



EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
<p>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</p>	<p>Manufacturing Research Hubs for a Sustainable Future 2 (funding opportunity)</p>
<p>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</p>	<p>EPSRC aims to fund 5 Manufacturing Research Hubs for a Sustainable Future at £10-11 million each, delivered over seven years. The Hubs will deliver a programme of innovative research in the engineering and physical sciences, related to the challenges in commercialising early-stage research and manufacturing. The Hubs will feature high quality, multidisciplinary research, strong engagement with relevant manufacturing industries, and will take a leadership role in their national network, in particular, demonstrating a cross-cutting and embedded approach to environmental sustainability, and promoting active equality, diversity and inclusion action planning and delivery. Manufacturing Research Hubs for a Sustainable Future 2 will complement and refresh EPSRC's existing portfolio of Future Manufacturing Research Hubs, Manufacturing Research Hubs for a Sustainable Future 1, and contribute to delivering EPSRC's strategic priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engineering net zero • artificial intelligence, digitalisation and data: driving value and security • transforming health and healthcare • quantum technologies • physical and mathematical sciences powerhouse • frontiers in engineering and technology • digital futures
<p>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manufacturing and the circular economy team • Manufacturing and the circular economy Strategic Advisory Team • EPSRC Strategic Leadership Board <p>This is the second round of Manufacturing Research Hubs for a Sustainable Future and follows on from previous critical mass funding for manufacturing research (Future Manufacturing Hubs, Centres for</p>

	<p>Innovative Manufacturing, and Innovative Manufacturing Research Centres). Consultation with the Manufacturing and the circular economy theme's Strategic Advisory Team (SAT) took place before round 1 of this series of funding opportunities, concerning the focus on embedding environmental sustainability.</p>
<p>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research office/institutions and staff • Research councils and staff • Applicants • External reviewers (outline panel, postal peer reviewers, prioritisation panel) • Early and mid-career academic researchers are most likely to be involved as Co-Is. PDRAs will be employed by the Hubs. • There will be significant interaction with industry and the wider innovation landscape. • Support staff will also be employed on the grant. • Students may be aligned to the Hub, although not directly funded through the Hub grant.
<p>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>Research outcomes are collected through Researchfish and additional data through an annual data return. EPSRC Portfolio Managers are members of the Hub advisory boards. An annual report is produced by each Hub. A mid-term review will be conducted by EPSRC, employing an independent peer review panel to determine whether the Hub should continue to be funded for the full 7 years.</p>

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. adjustment to the policy)
Disability	Potentially negative	<p>All information provided is in written format.</p> <p>Travel may be a barrier for any in-person panels</p> <p>Potential for unconscious bias</p>	<p>Any reasonable adjustments for specific requirements will be made. Documents will be produced in line with EPSRC formatting guidelines.</p> <p>Panels may be virtual or in person. Where not fully virtual, the option to attend virtually will be available, if required for accessibility reasons. Accessibility will be considered when choosing a physical venue.</p> <p>Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias.</p>
Gender reassignment	Potentially negative	Potential for unconscious bias	Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all

			panellists to challenge potential bias.
Marriage or civil partnership	None identified		Standard EPSRC policies will be followed.
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially negative	Participation in activity could be restricted by lack of availability due to parental leave/caring responsibilities/ pregnancy	<p>Accommodations will be made for individuals if required at all stages of the process.</p> <p>Timetable of key dates will be made available to applicants and panellists in advance as early possible.</p> <p>EPSRC policies for offering support to those support with caring responsibilities will be followed and panel members and applicants will be made aware of these.</p> <p>Panellists will be informed if a panel meeting is to be held virtually or in person as far in advance as possible. If an in person meeting has to be changed to virtual, we reserve the right to change the timetable of the meeting to take into account individual circumstances and allow additional time for breaks and technical issues.</p> <p>Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias.</p>
Race	Potentially negative	Potential for unconscious bias	Standard EPSRC policies will be followed,

			including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias.
Religion or belief	Potentially negative	<p>The outline funding opportunity will be open over Easter, which is a major religious holiday.</p> <p>The funding opportunity runs over Christmas, which is a major religious holiday.</p>	<p>Dates for interviews will be checked and chosen to avoid clashes with major religious events where possible. Breaks can be scheduled to coincide with any prayer times. If panels are held in person, dietary requirements will be catered for and a prayer room available on request.</p> <p>The call will be published before the holiday and will be open for an additional week to mitigate the impact of being open over the holiday.</p> <p>The timeline has been planned so that reviews will be due before Christmas and the request for applicants to respond to their reviews will be sent after New Year, so that neither reviewers nor applicants are required to work over the Christmas period.</p>
Sexual orientation	None identified		Standard EPSRC policies will be followed
Sex (gender)	Potentially negative	Possibility for unconscious bias	Gender neutral language will be used throughout and will be encouraged at panel meetings. Efforts will be made to select gender diverse panellists and reviewers.

			Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias.
Age	Potentially negative	Potential for unconscious bias.	<p>Evidence requirements for the Director are only about their ability to manage a large complex research grant and collaborate with users. They do not refer to years of experience.</p> <p>Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias.</p>
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)	Caring responsibilities – potentially negative	<p>Parents and other people with caring responsibilities may have reduced time to respond to the funding opportunity.</p> <p>Parents and other people with caring responsibilities may be less able to attend panel meetings, depending on whether they can make alternative arrangements for childcare/other caring responsibilities.</p> <p>The outline funding opportunity will be open during the Easter holidays, which could disproportionately affect parents.</p>	<p>Dates for panels will be outside of school holidays wherever possible</p> <p>Panellists will be informed in advance if a panel meeting is to be held virtually.</p> <p>Timetable of key dates will be made available to applicants and panellists as far in advance as possible.</p> <p>The outline opportunity will be open for an additional week to mitigate the impact of being open over Easter.</p>

		<p>The full funding opportunity will be open over the Summer holidays, which could disproportionately affect parents.</p> <p>The funding opportunity runs over the Christmas holidays, which could disproportionately affect parents.</p>	<p>The full opportunity will be open for an additional two weeks to mitigate the impact of being open over the Summer.</p> <p>The timeline has been planned so that reviews will be due before Christmas and the request for applicants to respond to their reviews will be sent after New Year, so that neither reviewers nor applicants are required to work over the Christmas period.</p>
	<p>Zoom panel meetings – potentially negative</p>	<p>Due to the COVID-19 pandemic or rail strikes it may be necessary to hold panel meetings virtually (potentially switching from in person to virtual at short notice).</p> <p>Panel meeting dates may need to be changed at short notice if affected by university strikes (e.g. if panel</p>	<p>Guidance will be provided to panellists – best practice and tools that can be used such as the hand raising and mute functions.</p> <p>‘Test runs’ will be offered to those who have not used Zoom before.</p> <p>Extra time will be allowed to assist with cognitive load and ‘short term’ technical difficulties</p> <p>Contingency plans will be put in place if Zoom cannot be used</p> <p>Learning from virtual panels held prior to this, will be incorporated to improve the process.</p> <p>We will communicate all changes to applicants and panellists as soon as possible and take individual requirements (e.g. access</p>

		members are not available).	requirements, caring responsibilities) into account as far as possible when rescheduling.
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Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	There is a potential that some individuals may be disadvantaged; however, mitigating steps will be taken to minimise any impact.	
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		
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.	✓	This activity needs to proceed at this time. Everything has been done to be as fair and flexible as possible to all applicants. We will promote and inform as early as possible, and take circumstances into due account when necessary.

Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes
Date completed:	21.02.2023
Review date (if applicable):	27.07.2023

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Elizabeth Saunders	24/11/2021	1.0	First draft

Name	Date	Version	Change
Laura Totterdell	29/03/2022	1.1	Reviewed and amended draft document to take into account changes made to the funding opportunity before publication.
Laura Totterdell	02/08/2022	1.2	Reviewed prior to publication of the second stage funding opportunity (full proposals). Spelling error corrected. No additional changes required.
Laura Totterdell	21/02/2023	2.0	Reviewed and amended prior to publication of Manufacturing Research Hubs for a Sustainable Future Round 2. Noted that Covid-19 is likely to have less impact on this second round of funding, however ongoing strike action (rail, and university staff) could have a greater impact on this round.