



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

	Response
Name of activity being assessed	Sandpit: Reservoir Computing for UK national security and defence
Council/department/project team	EPSRC
Aims and objectives of the activity	Call for Participants for a Sandpit on reservoir computing for UK national security and defence, followed by funding of projects. The Sandpit will be held over five days, with some days being in-person and others being virtual. The broad aims of the sandpit are to generate research proposals which can: • take into account the needs of UK defence and security stakeholders from across government • form new collaborations between researchers, innovators and government users of research (stakeholders) in diverse research areas • create new and transformative research ideas in RC, and allowing researchers to pitch projects for funding to test and de-risk novel ideas • address key research challenges that are identified and described at the sandpit • can be led by researchers who have not worked in this sector before This EIA covers all aspects of the Sandpit including advertising, application process, participant selection, panel selection, hosting the sandpit activity, and peer review procedures.
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	UK HEIs; • Admin Staff • Academics (social scientists, physical scientists, materials scientists/engineers, engineers, computer scientists and innovators) as sandpit participants or mentors. EPSRC staff Government stakeholders Contracted facilitators
What data and consultation have you used?	Consultation has taken place across UKRI with EPSRC discussing the remit and format of the sandpit with other research councils within UKRI and the academic community. Government input has been

provided and facilitated by Dstl. Academics and industrialists have been approached for input via various EPSRC Strategic Advisory Teams and utilising portfolio manager knowledge and suggestions of relevant community members. Further input has been and will continue to be sought through the Sandpit director and mentors. Previous Sandpit EIAs have been consulted.

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	☐	☒	Early career researchers* may be disadvantaged in the application process as they don't have the same track record to draw on to demonstrate how they meet the assessment criteria. (*It is assumed that early career researchers are generally younger than their more experienced peers, although this is by no	The opportunity has standard EPSRC eligibility with respect to career stages. We intend to ensure that the sandpit consists of a variety of career stages as opposed to solely highly experienced participants. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be

			means always the case. This is why this point has been included under 'age'). There could be potential bias or discrimination against a participant (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants).	provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias.
Disability	☐	☒	There could be potential bias or discrimination against a participant (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants). There may be potential for bullying and harassment and/or exclusionary practices to occur during the in-person event and subsequent online events/follow up activities. People with visual disabilities may find it difficult to access and view the online materials. People with physical disabilities may find it difficult to attend in person, especially if poor transport links.	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias. The virtual element of the sandpit will contain appropriate breaks. We will ensure that it is possible to print the online documents and they are in a form that text can be enlarged, and any information displayed by screen sharing can be zoomed as needed. Where possible, consideration will be given to the use of weblinks and acronyms (such as in the Call Document) as this information is not readily compatible with text readers. For the in-person days, EPSRC will select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific

				requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation e.g. subtitles for presentations. We have welcomed applications and enquiries from individuals with additional needs for whom specific provisions may need to be made.
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	☐	☒	There could be potential bias or discrimination against a participant (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants). There may be potential for bullying and harassment and/or exclusionary practices to occur during the in-person event and subsequent online events/follow up activities. Trans people may be absent from work because of transition and UKRI records may show the wrong gender.	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias. For the in-person days, EPSRC will select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation e.g. gender neutral toilets. We will strive to achieve a gender balance in mentor selection, with all considerations to ensure mentors are representative of the wider UK population. UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature on absence due to medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to

				transition would be covered by the Research Organisation's sick policy and strongly encourage research organisations to treat absence relating to transition like any other sick absence. Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted.
Marriage or civil partnership	☐	☐	No impact identified.	
Pregnancy and maternity	☐	☒	There could be potential bias or discrimination against a participant (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants). There may be potential for bullying and harassment and/or exclusionary practices to occur during the in-person event and subsequent online events/follow up activities. Participation in the sandpit may be negatively affected, if potential applicants or peer reviewers are unavailable at key stages. Inability to attend due to childcare commitments may affect who can participate. Health restrictions related to pregnancy.	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias. Full timeline provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with EPSRC on specific mitigations. EPSRC will do its best to accommodate adjustments. EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries.

				Sandpits are intense with a high cognitive load. Sufficient rest time will be allocated to the sandpit agenda, and any specific requirements for rest can be taken into consideration by EPSRC.
Race	☐	☒	There could be potential bias or discrimination because somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) is from a particular ethnic background. There may be opportunities for bullying and harassment during the sandpit or project.	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias.
Religion or belief	☐	☒	There could be potential bias or discrimination because somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) has a particular faith or belief. There may be opportunities for bullying and harassment during the sandpit or project. Participation in the opportunity may be affected, if potential applicants or peer reviewers are unavailable at key assessment stages (Activities could coincide with religious holidays, for example).	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias. EPSRC will ensure that religious observances are taken into account during the event. A full timeline will be provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with EPSRC on specific mitigations. EPSRC will do its best to accommodate adjustments.

Sexual orientation	☐	☒	There may be potential for bullying and harassment and/or exclusionary practices to occur during the in-person event and subsequent online events/follow up activities	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit.
Sex	☐	☒	There could be potential bias or discrimination against a participant (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants). There may be potential for bullying and harassment and/or exclusionary practices to occur during the in-person event and subsequent online events/follow up activities. Use of language in call for expressions of interest can present a barrier to participation. Attendees may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities.	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from those from diverse backgrounds. In line with EPSRC policy we will aim for a 30% representation of the underrepresented gender for the panel members (mentors) at the sandpit. We will ensure the use of gender-neutral language in the call specification, guidance documents and during delivery of the sandpit. EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals

				should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries.
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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)	☐	☒	Sandpit will be in a physical location, requiring travel.	When selecting the venue, transport links will be a key consideration, aiming for a range of transport options to be available to cater to different needs. Accommodation will be provided to ensure participation is not hampered by costs. T&S costs will be reimbursed.
Socio-economic status	☐	☒	Sandpit will be in a physical location, requiring travel.	Accommodation will be provided to ensure participation is not hampered by costs. T&S costs will be reimbursed.
Education background	☐	☐	No impact identified.	
Parent/guardian responsibilities	☐	☒	Sandpit participation will include a 4-day residential period.	EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries. The sandpit will be held outside of school holidays if at all possible.

			The short opening period of the Expression of Interest form may disproportionately affect those with less time available due to caring etc.	The Eol form is designed to be quite light-touch and not be onerous to complete.
Carer/parent carer responsibilities	☐	☒	Sandpit participation will include a 4-day residential period. The short opening period of the Expression of Interest form may disproportionately affect those with less time available due to caring etc.	EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries. The Eol form is designed to be quite light-touch and not be onerous to complete.
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	☐	☐	N/A	
Other characteristics	☐	☐	N/A	

Are there general or overarching impacts on multiple groups ? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?	A number of overarching impacts have been identified and actively considered as part of the sandpit call design and internal management processes for call delivery. These risks have been mitigated as far as possible. These include: Impacts related to the sandpit being held in a physical location Mitigations: • EPSRC will select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation. • When selecting the venue, transport links will be a key consideration, aiming for a range of transport options to be available to cater to different needs. • Accommodation will be provided to ensure participation is not hampered by costs. T&S costs will be reimbursed. • Full timeline provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with EPSRC on specific mitigations. EPSRC will do its best to accommodate adjustments. • EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries. • The sandpit will be held outside of school holidays if at all possible.
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	Impacts related to the potential for discrimination against people with protected characteristics Mitigations: • Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. • We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias.
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Continued below...

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.	☒	Mitigating actions have been identified to promote inclusion, and will be implemented throughout the process as identified in the table above
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?	Review EIA: • Before participant selection panel • Before in-person event • Evaluate after event and funding decisions have been completed
Next review date:	

Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes
Point of contact	Greg Smith
Signed off by (name and date):	Greg Smith 04/11/2025

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



Name	Date	Version	Change
Greg Smith	04/11/2025	1	Completion of EIA Assessment for Activity

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?
Timetable of key dates made available to applicants and panel members as far in advance as possible.	November 2025	Staff involved in delivering this funding opportunity.	Key dates will be identified when call is published.	Applicants have as much time as possible to prepare applications.
Unconscious bias training to be delivered to panel members. EPSRC members of staff will monitor all meetings and highlight instances of bias in conversations.	January 2026	Staff involved in delivering this funding opportunity.	Unconscious bias training within panel briefing. EPSRC staff presence at meetings.	Preventing unconscious bias as much as possible in panel discussions.