



UK Research  
and Innovation

## UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form



\*See guidance document for detailed support.

\* Delete the guidance text in the response column when completing your EIA.

**Overview of activity**

	<b>Response</b>
Name of activity being assessed	Future Underground Dark Matter Science Experiments
Council/department/project team	Science and Technologies Facilities Council (STFC) – Programmes Directorate – Nuclear Physics and Particle Astrophysics team
Aims and objectives of the activity	<p>This is a UKRI funding opportunity providing up to £10 million, over five years, to conduct a dark matter science project at the Boulby Underground Laboratory space.</p> <p>It is open to all researchers eligible for STFC (UKRI) funding.</p> <p>Projects must align with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the recommendations of the Dark Matter Strategic Review 2020;</li> <li>• the current capacity and capability of Boulby Underground Laboratory.</li> </ul> <p>The activities covered by this EIA include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the application process (including applicant guidance);</li> <li>• operational delivery of the funding opportunity (including the peer review and panel meeting stages);</li> <li>• funding decision, outcomes and applicant feedback.</li> </ul>
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	<p>Anyone applying for funding through the Future Underground Dark Matter Science Experiments funding opportunity, panel members, and external/internal stakeholders involved in the assessment process.</p> <p>STFC is dedicated to ensuring that the peer review process is open and inclusive. Those engaged in the process endeavour to conduct each stage in a fair manner, without prejudice or bias, in line with this we follow the Nolan Principles. Additionally, comments and suggestions received as part of the peer review survey are implemented where possible to improve the process.</p> <p><b>Applicants:</b></p>

- The funding opportunity is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience.
- The opportunity text and guidance provides detailed guidelines to applicants about the process, including clear eligibility and assessment criteria.
- STFC will make available hard copies of documents when required.
- The STFC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites.
- STFC will support applicants throughout the end-to-end process, from pre-submission through to informing them of the outcome.
- STFC will make all reasonable efforts to accommodate the requirements of any applicant who is selected to attend an interview, considering issues of accessibility, travel restrictions and alternative working patterns. The STFC team will request details of any such requirements when an applicant is invited for interview.

**Reviewers:**

- A wide range of reviewers are approached, and usage and spread is monitored each round.
- Written guidance is available and reviewed annually.
- Our guidance clearly states our expectations of reviewers.
- STFC will provide all reasonable support to our reviewers in order to ensure they understand the aims, objectives, and processes of the Future Underground Dark Matter Science Experiments funding opportunity.

**Panel Members:**

- Pre-meeting discussions take place, STFC staff will work closely with the Panel Chair to agree approaches that are designed to minimise opportunities for bias and improve transparency of the decision-making process.
- A presentation on Objective Decision making will be presented reminding panel members of the roles and responsibilities required for them and office staff and to highlight best practice.
- STFC will ensure that assessment criteria are clear and easily accessible throughout the process, including at the meeting.
- Everyone involved in the decision-making process is aware of unconscious bias.
- STFC endeavour to achieve the minimum 30% female participation and will justify if this isn't the case. When selecting panellists and reviewers for this funding opportunity, STFC will make every effort to ensure that wherever possible there is an equitable balance between female and male representatives. STFC will ensure that gender balance is a key consideration of panellist

	<p>selection, but note that an equitable balance can be difficult to achieve due to fact that there are more males than females working in this research field.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STFC enable participation for people with alternative work patterns, including reduced working hours.</li> <li>• Panel members are asked to inform STFC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation.</li> <li>• STFC will schedule appropriate breaks and provide refreshments for Panel members.</li> </ul> <p><b>For STFC Staff:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All STFC staff involved in the process will be made aware of unconscious bias to raise awareness of conditions that may impact upon decision making.</li> <li>• Venue arrangements when required will be selected for ease of accessibility; will not conflict with different cultures, religions or beliefs; and will offer a full range of sensory accessibility relating to visual and hearing impairments.</li> <li>• Catering will be arranged with clear labelling and be appropriate to those who have specific cultural, religious, health or disability needs.</li> </ul>
<p>What data and consultation have you used?</p>	<p>This funding opportunity engages directly with recommendations put forward in STFC's 'Dark Matter Strategic Review 2020', which included a community consultation exercise. Building upon this, the opportunity leverages the experiences and knowledge garnered through the delivery of multiple STFC funding programmes and awards. The actions and approaches listed below are those that STFC has adopted for previous EIAs. These have been found to deliver a fair and equitable process that mitigates – as far as possible - against any negative impacts upon stakeholders who may align with one more of the protected characteristics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>

### Analysing your impact

In addition to data gathering and consultation, the guidance materials should be used to assist in identifying impacts on different groups.



Are there **general or overarching impacts on multiple groups**? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?

None identified.

Continued below...



Protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit	Negative impact	Please explain the impact or why there is no impact including details of any evidence/data used	Detail actions taken/ that will be taken to increase positive or reduce negative impact (or why action is not possible). Detail how you plan to measure the relevant outcomes and outputs of your activity.
	Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown			
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Panel members, reviewers may cite age in terms of lack of experience or in terms of near retirement.	Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review. The Assessment criteria for this funding opportunity are not linked to age
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Applicants and/or reviewers with visual disabilities or impairments may find it difficult to access and review electronic documentation.</p> <p>Applicants or panel members with mobility disabilities may face difficulties in attending the panel meetings.</p> <p>Panel members with hearing difficulties may find it hard to engage in discussions. Attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration during panel assessments.</p>	<p>STFC will take all reasonable steps to make adjustments to the assessment process in order to enable participation. As examples, this may include the use of video conferencing or equivalent tools, tailored timing of the meeting schedule, or provision of specific facilities to enable an applicant or panel member to be comfortable in the meeting environment.</p> <p>Electronic information is accessible and STFC will investigate the ability for the potential use of screen readers for personnel who are visually impaired.</p>



			<p>It is a requirement of this call that the funded experiment be based at the Boulby Underground Laboratory. This may cause difficulties for some applicants with physical disabilities.</p>	<p>STFC will respond to individual support needs on a case by case basis.</p> <p>STFC will ensure the panel meeting venue is compatible with the use of hearing aid loops and will work with individuals to understand what other help can be provided.</p> <p>STFC will select a room that is light and airy, ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda and ensure that colours chosen don't trigger migraines, different colours may assist in this if personnel don't bring their own laptops.</p> <p>STFC consult with all Panel members to understand any specific requirements for participation and will accommodate where required.</p> <p>STFC will ensure that the application guidance clearly flags up this requirement and that any applicants who feel that that access to Boulby may be problematic have an opportunity to discuss their requirements with a member of the Boulby Underground Laboratory staff who will advise on ways to facilitate access.</p>
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Information regarding gender reassignment is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, this may become apparent during the meeting stage or it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out.</p>	<p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during interview acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Bias may be voiced in relation to new partners starting a family therefore not given as a high a priority.</p>	<p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias</p>



				during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Panel members who are pregnant or on parental leave may find it difficult to access the venue and /or participate in meetings.</p> <p>Nursing mothers may need additional support in terms of suitable accommodation or childcare.</p> <p>An applicant's career path and track record may be criticised due to the existence of a number of career breaks due to maternity/paternity.</p> <p>Panel members may face additional childcare costs if having to work outside of their normal hours.</p>	<p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>STFC consult with all Panel members to understand and cater for their requirements for participation. As a general principle, venues are easily accessible to main rail links.</p> <p>Meetings are timetabled to allow for adequate breaks.</p> <p>Ensure suitable accommodation provided for nursing mothers and additional childcare.</p> <p>STFC recognise this issue and the potential impact and will consider as part of the review. The Chair will appropriately moderate discussions and ensure the objective application of the assessment criteria.</p> <p>STFC will reimburse additional childcare costs, above any beyond that required during normal working hours.</p> <p>STFC recognise this issue and the potential impact and will consider as part of the review that is planned for the CG mechanism.</p>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Information regarding race is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out.	Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias



				during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Panel members may be unable to participate in meetings due to religious observances.</p> <p>Panel members or attendees may have specific dietary requirements due to religious belief.</p>	<p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p> <p>Consideration will be given to the timing of interviews/panel meetings so that Panel members (and applicants) from different religious communities can attend if requested.</p> <p>STFC consult with all Panel members to understand and cater for their requirements for participation. Ensure the venue caters for all dietary requirements.</p>
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Information regarding sexual orientation is not made available throughout the peer review process. However, it may be possible that panel members already know this information or could endeavour to seek it out. It may also become apparent during the interview stage.	Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Panel members, reviewers may criticise track record, publication history which could be as a result of extended maternity, paternity leave.</p> <p>Negative perceptions of an applicant's sex may be expressed by a peer reviewer or a panel member.</p>	<p>TFC are committed to ensuring that Panel Chairs are briefed on how to handle such situations.</p> <p>Panel members are required to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions, and are reminded of the conditions that may lead to unconscious bias during each meeting. STFC staff presence during meetings acts as an additional assurance to ensure unbiased peer review.</p>



				STFC will do all it can to ensure that the assessment panel has an equally representation of women and men.
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Continued below...



Additional characteristics

Additional characteristics	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit	Negative impact	Please explain the impact including details of any evidence/data used	Detail actions taken/ that will be taken to increase positive or reduce negative impact (or why action is not possible).
	Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown			
Geographical location and place (consider UK and international offices)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Potential negative:</b> The successful project must be based at the Boulby Underground Laboratory in Yorkshire. This may require project team members to travel to Boulby on a regular basis. This may pose problems for team members with caring responsibilities, or those who live geographically distant from the site.</p> <p><b>Potential negative:</b> The nature of the experiment means that it must be based at an underground facility. This may present access difficulties for some applicants (see Disability' section above).</p> <p><b>Potential positive:</b> Boulby Underground Laboratory is located in north-east England, an area identified as economically deprived. Having an additional project at Boulby will help stimulate the regional economy and contribute to the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda.</p>	<p>Reasonable travel and subsistence costs incurred through visits to Boulby can be budgeted of within the grant application.</p> <p>STFC will ensure that the application guidance clearly flags up this requirement and that any applicants who feel that that access to Boulby may be problematic have an opportunity to discuss their requirements with a member of the Boulby Underground Laboratory staff who will advise on ways to facilitate access.</p> <p>STFC communications will highlight successful outcomes of the experiments at Boulby, helping to promote the region's wider involvement in science and engineering.</p>
Socio-economic status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None identified	
Education background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None identified	



Parent/guardian responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Panel members may face additional childcare costs if having to work outside of their normal hours.</p> <p>Some key dates within the schedule of this funding opportunity may fall within school holidays, making it difficult for applicant with responsibility for school-age children to meet deadlines.</p>	<p>STFC will reimburse additional childcare costs, above any beyond that required during normal working hours.</p> <p>Wherever possible STFC will try to avoid scheduling key dates and meetings within school holidays. However, the nature of the grant funding process (with strict financial budgets and requirements to spend in set financial year) means that this may not always be possible. In such cases STFC will endeavour to ensure that applicants are given adequate time and advance warning to prepare, contribute to, and submit funding proposals.</p>
Carer/parent carer responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Panel members may face additional childcare costs if having to work outside of their normal hours.</p> <p>Some key dates within the schedule of this funding opportunity may fall within school holidays, making it difficult for applicant with responsibility for school-age children to meet deadlines.</p>	<p>STFC will reimburse additional childcare costs, above any beyond that required during normal working hours.</p> <p>Wherever possible STFC will try to avoid scheduling key dates and meetings within school holidays. However, the nature of the grant funding process (with strict financial budgets and requirements to spend in set financial year) means that this may not always be possible. In such cases STFC will endeavour to ensure that applicants are given adequate time and advance warning to prepare, contribute to, and submit funding proposals.</p>
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None identified	
Other characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None identified	

Continued below...



## Evaluation

Final Decision:	Select the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No negative or positive impact identified; therefore, activity will <b>proceed</b> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. <b>Adapt or change</b> the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.	<input type="checkbox"/>	e.g. The activity has been adapted following the actions described in the previous section.
3. <b>Stop</b> the activity because the evidence shows bias or negative impact towards one or more groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the activity (e.g. in <b>extreme cases</b> or where <b>positive action</b> is taken). Therefore, you are going to <b>proceed with caution</b> with this activity knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	STFC has considerable experience in running funding opportunities in a fair, equal and open manner, in-line with UKRI guidelines. This opportunity will follow (and where appropriate build upon) existing best practice in order to mitigate as far as possible against any of the potential negative impacts identified in this document.

Continued below...



Review and sign off

<p><b>What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?</b></p>	<p>In line with UKRI policy, STFC staff will continue to monitor and update this document as the funding opportunity develops and make changes as required. In addition, once the funding opportunity is completed, the delivery mechanisms, processes and outcomes will be analysed to see what lessons can be learned as part of STFC's commitment to continuous improvement.</p>
<p><b>Next review date:</b></p>	<p>TBC [March 2024?]</p>
<p><b>Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required</b></p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities for example funding opportunities and events.</p>
<p><b>Point of contact</b></p>	<p>Jamie Parkin, Head of Nuclear Physics and Particle Astrophysics, STFC Thomas Gray, Senior Programme Manager, STFC [STFC EDI lead?]</p> <p>For example, the person or group responsible for the EIA. This may or may not be the point of contact for the EIA. For example, workstream in a project or a team</p>
<p><b>Signed off by (name and date):</b></p>	<p>Christy Gosden, Head of Research Funding, STFC Helen Beadman, Associate Director, STFC</p> <p>For example, project board, committee, budget holder, Senior Responsible Owner (SRO)</p>

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Before publishing or archiving your EIA, please remove any sensitive or confidential information such as personal identifiable data.

Once your EIA is completed or updated:

1. Email it to your [council](#) EDI team and
2. Upload it to the UKRI central repository via [the EIA submission form](#)

EIAs for ODA and non-ODA ISPF programmes should be emailed to: [ISPF@ukri.org](mailto:ISPF@ukri.org)

### Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
		1	E.g. Based on input received from consultation groups at the <b>business case</b> stage, added actions under the gender section
		2	E.g. Based on input received from x at the <b>announcement of opportunity</b> stage, added/removed/edited x
		3	E.g. Based on input received from x at the <b>investment authorisation</b> stage, added/removed/edited x

Continued below...



**Action plan**

Use the table below to define the actions you intend to take (or have taken) to address the indications of negative impact you have identified or to promote equality. Actions should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound).

Action	Deadline	Owner	How will it be monitored?	What is/will be the impact/outcome?
e.g. Update application form to include questions on additional support and reasonable adjustments	December 2023	Applications manager	Updated form published and submissions reflect individual needs	Individual needs can be addressed. Inform inclusive design of the activity