



EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	EPSRC Mathematical Sciences Small Grants opportunity
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>The Mathematical Sciences community has clearly stated a need for a mechanism for funding small grants in a timely fashion to support Mathematical Sciences research which does not require funding at the level normally supported by EPSRC. The objective of this opportunity is to address this community need.</p>
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	<p>The idea of a Small Grant opportunity originated from the Mathematical Sciences Strategy Workshop held in March 2019. The opportunity has been developed following community consultation through the Mathematical Sciences Strategic Advisory Team, Learned Societies, and the Advisory Group for the Additional Funding for Mathematical Sciences Programme. Small grants were specified in the letter from Minister Chris Skidmore in relation to the up to £300m Additional Funding for Mathematics programme, stating “there will be freedom to grant small amounts for initial research and early-stage idea generation”. Furthermore, consultation with EPSRC’s Business Improvement team, Panel members through the panel member feedback questionnaires, and The Simpler and Better Funding programme team have been done.</p>
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants to EPSRC • Peer Review College Members and reviewers • Panel members • EPSRC staff who are managing the peer review process.
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback given on The Funding Service transition via the Simpler and Better Funding helpdesk (support@funding-service.ukri.org).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback given via the panel member questionnaire. • Reviewer response rates and proportion of usable reviews. • The monitoring of application and award rates across all demographic groups. • Feedback gathered about The Funding Service transition through user testing, pilots, and roll-out over 2023. • 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, and applications, and the time taken to process them. • Dialogue with senior leaders and research support staff through our strategic partner university relationships. • The assessment process to minimise and manage unconscious bias. • Research outcomes through Researchfish. • A wider evaluation exercise for the Additional Funding for Mathematical Sciences programme.
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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 expert 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>Some features of the EPSRC Mathematical Sciences Small Grants opportunity are likely to change on The Funding Service to accommodate system developments.¹ These changes may be more challenging for neurodiverse applicants, research support staff, and panel members to implement.</p> <p>Those who have or are perceived to have a disability face discrimination in society in general and are under-represented in EPSRC's portfolio, an assessment process may increase the risk of bias for this group.</p>	<p>EPSRC will publish an announcement on 02 January 2024, the reopening date, with information about assessment criteria and application questions. However, if updates are required, EPSRC will communicate these changes at least eight (8) weeks before they are implemented (excluding major public holiday periods).</p> <p>Under the Equality Act 2010, employers are expected to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants and employees. Applicants are encouraged to speak to their research support services about the support available to them. EPSRC can also make reasonable adjustments for applicants, for example giving more time for a PI response under these circumstances. Applicants and panel members are encouraged to speak to EPSRC staff if accommodations can be made to enable them to participate in the application.</p> <p>Information about how to apply to our funding Opportunities will be clearly signposted and explained on the Funding Finder under 'How to Apply' for each individual opportunity. Guidance will also be embedded into The Funding Service's digital application form.</p> <p>EPSRC's panel members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. EPSRC panel convenors will remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process.</p> <p>EPSRC has recently published a 3-year EDI action plan which includes</p>

			actions to reduce the likelihood of bias impacting on decision making.
Gender reassignment	Potentially negative	<p>Questions related to protected characteristics in The Funding Service will be in line with ONS guidance.²</p> <p>Those who have had or are undergoing gender reassignment face discrimination in society in general. An assessment process may increase the risk of bias for this group.</p> <p>If an applicant's gender reassignment became known to the panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.</p>	<p>EPSRC's panel members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. EPSRC panel convenors will remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process.</p> <p>EPSRC has recently published a 3-year EDI action plan which includes actions to reduce the likelihood of bias impacting on decision making.</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	Potentially negative.	<p>At no point in the application process will applicants be required to declare their marital or civil partnership status. 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, in line with UKRI's Conflict of Interest Policy.</p> <p>If an applicant's marital status became known to the panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.</p>	<p>EPSRC's panel members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. EPSRC panel convenors will remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially negative	<p>Mathematical Sciences Small Grants opportunity has no closing date, meaning that</p>	<p>If individuals receive a funding decision during their maternity leave period and are on leave for</p>

¹ Read about UKRI's Simpler and Better Funding Programme, which is developing The Funding Service, here: <https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/improving-your-funding-experience/our-pathway-for-change/>

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

		<p>those on parental leave will not be disadvantaged, because they will be able to continue to apply at a time that is convenient.</p> <p>If an applicant’s pregnancy or maternity leave status became known to the panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.</p>	<p>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 without additional funding subject to our prior written approval.³</p> <p>Application batching dates will be set taking into account standard holiday periods and potential difficulties in submitting applications during these times.</p> <p>Expert panels to be held remotely to remove travel requirements could occur if individuals are required to participate in events on what would normally be a non-working day or work extended hours on a normal working day. To minimise the impact, the panel will be held remotely and be less than a whole working day in duration. A rotating expert panel will be convened providing flexibility to those with additional care requirements.</p>
<p>Race</p>	<p>Potentially negative.</p>	<p>Questions related to protected characteristics in The Funding Service will be in line with ONS guidance.</p> <p>Those that are racialised other than white, face discrimination in society in general and are under-represented in EPSRC’s portfolio. An assessment process may increase the risk of bias for this group.⁴</p> <p>If an applicant’s race or ethnicity became known to the panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the</p>	<p>EPSRC’s panel members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. EPSRC panel convenors will remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process.</p> <p>EPSRC has recently published a 3-year EDI action plan which includes actions to reduce the likelihood of bias impacting on decision making.</p> <p>Efforts will be made to draw up an expert panel pool that is ethnically diverse in line with EPSRC peer review guidance. The opportunity is open to all eligible UK researcher organisations.</p>

³ <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/UKRI-021122-fECGrantTermsAndConditionsGuidance.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/epsrc/our-policies-and-standards/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/ethnicity-and-race-equality-in-our-portfolio/>

		assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.	
Religion or belief	Potentially negative	<p>If key dates in the assessment process coincide with major religious festivals, then this could disadvantage applicants.</p> <p>Those who observe religion/belief systems face discrimination in society in general, an assessment process may increase the risk of bias for this group.</p>	<p>We will ensure that panel dates and application batching dates do not coincide with major religious festivals and bank holidays.</p> <p>This is an opportunity rather than a specific call where applications can continually be submitted. As such, applicants can continue to submit throughout the year.</p> <p>EPSRC's panel members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. EPSRC panel convenors will remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process.</p> <p>EPSRC has recently published a 3-year EDI action plan which includes actions to reduce the likelihood of bias impacting on decision making.</p>
Sexual orientation	Potentially negative	<p>Questions related to protected characteristics in The Funding Service will be in line with ONS guidance.</p> <p>Those who are LGBTQ+ face stigma and discrimination in society in general, an assessment process may increase the risk of bias for this group.</p> <p>If an applicant's sexual orientation became known to the panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.</p>	<p>EPSRC's panel members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. EPSRC panel convenors will remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process.</p> <p>EPSRC has recently published a 3-year EDI action plan which includes actions to reduce the likelihood of bias impacting on decision making.</p>
Sex (gender)	Potentially negative	<p>Questions related to protected characteristics in The Funding Service will be in line with ONS guidance.</p>	<p>EPSRC's panel members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. EPSRC panel convenors will remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process.</p>

		<p>Women and individuals across the sex and gender spectrums who do not identify as cis men face stigma and discrimination in society on the basis of their sex or gender and are underrepresented in EPSRC’s portfolio. An assessment process may increase the risk of bias for this group.</p> <p>If an applicant’s sex became known to the panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.</p>	<p>EPSRC has recently published a 3-year EDI action plan which includes actions to reduce the likelihood of bias impacting on decision making.</p> <p>Efforts will be made to draw up an expert panel pool that is mixed gender in line with EPSRC peer review guidance.</p>
Age	Potentially negative	<p>Questions related to protected characteristics in The Funding Service will be in line with ONS guidance.</p> <p>For a variety of reasons individuals can face stigma and discrimination in society and assessment processes for their relative youth, or their relative age and the perceived experience or energy associated with these assumptions.⁵</p> <p>If an applicant’s age became known to the panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but in at point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.</p> <p>⁶</p>	<p>EPSRC’s panel members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. EPSRC panel convenors will remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process.</p> <p>EPSRC has recently published a 3-year EDI action plan which includes actions to reduce the likelihood of bias impacting on decision making.</p>
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)			

⁵ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/age-discrimination>

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the new/proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate against or unfairly disadvantage people?	With mitigations in place, it is unlikely that the new funding opportunity for EPRC's Mathematical Sciences Small Grants opportunity will discriminate against or unfairly disadvantage people.	
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/against one or more groups.		
3. You can adapt or change the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias.	X	<p>We can provide adaptations to our processes if biases are identified during the application, or panel stages. These may involve providing information in alternative formats and offering additional support where necessary.</p> <p>ED&I aspects will be considered throughout the lifetime of the opportunity and this EIA will be reviewed accordingly.</p>
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.		

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:	09 th November 2023
Review date (if applicable):	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Chanattra Ammatmanee	02 nd January 2024	1	