



UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form

Overview of activity

	Response
Name of activity being assessed	Mid-range equipment for biosciences research: ALERT 2025
Council/department/project team	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)/ BBSRC Research Infrastructure Team
Aims and objectives of the activity	The ALERT scheme is an equipment only grant that aims to support the purchase of mid-range equipment for research across Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)'s scientific areas. A key component of this is advanced, multi-user equipment that addresses the shared needs of research organisations, industry and end user communities. This funding opportunity involves a multidisciplinary panel-only peer review and assessment, which will lead to the awarding of funding to successful applicants and institutions. It therefore requires consideration of equality, diversity, and inclusion as part of advertising, application process and assessment processes such as panel building, expert panel review and hosting the panel meeting. The following aspects should be considered as part of this equality impact assessment (EIA): • Ensuring that the submission, peer review and awarding processes are free from unintentional bias • Ensuring the process enables rigorous and fair assessment of this investment • Identifying and addressing any potential barriers to attendance and participation by a diverse range of people either as an applicant, panel member of BBSRC staff BBSRC is committed to ensuring that the processes for funding are open and inclusive. Those engaged in the processes endeavour to conduct each stage in a fair manner and without prejudice or bias. This EIA covers the application and assessment process for the ALERT 2025 funding opportunity
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	Applicants to the scheme including Research Technical Professionals (RTPs); submitting Research Organisations; Research support services; ALERT panel members and panel chairs; BBSRC staff supporting delivery of the funding opportunity.
What data and consultation have you used?	• Discussed with colleagues and reviewed EIAs developed within BBSRC for previous rounds of ALERT and comparable funding calls and peer-review activities

	• Learning from good practice in objective decision across BBSRC and UKRI peer review activities, including previous ALERT opportunities • Consultation with members of BBSRC Equality and Inclusion Policy Group on barriers to inclusion, participation, and potential bias in the decision-making process. • Consultation with panel chairs and applicants (via a post submission survey) to take learnings from ALERT 2024 • Consultation with the BBSRC events management team will occur as there is preference for an in-person meeting - a hybrid meeting format will be considered where required. Panel meeting organisation must ensure that the meetings allow attendance and participation from a diverse range of people BBSRC is dedicated to ensuring that the processes for all 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. Consultations to adopt best practices in equality have been incorporated from other UKRI/BBSRC reviews, for example: • UKRI People and Teams action plan, which addresses how UKRI will deliver on our support for technicians and RTPs as a signatory of the Technician Commitment • BBSRC's EDI Strategy, where a key action is to promote diverse representation in our assessment panel.
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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	☐	☐	If an applicant's age 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.	
Disability	☐	☒	General issues regarding UKRI's grant application systems and provisions for flexibility are addressed through policies designed to apply across our organisation. 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. If an applicant's disability 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, with the exception of prior consented disclosure in the application by the applicant. Difficulties attending the launch webinar, meetings, or panels: Individuals who have a visual disability may find it difficult to access and view the electronic call texts, attend the webinar/meetings/panels, view online	BBSRC encourages individuals to communicate their needs and will make reasonable adjustments where possible. Applicants with a disability (inclusive of physical or neurological) can cost for additional support required that is directly related to the grant. Where appropriate, the communications (for example, from the launch webinar) will be recorded and shared online and modified versions can be shared upon request (cc, alternative font, font size, font colour). In terms of the Panel BBSRC will: Strive to enable an accessible face-to-face panel meeting. In person is preferred for ALERT 25 due to business needs (quality of discussion) and in response to panel feedback.

			documentation, and/or complete the online application form. • Potential for difficulties with concentration for individuals with neuro-disabilities. • Potential difficulties for individuals with Dyslexia in terms of accessibility of written documents. • Panel members with physical disabilities may find it difficult to access a physical meeting venue and / or participate in the meeting if the assessment venue cannot cater for their needs.	• Choose a meeting venue that can accommodate any potential accessibility requirements and has the capacity to allow hybrid participation if required. A quiet room for people needing quiet space will be made available. • Ensure that plenty of breaks are built into each activity (for example, comfort breaks and a substantial lunch break). • Arrangement of appropriate colour/text will be arranged for those with visual impairments. • Allow for potential use of screen readers for participants of panel meetings who are visually impaired. • Alternatively, BBSRC will provide a printed version of documentation or guidance to anyone who is unable to view/complete it online. • Arrangements can be made upon request to provide documents in a format accessible to individuals with Dyslexia, for example written in the Dyslexie font.
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	☐	☐	As per UKRI's policies we take care to adopt gender neutral language and protect applications personal details. 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.	We will ensure to use gender neutral language in all call materials and engagement with the community.

Marriage or civil partnership	☐	☐	Applicants are not required to declare their marital or civil partnership status. Panel members are provided the opportunity to declare conflicts of interest, but never directly asked to provide their marital or civil partnership status. If an applicant or panel member's marital or civil partnership status became known to BBSRC, there is no point during the assessment process where this is disclosed. UKRI's policies protect applicant and panel members' personal data, and UKRI's Conflict of Interest policy safeguards against undue influence.	
Pregnancy and maternity	☐	☒	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 Difficulties attending funding call webinar due to maternity appointments/general wellbeing Applicants may not apply knowing that they are going on parental leave soon. Career breaks in applicant track records due to parental leave may result in the potential for unconscious bias. Panel members who are pregnant or on maternity leave may be discouraged from participating in panel meetings.	The panel webinar will be recorded and made available on the funding finder shortly after. If individuals receive a funding decision during their maternity leave period and are on leave for 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. Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI) has an optional additions section, where applicants may provide context, such as details for career breaks. 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 Panel members are provided an outline of the key dates during the assessment period which will require their participation upon invitation to participate so they can make an informed decision on their involvement. BBSRC consults with all participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation at panel meetings e.g., ensure that plenty of breaks are built into each activity (for example, comfort breaks and a substantial lunch break) and make clear that applicants can request a comfort break if required.
Race	☐	☒	It is important that selection of panel members is from a diverse community which represents the community and UK. 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 assessment process is this disclosed to panel members	BBSRC will monitor diversity of panel members and applicants to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion.
Religion or belief	☐	☒	Key dates for the call could coincide with religious holidays, resulting in applicants and/or panel members being unable to, or requiring flexibility to participate.	BBSRC ensures that religious observances are considered as much as possible when timetabling major activities. appropriate to ensure flexibility to participate whilst observing religious holidays. Applicants are provided an outline of the key dates (e.g. closing date, webinar date) on the Funding Finder as soon as the call is open

				Panel members are provided an outline of the key dates during the assessment period which will require their participation upon invitation to participate so they can make an informed decision on their involvement. BBSRC will ensure that the panel meeting venue caters for all dietary requirements. A quiet room for people needing quiet space or space for prayer will be made available.
Sexual orientation	☐	☐	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.	
Sex	☐	☒	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. It is important that selection of panel members is from a diverse community which represents the community and UK. The awards are open to all eligible researchers. However, given the greater proportion of males at the mid and advanced career stages (HESA, 2022/23) this could result in an increased proportion of applications from male project leads to the scheme. During panel building in preparation for a meeting, gender is considered to ensure equal representation as far as practicable.	To avoid potential unconscious bias, first names and titles of applicants will not be used during virtual meeting discussions; but instead, application and extranet numbers are used for discussing applications. BBSRC will ensure that the call text highlights the importance of a diverse team Diversity of panel members will be monitored to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion.

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)	☐	☒	Panel members may be prevented from participating due to the travel requirement associated with in person meetings During panel building in preparation for the meeting, geographical spread across the UK is considered as far as practicable to ensure representation.	BBSRC will: Consider a hybrid meeting format where required Use discussion boards to allow robust participation in the assessment outside the panel meeting as required.
Socio-economic status	☐	☐	If an applicant's socio-economic status became known to the panel members, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members	
Education background	☒	☒	Building on the <u>Technician Commitment UKRI Action Plan</u> and the <u>UKRI people and teams action plan</u> , applications are particularly encouraged from RTPs as either project leads or project co-leads (positive impact).	The Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI) enables applicants to describe their track record, and additionally to describe any factors that provide context, such as career breaks.

			Panel members are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds (academia, industry, early career researchers, RTPs, and those with a non-traditional background). However, some of these areas may be underrepresented	Steps have been taken to minimise the potential impact of unconscious bias in the assessment process see below for more information in general or overarching impacts section.
Parent/guardian responsibilities	☐	☒	Potential difficulties with application preparation, meeting/panel preparation/attendance, completion of peer review activities, due to school holidays. Panel members may find it difficult to participate if they have caring responsibilities	Applicants are provided an outline of the key dates (e.g. closing date, webinar date) on the Funding Finder as soon as the call is open. Submission dates and the webinar dates are scheduled within the times of a normal working day and outside of school holidays where possible. Within the confines of the budget spend requirements, the funding opportunity has been designed to allow the maximum possible time during the application phase, whilst safeguarding robust and transparent peer review. The closing date of the call has been moved later into January to give additional time after the Christmas break after feedback form ALERT 24 applicants. Expectations and dates for all aspects of the panel process are set out as far in advance as possible, allowing for preparation for participants to cover any caring responsibilities. Where possible, BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours. Features of the panel assessment period, such as the online discussion boards, have

				been implemented to allow for flexible working patterns. Members of the panel will be able to reclaim reasonable costs for additional caring responsibilities resulting from BBSRC business.
Carer/parent carer responsibilities	☐	☒	Potential difficulties with application preparation, meeting/panel preparation/attendance, completion of peer review activities, due to school holidays. Childcare management during webinar/meetings/panels, application writing, and preparation for panels.	Applicants are provided an outline of the key dates (e.g. closing date, webinar date) on the Funding Finder as soon as the call is open. Submission dates and the webinar dates are scheduled within the times of a normal working day and outside of school holidays where possible. Within the confines of the budget spend requirements, the funding opportunity has been designed to allow the maximum possible time during the application phase, whilst safeguarding robust and transparent peer review. The closing date of the call has been moved later into January to give additional time after the Christmas break after feedback from ALERT 24 applicants. Expectations and dates for all aspects of the panel process are set out as far in advance as possible, allowing for preparation for participants to cover any caring responsibilities. Where possible, BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours. Features of the panel assessment period, such as the online discussion boards, have

				been implemented to allow for flexible working patterns. Members of the panel will be able to reclaim reasonable costs for additional caring responsibilities resulting from BBSRC business.
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	☐	☐	If an applicant's political opinion became known to the panel members, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members	
Other characteristics	☐	☐		

Are there general or overarching impacts on multiple groups? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?	UKRI is committed to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in all we do, so that we can maximise the impact of our research and innovation to involve and benefit all parts of society. Everything we fund must embrace a diversity of thought, people and ideas. Applicants are signposted to our EDI policies and provisions, to include guidance for those who have taken career breaks or need 'reasonable adjustments' to support them in the application process. The Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI) has an optional additions section, where applicants may provide context, such as details for career breaks, alternative career paths, information about a disability or long-term health condition. The ALERT scheme adopts the standard UKRI Terms and Conditions of Research Grants, and these are designed to support equality, diversity and inclusion in all that we do. UKRI collates EDI data on grant applicants and publishes this annually. UKRI's Conflict of Interest policy sets out our expectations, alongside our commitment to the Nolan Principles and our Code of Conduct. In the case of exceptional demand for ALERT 25, we reserve the right to ask research organisations to undertake further internal prioritisation. This may indirectly result in
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	negative impact to multiple groups and as such further assessment of the equality impacts and consultation will be undertaken if required. In line with UKRI's reasonable adjustments guidance, where an application includes costs for reasonable adjustment, UKRI will ensure they are eligible, and these should be accepted without comment. Panel members will receive a briefing on Methods of Working and objective decision making (for example, by webinar). Panel members will also be invited to inform BBSRC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation, and reasonable adjustments will be pursued where possible. Panel members must avoid any bias in their final reports due to gender, disability, age, racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation and religious belief. Panel members' comments must not break this policy or be defamatory or otherwise actionable. The new UKRI Funding Service, contains an expanded set of questions asked of applicants, which includes some or all, of the protected characteristics above. Data processing will be in line with data protection practice and use will be subject to the new UKRI Funding Service Data Protection Impact Assessment. BBSRC is dedicated to ensuring that the processes for the ALERT scheme 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: For applicants • The call is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience • The call text and guidance clearly state the eligibility and assessment criteria and ask questions in a clear and descriptive way • The UKRI funding finder website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites, including the ability to adjust the text size or use a text reader on the page. • BBSRC supports applicants as much as possible, both before and after submission, to assist them in the application and assessment process.
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- Applicants can contact the funding opportunity lead to discuss individual needs and support in the application process
- Applicants can contact peer review support to provide sensitive information, for example unavailability due to parental leave.
- BBSRC consults with applicants regarding business improvements including a questionnaire sent after the call closes for feedback

For panel members

- Everyone involved in the decision-making process has had or will receive training in Unconscious Bias to raise awareness of conditions that may impact on their decision-making
- BBSRC is committed to enabling participation for people with alternative work patterns, including reduced working hours
- Panel members are asked to inform BBSRC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation
- BBSRC consults with panel members on a regular basis regarding business improvements including a questionnaire sent after each meeting for feedback
- BBSRC consults with the panel chairs informally throughout the panel meeting period
- BBSRC provides regular training and guidance on new or revised ways of working.

Evaluation

Final Decision:	Select the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No negative or positive impact identified; therefore, activity will proceed .	☐	
2. Adapt or change the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.	☒	Potential for negative impact has been evaluated. Actions to address negative impacts identified are being applied as per the previous section. Should additional impacts be identified throughout the ALERT 25 assessment process, ad hoc mitigations strategies will be discussed with EDI and peer review policy colleagues as required. These additional impacts will then be integrated into the EIA at its next revision point.
3. Stop the activity because the evidence shows bias or negative impact towards one or more groups.	☐	
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.	☐	

Continued below...

Review and sign off

What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?	BBSRC will conduct post-meeting surveys for chairs, panel members and post submission survey to applicants to gain feedback about the opportunity. Any feedback received will be reviewed and used to inform updates to future EIA for repeated opportunities. BBSRC will review this equality impact assessment annually to identify any further actions or interventions that are required to improve the diversity and inclusion of the scheme. BBSRC monitors, analyses and publishes data to better understand the diversity of our applicant and assessor community. BBSRC is proactive in increasing the diversity of our reviewers and panel members. Panel membership for each meeting is published on the website after the funding decisions have been made and all outcomes communicated to applicants. Further information: https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/equality-diversity/
Next review date:	25/09/2026
Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes
Point of contact	Dr Jennifer Swarbrick Dr Tim Shuttleworth Dr Charlotte Cooper

Signed off by (name and date):	Daniela Hensen, 29 September 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 <u>the EIA submission form</u> EIAs for ODA and non-ODA ISPF programmes should be emailed to: ISPF@ukri.org	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Amelia Townley-Taylor	14/09/2023	v1.0	Created for 2023 ALERT
Geoffrey Maycock	18/09/2024	v2.0	Reviewed and updated for 2024 ALERT
Charlotte Cooper	24/09/2025	v3.0	Reviewed and updated for 2025 ALERT
Jennifer Swarbrick	25/09/2025	v3.1	Reviewed and updated for 2025 ALERT

Continued below...

Action plan

Action	Deadline	Owner	How will it be monitored?	What is/will be the impact/outcome?