>• Zinc (UKRI's delivery partner for Catalysts)</li> <li>• Knowledge Exchange and Technology Transfer offices at three University roundtable events</li> <li>• Additionally, a series of four further pre-application workshops was held in Nov and Dec 22 and through Jan 23, open to researchers in any discipline from any UK university or IRO.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants to the Healthy Ageing Catalyst Award competition</li> <li>• Attendees at the online Catalyst workshops, hosted by Zinc.</li> <li>• Commissioning Panel Members for Healthy Ageing Catalyst Award</li> <li>• UKRI and Zinc staff attending the Panel meeting(s) for Healthy Ageing Catalyst Award.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</b></p>	<p>The delivery partner Zinc will collate information on protected characteristics and diversity of applicants and workshop attendees on behalf of UKRI. This information will be shared with UKRI in-line with GDPR and organisational requirements. It will enable us to understand whether the outcomes are meeting our objectives for diversity within the Catalyst Awards.</p>

## GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

UKRI's research commissioning processes are designed with fairness in mind.

### Eligibility and criteria

- Catalyst Awards are 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 this scheme, and reviewers and panels are briefed that they should not pay particular attention to the track record of applicants

when making assessments. We are looking to ensure that innovative / potentially high impact work by less established researchers is not 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:**

- 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.

### **Process**

- Proposals will be assessed via a two-stage process. Applicants are first asked to complete a short expression of interest comprising: a lay summary, problem mapping statement, idea mapping statement, and why they are best placed to tackle the problem. Accompanying this, applicants are asked to submit a short video to explain what impact they would like to have beyond academic research. The expression of interest document and video will be sent to peer reviewers for assessment. The reviews received will be moderated by a shortlisting panel, to determine which applicants proceed to the next stage.
- In the second stage, applicants who are shortlisted will submit a full case for support, which will be assessed through an interview with an expert panel. Interviews will be conducted online (e.g. via Zoom or equivalent). The interview format will be a short 'pitch' of the innovation idea and its potential impact in healthy ageing, plus the suitability of the applicant to progress the idea, followed by a question-and-answer session.
- Funding decisions will be based primarily on quality as determined by the assessment criteria, and according to the scoring of the panel. However, UKRI reserve the right to apply a portfolio approach where needed, to ensure a balanced cohort across the

Catalyst awards in the healthy ageing innovation domain. Successful applicants will be asked to submit a proposal form via Je-S so that the grant award can be issued to the research organisation hosting the applicant.

- Peer Review Colleges will be consulted by UKRI staff when nominating reviewers. The membership of Peer Review Colleges aims to reflect the communities they represent, and efforts 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 college membership, UKRI case officers will look beyond the college membership. In this call, external reviewers will also be selected by Zinc (the delivery partner), to be approved and agreed by the UKRI case officers, reflecting the innovation focus of this funding opportunity and the need for specific expertise in the healthy ageing innovation domain. Reviewers will receive briefing on the assessment criteria and process to be used, with an emphasis on the importance of timely, objective, fair and informed peer review.
- Peer reviewers are required to evidence their views and scores. Zinc staff will conduct usability checks on peer review comments, with guidance from UKRI, and where there is evidence of bias or a reviewer has failed to provide evidence for their scores the review will be deemed 'unusable'.
- All panel members will receive guidance before the panel which covers issues including fairness, objectivity, and unconscious bias.
- It is the role of panel members to assess the quality of the proposal according to the assessment criteria 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 Chair and Panel Convenor play a particularly important role in this respect. A statement will be read out at the beginning of the panel meeting which sets the tone for discussions and requires that panel members pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions.

<b>Protected Characteristic Group</b>	<b>Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?</b>	<b>Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used</b>	<b>Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)</b>
<b>Disability (both mental and physical)</b>	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Workable platform for the Expression of Interest and Case for	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  For the Expression of Interest and initial Case for Support submission via Workable, there is an <a href="#">accessibility arrangement</a>

		<p>Support may not meet all accessibility requirements</p> <p>Je-S does not currently comply with disability accessibility schemes.</p> <p>Panel meeting attendees and applicants with physical disabilities or neurodiversity may have difficulties if the arrangements for the online meeting does not cater for their needs.</p>	<p>in place: Workable are committed to providing a platform that is accessible to all, and are striving towards the goal of promoting accessibility and meeting WCAG 2.1 level AA guidelines. Zinc are also able to adapt for individual applicants as and when they have needs for adjustments, to ensure they can access the application process (for example, but not limited to, providing information in different formats to meet the needs of an applicant, and allowing them to submit information in different formats if required).</p> <p>Applicants should seek additional support from their institution's research support office for the Je-S submission, if successful at the panel stage.</p> <p>Solicit information from panel meeting participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have to fully participate.</p> <p>Meetings will be held online (with use of closed captions for people who have impaired hearing)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the EOI video submissions, applicants have the option to cover the camera or record audio-only.</li> <li>• On request, black and white versions of guidance documents and other materials can</li> </ul>
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			<p>be provided to candidates with accessibility requirements, and these can be attached to emails rather than provided as GoogleDoc links.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants may dial into Zoom calls via telephone as an alternative to attending via video call.</li> <li>• Captions are added to workshop video presentations and a leaflet provided to explain key elements of the workshops and linked to further reading/key documents.</li> <li>• Extra time can be given to applicants with accessibility requirements for their pitch and interview presentation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Gender reassignment</b></p>	<p>Potential negative</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Trans people may have a period of absence from work due to transition.</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 medical absence.</p>

		UKRI records may show the wrong gender.	Consideration to be given at UKRI level as to how records might be adjusted.
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	Neutral (no impact identified)	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>People may be absent from work due to parental leave.</p> <p>Childcare and other factors may need to be considered, for applicants and panellists to be able to attend the online panel.</p>	<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 grant terms and conditions.</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. However, childcare costs associated with normal working patterns may not be sought.</p> <p>As the commissioning panel meeting is due to take place virtually, using an online platform, we will endeavour to provide adequate breaks in the proceedings to support breastfeeding/expressing mothers if required.</p>



			Reimbursement of additional childcare costs on a case-by-case basis, 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).
<b>Race (including ethnicity)</b>	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.
<b>Religion or belief</b>	Potential negative	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Potential discrimination because it is known or assumed 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)  Restate considerations of unconscious bias by briefing the panel at the start of the meeting.  Ensure that religious observances have been considered when planning panel meetings.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Potential negative	Also see above, under General Equality and	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.

		Diversity Considerations.	Restate considerations of unconscious bias by briefing the panel at the start of the meeting.
<b>Sex (gender)</b>	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Use of language can present a barrier to participation e.g. it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged.</p> <p>Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Ensure use of gender-neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc.</p> <p>Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation (aim for at least 60:40 split).</p> <p>Ensure that the meeting can be attended virtually using an online platform at a convenient time of the day.</p> <p>Reimbursement of additional childcare costs on a case-by-case basis, 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).</p>
<b>Age</b>	Potential positive	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Track record of the researcher is not a criterion in this call and is not part of the proposal documentation.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Use of a variety of different communication strategies including social media to ensure that our messages reach the widest possible target audience. The Catalyst awards opportunity and associated information</p>

		<p>This mitigation is highlighted given the possible (but not certain) relationship between career stage and age.</p>	<p>will also be promoted via the Zinc and UKRI websites.</p> <p>Panel members will be briefed to make clear that they should be assessing the application in front of them against the specified criteria and not read between the lines. They should assess an individual's capability to deliver the proposed project.</p>
<p><b>Other characteristics not protected under the Equality Act</b></p> <p>Examples (if applicable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographical location (consider UK and international offices)</li> <li>• Socio-economic status</li> <li>• Education background</li> <li>• Parent/guardian responsibilities</li> <li>• Carer/parent carer responsibilities</li> <li>• Political opinion (Northern Ireland)</li> </ul>	<p>Potential negative</p>	<p>UKRI is committed to go above and beyond 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. 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>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>

## Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
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 <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	✓	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 <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:	Yes
<b>Date completed:</b>	30 Jan 2023
<b>Review date</b> (if applicable):	To be reviewed if any significant changes are made to the scheme.