



EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	Strategic infrastructure for engineering and physical sciences
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	To fund infrastructure over £400K that enhance UK scientific capability and support a portfolio of high-quality, cutting-edge research of high priority of EPSRC. To encourage a culture of equipment sharing as appropriate. To improve access to existing infrastructure in order to maximise its usage.
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	Process in place since 2011. Any amendments to the scheme are implemented after consultation with the Capital Infrastructure Strategic Advisory Team.
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	Academics wishing to apply for equipment over £400K, or for resources to enhance the capability of existing infrastructure. Members of the Research infrastructure theme, members of other EPSRC themes involved in the processing of proposals.
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	SEP updates are given at every Capital SAT and trends discussed. Universities are required to provide an annual equipment report for all items over £400K.

As a funder of research, EPSRC remains committed to attracting the best potential researchers from a diverse population into research careers. The Research Councils have together developed the ambitious [RCUK Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#) to outline our collective aspirations for working with the research community, and partners throughout the sector. 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 positive or negative	The interview panel is taking place virtually which is a long period of screen time which may be a problem for some. However those with physical disabilities will find it easier to attend virtually.	Regular breaks will be included in the agenda. Panel members will be encouraged to request additional breaks
Gender reassignment	No known negative impact		
Marriage or civil partnership	No known negative impact		
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially negative – participation in the call may be negatively affected if potential	Dependent on individual circumstances.	The call is an open call with key dates for outlines and full proposals published

	<p>applicants, peer reviewers or panel members are unavailable at key assessment stages.</p>		<p>via Funding Finder allowing for early engagement with EPSRC on specific personal impact from applicants.</p> <p>Interviewees are contacted in advance of the interview stage to schedule interviews on a preferred day/time (within the limitation of the interview dates).</p> <p>Panels will be held virtually so that travelling to Polaris House is not necessary.</p> <p>EPSRC will do its best to accommodate adjustments, such as deputising.</p>
Race	Potentially negative	Potential unconscious bias of panel members and convenors may affect the decision process.	We will align with EPSRC policies regarding ethnic diversity on panels.
Religion or belief	Potentially negative	Timeline for call is intended to align with other EPSRC activities. This limits how flexible we can be with the timeline and could potentially mean deadlines and panel dates coinciding with religious holidays.	The call will be open for at least six weeks at outline and full proposals stages to minimise the impact of religious holidays. When the call is initially set up key dates will be provided in a pre-announcements month in advance of the call opening. Funding rounds will be held at roughly the same time each year. This will allow applicants to plan for future rounds.

			EPSRC will do its best to accommodate adjustments, such as deputising. Panel meetings will be held virtually and include regular breaks.
Sexual orientation	No known negative impact		
Sex (gender)	Potentially negative	Potential unconscious bias of panel members and convenors may affect the decision process.	In line with EPSRC policies both the outline (internal EPSRC) and interview panel will be mixed gender.
Age	Potentially negative	The call is open to all career stages, however due to the size of equipment bids there may be unconscious bias towards applicants that are early career.	EPSRC will endeavour to have representation from across career stages on the interview panel. Panel are briefed regarding unconscious bias prior to the interview panel.
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)	Caregiving responsibilities – potentially negative	Timeline for call is intended to align with other EPSRC activities. This limits how flexible we can be with the timeline and could potentially mean that calls need to be open over the summer holidays, which could make it difficult to apply for some applicants.	The call will be open for at least six weeks at outline and full proposals stages to minimise the impact of holidays. When the call is initially set up key dates will be provided in a pre-announcement a month in advance of the call opening.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	Potentially, these awards are Organisational Awards and the PI must be a senior member of staff with responsibility for the RO's capital strategy. We have however designed the call to be inclusive of ECRs and

	students. Research Technical Professionals are also encouraged to be listed as investigators.	
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.	Y	We will give as much advanced warning as we possibly can before launching the call and the call will be open for 6-8 weeks.

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:	17/05/2023
Review date (if applicable):	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Claire Higlett	03/02/2020	1	
Stephen Gilligan	17/05/2023	2	Updated to account for move from in-person to virtual panels and changes as a result of move to the new funding service.