# Strengthening the Resilience of the UK Food System Funding Opportunity

# Equality Impact Assessment

| | Question | Response |
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| 1. | **Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed** | Funding opportunity entitled: Strengthening the resilience of the UK food system |
| 2. | **Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event** | This funding opportunity is for interdisciplinary and collaborative research proposals to strengthen the resilience of the UK food system to cascading risk and systemic shocks by taking a food systems approach. It is funded via the UKRI 'Building secure and resilient societies strategic theme', and will strengthen societal and economic resilience through improved awareness of risks and threats to food supply chains. The research will be strongly focused on securing positive outcomes for people and society. This call is co-funded with the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The call aims to identify how resilience to cascading risks can be increased, for example, via enhanced redundancy or diversity, whilst ensuring that food remains safe, nutritious, affordable and accessible for all in our society. Proposals must address two or more cascading risks and align with at least one of the themes of 'domestic production and trade' and 'critical infrastructure and resources'. Proposals should also include at least two different research disciplines, take a food systems approach, have a primary focus on the UK food system, collaborate with at least one stakeholder organization and demonstrate a commitment to championing diversity and inclusivity.

We particularly encourage interventions that will transform the current food system and lead to longer term resilience and nutritional security.

Projects should be 36 months in duration

The call will be launched using the UKRI TFS, funding application system.

The assessment and decision-making will be via panel meeting. We will take steps to ensure this process is fair and robust and that the decisions taken are criterion led.

Panel members and UKRI office staff will be fully briefed on their roles and responsibilities. |
| 3. | **What involvement and consultation has been done in** | The Strengthening the Resilience of the UK Food System opportunity has a funders group made up of representatives from BBSRC, NERC, |

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| **relation to this policy?** *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)* | ESRC, AHRC, EPSRC,STFC, Innovate UK and Defra who have all been consulted and have agreed on the call design, application process and assessment process<br><br>BBSRC's Equality and Inclusion Policy Group have been asked to review the EIA and the call assessment process more broadly.<br><br>BBSRC will consult with Panel meeting attendees to understand potential barriers and take action, where possible, to enable attendance and participation<br><br>BBSRC will maintain two-way channels of communication with stakeholders<br><br>BBSRC will learning from good practice in objective decision making and interview processes from across UKRI, supported by external independent advice |
| **4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?** | Research community, stakeholders, staff from Gov departments, UKRI employees & panel members |
| **5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?** | BBSRC is dedicated to ensuring that the processes for its funding opportunities are open and inclusive. Those engaged in the processes endeavour to conduct each stage in a fair manner and without prejudice or bias. In line with this we adopt the following principles to ensure equality and maximise the impact of the funding opportunity:<br><br>For applicants<br><ul><li>The call is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience</li><li>The call text and guidance clearly state the eligibility and assessment criteria</li><li>The UKRI website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites, including the ability to adjust the text size or use a text reader on the page</li><li>BBSRC supports applicants as much as possible, both before and after submission, to assist them in the application and assessment process.</li></ul><br>For assessors:<br><ul><li>Everyone involved in the decision-making process has had training in Unconscious Bias to raise awareness of conditions that may impact on their decision-making</li><li>BBSRC is committed to enabling participation for people with alternative work patterns, including reduced working hours</li><li>Panel members are asked to inform BBSRC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation</li></ul> |

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| | | In terms of monitoring and reviewing, BBSRC will consult with Applicants and Panel members throughout the call launch and delivery phase and take all necessary steps to ensure additional needs are met. Additionally, BBSRC/UKRI will gather EDI data at both the application and award level and this information, along with broader feedback from applicants and assessors involved in funding opportunity will be used to inform future funding opportunity equality and impact assessments. | |

| 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) |
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| Disability | Potentially negative | BBSRC recognises that disability has a diverse spectrum. Specific examples of barriers are provided below but are not intended to cover this spectrum in its entirety.<br><br>Individuals who have hearing impairments may find it difficult to access the panel webinar and assessment panel meeting.<br><br>Individuals who have a visual disability may find it difficult to access and view the electronic adverts, attend the panel webinar and assessment panel, view online documentation, and/or complete the online application form. | BBSRC encourages individuals to communicate their needs (please contact foodsystemsresilience@bbsrc.ukri.org) and will make reasonable adjustments where possible<br><br>Arrangement of closed captioning (cc) for those with hearing impairments at virtual meetings/events.<br><br>Arrangement of appropriate colour/text will be arranged for those with visual impairments. Alternatively, BBSRC will provide a printed version of documentation/ guidance to anyone who is unable to view/complete it online. Where appropriate, the communications (e.g. from the panel webinar) will be recorded and shared online and modified versions can be shared upon request (cc, alternative font, font size, font colour). |
| | | Potential for difficulties with concentration for individuals with neuro-disabilities.. | Breaks will be incorporated into the agenda of the panel meeting<br><br>All information given at the panel webinar will be recorded |

| | | | and made available online for the the panel members to rewatch at their own convenience. |
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| **Gender reassignment** | Potentially negative | Communications should not be skewed towards a specific gender. | Where an individual's pronouns are unknown, gender neutral pronouns will be used. |
| **Marriage or civil partnership** | No | | |
| **Pregnancy and maternity** | Potentially negative | Panel members who are pregnant/ on maternity or have child or other caring responsibilities may be discouraged from participating in Panel meetings. | BBSRC will use a virtual meeting format and discussion boards following UKRI's virtual first policy<br><br>BBSRC consults with all participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation which may, for example, include building in extra breaks<br><br>BBSRC allows panel members to claim expenses for reasonable childcare costs during the panel meeting<br><br>UKRI policy ensures that grant extensions, and movement of start dates are available to individuals who have been on and/or are going on maternity/parental leave. |
| | | Career breaks in applicant track records due to parental leave or caring responsibilities may be seen as negative by the panel | Guidance to be provided to the panel to ensure appropriate assessment of applicant track record without bias against career breaks due to parental leave/caring responsibilities and others |
| **Race** | Potentially negative | There is always the possibility of unconscious bias in assessment of applications | BBSRC will ensure that the selection criteria used are objective, transparent and robust. We will remind all assessors about not bringing in personal biases, and provide briefing in objective decision making.<br><br>The presentation materials, funding call, eligibility criteria, call guidance and assessment process will be written to |

| | | Applicants for whom English is their second language may be negatively impacted. | minimise subjectivity using the principles of plain English.<br><br>Applications will be referred to by extranet number during the panel meeting.<br><br>Presentations will all come with transcripts and will be available to be watched back. |
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| | | It is important that selection of panel members represents the diversity of the research community and UK society more broadly. | BBSRC will monitor the diversity of panel members to ensure good representations of place, gender and career stage and through this, diversity of opinion |
| **Religion or belief** | Potentially negative | Organising meetings and events that take place during religious observances may prevent participation | Religious observances will be taken into account. |
| **Sexual orientation** | No | | |
| **Sex (gender)** | Potentially negative | There is always the possibility of unconscious bias in the assessment process. | BBSRC will ensure that the selection criteria used are robust and minimise subjectivity. We will remind all members of the selection panel about unconscious bias and provide training as required, to ensure they make a conscious effort to remove bias from their decision making.<br><br>BBSRC will ensure that the panel is gender balanced<br><br>BBSRC will ensure all panel members have the opportunity to contribute equally through effective meeting management.<br><br>Applicants are referred to by extranet number only in panel meeting.<br><br>Additional costs incurred by caring responsibilities can be claimed as set out in https://bbsrc.ukri.org/documents/bbsrc-handbook |

| Age | | Older researchers are those most likely to hold senior positions with pre-established industrial/ civil society/ government links. | BBSRC provides unconscious bias training in the panel Method of Working and panel webinars and does not use titles in panel meeting (i.e extranet number only) |
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**Unconscious bias**

In addition to the above, steps have been taken to minimise the potential impact of unconscious bias on the assessment processes. These include:

- Chair and deputies to attend briefing meeting, where unconscious bias will be covered
- Panel to receive a briefing on Methods of Working and objective decision making (by webinar and documentation)
- Note regarding unconscious bias included in the Chair's brief
- Safeguarding decision making and unconscious bias are explained again at the beginning of the Virtual Meeting, and prior to the ranking session.
- No applicant names are shown on the ranking list during the ranking session.

**Evaluation:**

| Question | Explanation / justification |
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| Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people? | Potential for discrimination or negative impact has been assessed and actions to address negative impacts are being implemented |

| Final Decision: | Tick the relevant box | Include any explanation / justification required |
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| 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. | | |

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| **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:** | 17/04/2024 |
| **Review date** (if applicable): | 17/04/2025 |

**Change log**

| Name | Date | Version | Change |
|---|---|---|---|

| Jamie Stone | 17/04/2024 | 1 | |