



UK Research
and Innovation

UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form



Overview of activity

	Response
Name of activity being assessed	OPP1011: Institutional Diversity Fund (invite only)
Council/department/project team	Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Grants Delivery Team
Aims and objectives of the activity	<p>Since 1 April 2025 some Independent Research Organisations have experienced changes in funding eligibility rules. This has been implemented in response to the independent review of research bureaucracy led by Professor Adam Tickell. There will be greater consistency and standardisation across the research councils to help reduce bureaucracy in the new Funding Service. Reducing research bureaucracy – UKRI.</p> <p>This change in Full Economic Cost (FEC) funding eligibility rules applies to the following four IROs. These organisations are eligible to apply to this invitation only funding opportunity, providing short-term additional funding to meet this FEC change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) • Institute of Development Studies (IDS) • National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) • National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) <p>This short-term funding Opportunity is intended to address the immediate challenges facing Independent Research Organisations and provide strategic research infrastructure base funding to support the full costs of awarded UKRI-funded projects delivering against ESRC strategic priorities. Funding will be provided at 100% FEC following a competitive quality assessment process.</p> <p>The Opportunity presents an alternative and temporary solution to encourage research activity of key Independent Research Organisations operating within ESRC's remit.</p> <p>Awards will be used to provide baseline support for research and data infrastructure activity within the 25/26 financial year. The duration of this award is for up to 12 months only. Due to the nature of the award, extensions will not be permitted. The total funding available is £500,000 (100% FEC).</p> <p>Through this Opportunity, Applicants will be asked to demonstrate how the funds will allow there organisation to maintain the social science research and/or data infrastructure capability, to deliver on ESRC priorities.</p>

	<p>ESRC will launch this Opportunity using the UKRI Funding Service – Funding Finder and it will be open for submissions for 8 weeks. Eligible organisations will be emailed a direct link to apply. Applying organisations may submit only one application.</p> <p>Applicants will be assessed on three areas within the application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision • Approach • Resources and cost justification. <p>This Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is used with consideration to the applicant submission process through the UKRI Funding Service and building/hosting a panel meeting.</p>
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants to the Institutional Diversity Fund (invite only) funding opportunity. • ESRC and Panel members attending meeting(s) for the Institutional Diversity Fund panel.
What data and consultation have you used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal consultation has taken place with the ESRC Grants Delivery Team and Institutional Diversity Fund commissioning group. • Review of previous (invite only) Funding Opportunity EIAs used within UKRI.

Analysing your impact

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

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"/>	<p>Track record of the Project Lead is not an assessment criterion in this funding opportunity and is not part of the proposal documentation. This mitigation is highlighted given the possible (but not certain) relationship between career stage and age.</p> <p>Also covered under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>	<p>Assessors should assess the application in front of them against the specified criteria. This funding opportunity is based on the applying organisations capability to deliver the proposed project and not the individual administering the application.</p>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Funding Service is compliant with relevant accessibility standards.</p> <p>Also covered under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>	<p>Solicit information from panel meeting participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have to fully participate.</p> <p>Most meetings will be held virtually. Where an in-person meeting is scheduled, this will</p>

				<p>have the facility for members to join remotely where this is necessary.</p> <p>Online meeting platforms offer an accessible and inclusive environment for participants. Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The chat function and closed captioning can be enabled, and volume adjusted, to support those with hearing requirements. • Where there are particular constraints consider opportunities for participants to engage in a different way (e.g., tele-conference). • Consider the length of any online meetings, shorten if necessary, and ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda. <p>Where used, we will try to ensure that venues offer an accessible and inclusive environment for participants. We will also ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda.</p>
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>UKRI records may show the wrong gender.</p> <p>Also covered under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>	<p>We will work to ensure the use of gender-neutral language where possible in our documents.</p> <p>At virtual panel meetings, members may wish to include pronouns in biography.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted.</p>

Marriage or civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Applicants' eligibility is not based on marriage or civil partnership basis.	N/A
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>People may be absent from work due to parental leave.</p> <p>Childcare and other factors may need to be considered, for panel member to be able to participate.</p> <p>Also covered under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>	<p>We will work to ensure the use of gender-neutral language – parental leave, irrespective of sexual orientation.</p> <p>Meetings and deadlines will be scheduled to account for school holidays and the school day, giving participants reasonable notice whenever possible.</p>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>There could be potential for discrimination because it is known to somebody (either a panel member or applicant) has a particular race.</p> <p>Also covered under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>	<p>Particularly in relation to panel composition, all assessors will follow the code of practice and guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity, and unconscious bias.</p> <p>ESRC will ensure that, where possible, a diverse group of assessors is recruited.</p> <p>During meetings, ask people to introduce themselves to check correct pronunciation of names.</p>
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>There could be potential for discrimination because it is known to somebody (either a panel member or applicant) has a particular faith or belief.</p> <p>Also covered under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>	<p>Particularly in relation to panel composition, all assessors will follow the code of practice and guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity, and unconscious bias.</p> <p>Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning panel meetings. Considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals; (if impossible to avoid, otherwise consider mitigations) • Allowing prayer breaks if requested

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If in person any dietary requirements or seating arrangements
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There could be potential for discrimination because it is known to somebody (either a panel member or applicant) has a particular sexual orientation.	Particularly in relation to panel composition, all assessors will follow the code of practice and guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity, and unconscious bias.
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>There could be potential for discrimination because it is known to somebody (either a panel member or applicant) has a particular gender.</p> <p>Use of language can present a barrier to participation, and it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged.</p> <p>Also covered under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>	<p>Ensure use of gender neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc.</p> <p>Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation (aim for no higher than 60:40 split) Ensure that the meeting location is suitable to allow easy return home.</p>

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	We wish to ensure that potential applicants and stakeholders are not disadvantaged by geography, institutional status etc. People based in different time zones may impact their ability to participate.	We work to ensure that panels are balanced as far as possible (within the constraints of quality and appropriateness) across the range of protected characteristics, and across broader

				characteristics including participation from post-1992 and Russell Group institutions, ensuring that we have a good geographical spread of panel members across the four nations of the UK, and across a diversity of career stages and paths. Where possible adjustments will be made to meeting times if assessors or applicants are based in a different time zone.
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"/>	Parental/guardian responsibilities may prevent people from attending meetings or feeling that they cannot participate due to caring for children/attending appointments.	Meeting arrangements will be made to accommodate the needs of those with caring responsibilities. Regular breaks will be built into the meetings to allow for any caring duties.
Carer/parent carer responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Carer/parent carer responsibilities may prevent people from attending the meetings or feeling that they cannot participate due to caring responsibilities/attending appointments.	Meeting arrangements will be made to accommodate the needs of those with caring responsibilities. Regular breaks will be built into the meetings to allow for any caring duties.
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None identified	
Other characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None identified	

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

General Equality and Diversity Considerations

The Institutional Diversity Fund (invite only) funding opportunity is designed with fairness in mind.

Eligibility and criteria

- The Institutional Diversity Fund is an invite only funding opportunity. Only applicants from organisations IFS, IDS, NatCen, NIESR are eligible to apply. Applicants are eligible for funding regardless of whether they are established members of a recognised RO, but applicants who are not an established member of a recognised RO must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research.
- Individual track record of the Project Lead is not a funding criterion for this funding opportunity, and assessors are briefed that they should not pay particular attention to the track record of applicants when making assessments. Assessors are instructed to assess the application in front of them and not to 'read between the lines' or give the benefit of the doubt based on the reputation of the individual applicant or team, as this would be a form of confirmation bias.
- Assessors should assess the application in front of them against the specified criteria. This funding opportunity is based on the applying organisations capability to deliver the proposed project and not the individual administering the application.

Standard Grant Terms and Conditions

- UKRI standard Grant Terms and Conditions comply with UK equality legislation and include provisions designed to mitigate against potential negative impacts (e.g., sick pay, parental and adoption leave, the possibility of part-time and flexible working, and grant extensions).
- Research Organisations are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. RGC 8 states that Research Organisations are wholly responsible for staff funded from the Grant, including Research Fellows, and accept all duties owed to and responsibilities for these staff, including, without limitation, their terms and conditions of employment, and their training and supervision, arising from the employer/employee relationship Universities are therefore required to make reasonable adjustments as required to support their staff.

Panel recruitment

- Panel members for the Institutional Diversity Fund are selected from existing standing ESRC governing and decision-making groups.

- Panel members are selected, first and foremost, based on expertise. We do not know the ethnicity/race, disability status or other protected characteristics for applicants as equal opportunities monitoring forms are detached from the applications and remain anonymous. We will only make recruitment decisions which compromise diversity when it is objectively justified by the necessity to ensure the required breadth of subject expertise with high quality candidates.
- We aim to ensure that the composition of the panels is diverse, with each panel having at least a 60:40 gender balance.
- Where possible we ensure that the chair and vice chair of each panel are not the same gender.
- We encourage applicants across the full range of protected characteristics, and following each recruitment round we look at panel composition by race/ethnicity and disability status and consider if we need to take additional action at the subsequent recruitment round (for instance, targeted advertising). We do not impose quotas.

Application Process (The Funding Service)

- Applications are made through UKRI's 'The Funding Service' (TFS). This EIA does not cover this service but notes that it complies with the latest accessibility requirements.
- As a Government Digital Service (GDS) TFS is built to an AA accessibility standard and the team cannot release code unless it passes tests to ensure compliance with that standard. TFS's interaction designers are trained in accessible design and to ensure it is accessible they undertake regular audits with the Disability Accessibility Centre (DAC) who run the service through human-based testing with people who have a wide range of disabilities. The accessibility statement for the TFS can be found at [Accessibility statement for the UKRI Funding Service – UKRI](#)
- Bespoke guidance in The Funding Service has been reviewed to ensure wording is accessible as possible.

Panel Review Process

- It is the role of panel members to moderate and assess the quality of the proposal according to the assessment criteria and to agree final scores for each proposal.
- The ESRC provides briefings to panel members on unconscious bias and encourages members to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it. The Panel Chairs and Panel Secretaries play a particularly important role in this respect. An implementation intention statement is read out at the beginning of each meeting which sets the tone for discussions and requires that panel members pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions. ESRC staff are also able to challenge bias if identified at other stages of the assessment process.



Final Decision:	Select the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No negative or positive impact identified; therefore, activity will proceed .	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Adapt or change the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The activity has been adapted following the actions described in the previous section.
3. Stop 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 extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore, you are going to proceed with caution with this activity knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Review and sign off

What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?	Progress will be monitored through regular reporting and meetings with the Institutional Diversity Fund commissioning group. We will continue to consider and consult with the groups affected by this activity and use new insights to review the EIA.
Next review date:	To be reviewed if any significant changes are made to the funding opportunity.



Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes – The EIA will be published as part of the funding opportunity on the UKRI Funding Finder.
Point of contact	ESRCenquiries@esrc.ukri.org
Signed off by (name and date):	Stian Westlake (ESRC Executive Chair) - 23/06/2025

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. 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

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Steven Sharpe	17/06/2025	1	Initial draft of the Institutional Diversity Fund (invite only) funding opportunity Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

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?
Publish the EIA as part of the as part of the funding opportunity on the UKRI Funding Finder.	July 2025	Opportunity Delivery Manager	Updated form published and submissions reflect individual needs	Individual needs can be addressed. Adaptions will be considered in consultation with the funding opportunity commissioning group.