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	2026 Diet and Health: Collaborative Research and Development Grants Programme
Council/department/project team	Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC): Business Interaction Unit (BIU) in collaboration with Research Innovation Funding Delivery (RIFD) team Joint call with Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
Aims and objectives of the activity	The aim of this current Programme is to build on the successes of the previous work of the Diet and Health OIRC, which was also co-funded by Defra. It will serve the research community by introducing further investment which will allow researchers to create novel food and drink products and/or innovations that can deliver healthy, sustainable, and resilient diets supporting a productive UK population and a thriving food and drink sector. The scope of this programme should address one or more of the following priority areas: a) Improving the nutrition of food and drink products to support populations at higher risk of malnutrition and/or muscle loss, for example those using GLP-1 drugs, older population groups and those from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. b) Supporting research and innovation to assess the impact of food processing and final food product composition on health, including but not restricted to assessing and improving the nutritive value retained by different processing methods, as well as evaluating the impact of food additives and emulsifiers on human physiology, to develop innovations and sustainable alternatives to support healthy sustainable diets. c) Improving environmental outcomes for novel innovations in the food and drink sector for example by considering a circular economy approach seeking to reduce waste and food losses. Key Features: • There will be a two-stage application process: a mandatory Notification of Intent stage followed by a full application stage • The Notification of Intent stage will be internally assessed for scope and remit to the call • The full applications will be assessed by a panel of experts

	This funding opportunity requires consideration of equality as part of the application process and assessment related processes, such as panel building and hosting panel meetings. There are three aspects to this Equality Impact Assessment (EIA): • Ensuring that the submission, assessment process and awarding processes are free from unintentional bias • Ensuring the process enables rigorous assessment of this investment • Identifying and addressing any potential barriers to participation by a diverse range of people UKRI-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 2026 Diet and Health: Collaborative Research and Development Grants opportunity.
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	Applicants to the scheme, research offices, submitting organisations, panel members and chairs, BBSRC and Defra secretariat and employees supporting the delivery of the funding opportunity.
What data and consultation have you used?	• Consultation of previous EIAs developed within BBSRC for comparable peer review activities • Learning from best practice in objective decision making across BBSRC peer review activities, including previous initiative calls • Consultation with BBSRC's EDI and peer review policy experts on barriers to inclusion, participation and potential bias in the decision-making process • Consultation with BBSRC's Appointments Panel secretariat to ensure diversity of panel membership • Maintenance of two-way channels of communication between UKRI-BBSRC and external stakeholders • External data e.g. Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data

Analysing your impact

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

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Protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown	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.
Age	☐	☐	If an applicant's age became known to the panel or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or 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. 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. 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.	Applicants with a disability (inclusive of physical or neurological) can cost for additional support required that is directly related to the grant. Panel members are advised applications may include these costs for reasonable adjustments and are advised they should be accepted without comment. UKRI will ensure their eligibility. Disability and accessibility support for applicants and grant holders is offered during the application and assessment periods and, the ability to provide information in their applications about disability or long -term health conditions that

				they may wish to be considered by panel members. UKRI -BBSRC will: • Use a virtual meeting format and Discussion boards following UKRIs Virtual -first policy • Respond to individual support needs on a case-by-case basis. • Ensure that electronic information is accessible • Gather information from meeting participants about any additional requirement they may need to fully participate • Ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the panel meeting agenda • Allow for potential use of screen readers for participants of panel meetings who are visually impaired • Ensure that colours chosen, and other visual stimuli do not trigger migraines or affect those with colour blindness; different colours may assist with this if participants do not bring their own laptops to panel meetings
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 members, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point	BBSRC will ensure to use gender neutral language in all call materials and engagement with the community.

			during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.	
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 UKRI-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	☐	☒	Panel members who are pregnant or on maternity leave may be discouraged from participating in panel meetings. 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 to panel members. Career breaks in applicant track records due to parental leave may result in the potential for unconscious bias.	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. UKRI-BBSRC consults with all participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation. Panel members are provided an outline of the key dates during the assessment period which will require their participation upon

R4RI				invitation to participate so they can make an informed decision on their involvement. 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.
Race	☐	☒	If an applicant's race or ethnicity 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. Individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds are underrepresented as academic staff (HESA, 2022/23). It is important that selection of panel members is from a diverse community which represents the community and UK as a whole.	UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of panel members and applicants to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion
Religion or belief	☐	☒	Assessment timelines may fall over religious holidays resulting in applicants and/or panel members being unable to or requiring flexibility to participate.	UKRI-BBSRC ensures that religious observances are considered as much as possible when timetabling major activities. Applicants are provided an outline of the key dates during the assessment period which will require their participation as soon as possible after the close date of the opportunity.

				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. When applicable, UKRI-BBSRC ensures that the 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 members, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to the panel members.	
Sex	☐	☒	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. If an applicant's sex 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.	UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of panel members to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion. 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. UKRI-BBSRC will ensure that the call text highlights the importance of a diverse team.

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Additional characteristics

Additional characteristics	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown	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).
Geographical location and place (consider UK and international offices)	☐	☒	Panel members may be prevented from participating due to the travel requirement associated for in person meetings. During panel building in preparation for a meeting, geographical spread across the UK is considered as far as practicable to ensure representation.	UKRI-BBSRC will: Use a virtual meeting format and Discussion Boards following UKRI's Virtual-first policy
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	☐	☒	Project lead applicants must have a contract of employment at lecturer level or equivalent. Panel members are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds (academia, industry, early career researchers, and those with a non-traditional background). However, some of these areas may be underrepresented.	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. 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 | ☐ | ☒ | Panel members may find it difficult to participate if they have caring responsibilities | UKRI-BBSRC ensures that school holidays are considered where possible when timetabling discussion boards and virtual meetings.

Expectations and dates for all aspects of the process are set out as far in advance as possible, allowing for preparation for participants to cover any caring responsibilities.

Where possible, UKRI-BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours.

UKRI-BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on UKRI-BBSRC business. |
| Carer/parent carer responsibilities | ☐ | ☒ | Panel members may find it difficult to participate if they have caring responsibilities | UKRI-BBSRC ensures that school holidays are considered where possible when timetabling discussion boards and virtual meetings.

Expectations and dates for all aspects of the process are set out as far in advance as possible, allowing for preparation for participants to cover any caring responsibilities.

Where possible, UKRI-BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours. |

				UKRI-BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on UKRI-BBSRC business.
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	☐	☐		
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?	UKRI is committed to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) 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 UKRI-BBSRC Diet and Health: Collaborative Research and Development Grants Programme 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.

Operationally we have particularly focussed on considering applicant and panel members' time commitments ensuring that, where possible, the preparation of applications, closing dates, assessment periods and all panel meetings take into consideration school holidays.

Materials for applicants and assessors are provided online, and in accessible formats where required.

Virtual settings for panel training and for panel meetings and locations and venues for post-award engagements are designed to be physically and neurologically |

accessible, with agendas considerate of EDI, and all engagements incorporate reasonable adjustments as required to support applicants, assessors and award holders.

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 must avoid any bias in their final reports due to; gender, disability, age, racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation and religious belief. Panel members 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.

UKRI-BBSRC is dedicated to ensuring that the processes for the Diet and Health: Collaborative Research and Development Grants Programme 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-BBSRC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites, including the ability to adjust the text size or use a text reader on the page
- UKRI-BBSRC supports applicants as much as possible, both before and after submission, to assist them in the application and assessment process

- UKRI-BBSRC will provide light-touch feedback following the Notification of Intent stage to aid applicants' preparation for submission to the full stage
- Applicants can contact the funding opportunity lead to discuss individual needs and support in the application process via a dedicated inbox
- Applicants can contact peer review support to provide sensitive information, for example unavailability due to parental leave.

For panel members:
- 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
- UKRI-BBSRC is committed to enabling participation for people with alternative work patterns, including reduced working hours
- Panel members are asked to inform UKRI-BBSRC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation
- UKRI-BBSRC consults with panel members on a regular basis regarding business improvements including a questionnaire sent after each meeting for feedback
- UKRI-BBSRC consults with the panel chairs informally throughout the panel meeting period
- UKRI-BBSRC provides regular training and guidance on new or revised ways of working

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.	☐	
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.	☐	

Review and sign off

What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?	UKRI-BBSRC will review this equality impact assessment as the programme progresses to identify any further actions or interventions that are required to improve the diversity and inclusion of the scheme. UKRI-BBSRC monitors, analyses and publishes data to better understand the diversity of our applicant and assessor community. UKRI-BBSRC is proactive in increasing the diversity of our 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:	April 2026

Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes
Point of contact	Elly Tyacke
Signed off by (name and date):	Elly Tyacke, Senior Portfolio Manager, Research and Innovation Funding Delivery (RIFD) team lead. January 2026

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Elly Tyacke	January 2026	1	EIA created for BBSRC/Defra 2026 Diet and Health: Collaborative Research and Development Grants Programme

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?