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	ESRC Decision Maker Panel 2026-2029 (invite only)
Council/department/project team	ESRC Productivity and Growth
Aims and objectives of the activity	This funding opportunity will support a further three-year funding phase of the ESRC funded Decision Maker Panel (DMP). This new phase will continue the collection of data from key business decision makers across a wide range of firm sizes and sectors, capturing their expectations and the uncertainties facing their businesses. It will also ensure that the resulting data are made available to the research community in line with ESRC's research data policy. This invite-only opportunity is designed to ensure continuity of the DMP survey time series. The DMP has provided unique and valuable evidence base for understanding the implications of some of the significant economic events on the UK economy in recent years. This funding will sustain the high-quality data collection and stewardship that underpin the DMP, ensuring continued access to robust high-quality data available to researchers in academia and government. Applications will be submitted via The Funding Service and assessed by a small review panel through an online meeting.
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	• Applicants • Evaluation panel members • ESRC staff organising the opportunity, including the panel meeting. • Wider research and policy community (indirectly affected) through access to the data generated by the DMP
What data and consultation have you used?	• Consultation with ESRC colleagues on the appropriateness of this EIA • Information from previous funding awards for the Decision Maker Panel • Previous EIAs, both withing and outside UKRI

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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	☐	☒	See General Equality and Diversity Considerations An Invite-only opportunity may unintentionally favour experienced networks and stablished researchers. Early career researchers may face some disadvantages as they may have differential access to networks or not have the same track record as an experienced researcher. This is assuming that early career researchers are younger than more experienced peers.	Track record is not assessed as a standalone evaluation criterion, recognising its close relationship to career stage and age. Applicants are not required to disclose their age at any stage of the application process. Panel members will be asked to apply a *career stage equivalence* criterion when assessing applications, ensuring fair and proportionate evaluation of experience and contributions.
Disability	☐	☒	See General Equality and Diversity Considerations	**Disability Access and Accessibility Considerations**

				Barriers my arise in application systems or panel formats. Neurodiverse and/or disabled applicants may face difficulties with the application process and accessibility, with a specific focus on concentration and focus during application writing. This consideration includes participation from panel members.	The Funding Service has been designed to comply with recognised disability access and accessibility standards, ensuring that applicants and panel members can engage fully and equitably with the application and assessment process. Applicants will be signposted to <u>Disability and accessibility support for UKRI applicants and grant holders – UKRI</u>, which provides guidance and practical support throughout the funding lifecycle. Both applicants and panel members will be given the opportunity to confidentially disclose any reasonable adjustments required to support their full participation in the process. Requests will be handled sensitively and in confidence, with adjustments implemented wherever feasible to remove barriers to engagement. **Digital Accessibility and Inclusive Participation** We will take steps to ensure that all digital guidance. Application forms and assessment material are accessible and inclusive. This includes adherence to recognised digital accessibility standards and best practice. The use of online meeting platforms will be designed to create an accessible and inclusive environment for all participants. Considerations include, but are not limited to:

				• Enabling chat functionality, closed captioning, and volume control to support participants with hearing or communication requirements. • Ensuring all digital materials meet recognised accessibility standards, enabling equal access for all users. • Designing online meetings with inclusivity in mind by considering overall length, building in regular breaks, and shortening sessions where appropriate., • Ensuring staff have sufficient EDI training to be able to respond effectively to requirements of all applicants and panel participants.
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	☐	☒	See General Equality and Diversity Considerations Invite-only process might increase concerns related with disclosure, misnaming and misuse of a person's pronouns or suitable options for titles may not be available on funding platforms and documents.	Ensure the use of gender-neutral inclusive language where possible in the documents utilised in this application. Ensure preferred names and pronouns are accurately captured and used consistently across systems and at all stages of the process, including briefing panel members on respectful and inclusive practices.
Marriage or civil partnership	☐	☐	N/A No specific impacts anticipated beyond safeguarding against discrimination. Applicants are not asked at any point in the application to disclose their civil status.	N/A
Pregnancy and maternity	☐	☒	See General Equality and Diversity Considerations	Provision for parental leave are covered in UKRI terms and conditions.

			An Invite-only opportunity timeline may be more restrictive and less flexible, creating barriers for applicants on leave, with childcare responsibilities or with health needs. Completion of the application may be affected by different types of parental leave. Childcare responsibilities could be a barrier to application submission or attendance to panel meeting.	Dates for application submission and panel meeting will be agreed and communicated well in advance, enabling applicants and panel members (attendees) to plan appropriately and make any necessary arrangements to support participation. Panel meetings will be designed with flexibility and wellbeing in mind, including the scheduling of regular breaks and consideration of reasonable adjustments to accommodate caring responsibilities (including childcare), health needs, or other personal circumstances where required.
Race	☐	☒	See General Equality and Diversity Considerations An invite-only opportunity risks the perpetuation of existing network biases. UKRI diversity data for applicants and awardees shows the inequalities existing in awarding rates between applicants that identify as White (higher success rates) compared to applicants who identify as being from a minority (lower success rate). Minority researchers are also underrepresented in panel membership.	Adopt a transparent, evidence-based approach to the selection of invitees and panel members, using defined and published criteria. This will include consideration alongside diversity of perspectives, backgrounds, and lived experience.
Religion or belief	☐	☒	See General Equality and Diversity Considerations Scheduling of application deadline and panel meeting may disadvantage some religious	Ensure religious observances are appropriately considered when scheduling panel meetings, to support inclusive participation for all members. This may include:

	Positive	Negative		
		☒	groups, as religious holidays or practices may present a barrier to attending panel meeting.	• Avoiding scheduling meetings during major religious festivals and holy days, where possible. • Being mindful of specific days or times associated with religious observance that may conflict with attendance (e.g. prayer times).
Sexual orientation	☐	☒	See General Equality and Diversity Considerations	Ensure materials are LGBTQ+ inclusive, reflecting respect for diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, and expressions.
Sex	☐	☒	See General Equality and Diversity Considerations Potential discrimination given it is known somebody has a particular gender. Use of language can be a barrier to participation.	Gender-neutral and inclusive language will be used consistently across all documentation, including call specifications, applicant guidance, assessment criteria, and panel material. Ensure the panel has balanced gender representation, taking a proactive approach to achieving diversity across gender identities.

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).

	Yes	No	Description	Mitigation
Geographical location and place (consider UK and international offices)	☒	☐	The meetings considered for this opportunity will be held virtually, allowing panel members from a diverse range of geographical locations to participate.	All applicants and panel members will be asked to declare any personal circumstances requiring additional support and considerations or specific considerations.
Socio-economic status	☐	☒	Participants in all the activities proposed for this opportunity will not incur in any expenses.	The panel meeting will be scheduled at appropriate times and communicated with sufficient notice to allow participants to rearrange work commitments where necessary. Applicants are expected to apply through the Research Organisation, which helps to remove many potential accessibility barriers providing institutional support. Applicants and panel members will be contacted directly by ESRC staff, ensuring they ensuring they have the opportunity to highlight any additional needs or request further support or reasonable adjustments.
Education background	☐	☒	Potential difficulties in understanding jargon/language used by panel members from a different background, outside of academia or in a different discipline	Ensure that unnecessary jargon and/or academic language are not used to prevent potential barriers to understanding.
Parent/guardian responsibilities	☐	☒	Invite-only opportunities may conflict with childcare commitments, presenting potential difficulties attending panel meetings.	The timeline for the opportunity will be shared well in advance of the deadline, enabling applicants to make appropriate arrangements around parental leave or childcare responsibilities. Panel member participation will be scheduled in due consideration of a caring responsibility. All panel participants will be asked to highlight any personal

				circumstances that may require additional support or reasonable adjustments.
Carer/parent carer responsibilities	☐	☒	Caring responsibilities may reduce ability to participate in invite-only condensed submission windows. Potential difficulties attending panel meetings.	The timeline for the opportunity will be shared well in advance of the deadline, enabling applicants to make appropriate arrangements around caring responsibilities. Panel member participation will be scheduled in due consideration of caring responsibilities. All panel participants will be invited to highlight any personal circumstances that may require additional support or reasonable adjustments.
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	☐	☐	N/A	N/A
Other characteristics	☐	☒	Avoid the assumption that everyone has equal access to technological devices and internet. Barriers my increase in invite-only processes where expectations are high and timelines a reduced.	All panel participants will be asked to highlight any personal circumstances that may require additional support or reasonable adjustments. Where necessary, alternative formats for information will be provided, appropriate arrangements will be made to ensure access to information. Applicants and panel members are expected to seek assistance from their Research Organizations if they experience difficulties related to technological access.

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** ESRC is committed to go above and beyond complying with Equality legislation to ensure that our processes are as fair and equitable as they can be. **Eligibility criteria** ESRC Decision Maker Panel 2026-2029 is an invite-only funding opportunity. This approach was approved by ESRC's Executive Board, as a primary objective of the funding opportunity is to maintain an unbroken data series consistent that is consistent with data collected under previous awards. Given short timeframes for delivery - arising from the timing of the 2025 UKRI Budget Allocation- an invite-only funding opportunity was deemed the only viable funding route to maintain the continuity of the data series before the current grant ends. • Applicants are eligible for funding regardless of whether they are established members of a recognised Research Organization (RO). Applicants who are not established members of an RO, must be formally supported by a RO which must confirm that appropriate facilities and support will be provided to carry out the research. • All Applicants will be required to describe how Equality, diversity and Inclusion will be embedded within their proposed work. Responses will be assessed by the panel as part of the application review process. **Support for UKRI applicants** • Applicants will have the opportunity to share, in confidence, any arrangements required to support their participation in the opportunity by contacting the office at DMP@esrc.ukri.org • Applicants may experience challenges due to the application window being shorter than the recommended four-week period. This approach has been discussed with the invited applicants and has been adopted in response to a strategic delivery timeline to ensure continuity of the project. Applicants are encouraged to contact ESRC should with any queries or issues arise during the application process. • This funding opportunity will affect only those investments that have been invited to apply.

	Panel recruitment • Panel members are appointed based on relevant expertise. In doing so, we will seek to appoint a diverse panel, with final decisions taking into account diversity of career status, stage and institutional representation. **Panel process** • All panel members will receive guidance covering key principles, including fairness, objectivity and the mitigation of unconscious bias. • Panel members are responsible for moderating and assessing the quality of peer review and for agreeing on a final score for each proposal. • The Panel Chairs and Panel Secretaries play a particularly important role in ensuring consistency and fairness. An implementation intention statement will be read out at the start of the commissioning panel meeting, setting expectation for discussions and reinforcing the need to adhere closely to the published scoring criteria and definitions. **Panel meeting** • The meeting will be held virtually to provide an accessible and inclusive environment for participants, including those with parental/caring responsibilities or disabilities. • More information on specific arrangements provided in the relevant sections of this form.

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.	☒	The mitigations outlined will enable the opportunity to be adaptable to overcome barriers on accessibility and eliminate potential bias.
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?	• Plan regular reviews of the EIA and action plan, monitored though regular reporting and meetings
Next review date:	

Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	No
Point of contact	DMP@esrc.ukri.org
Signed off by (name and date):	David Bowkett

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
		1	E.g. Based on input received from consultation groups at the **business case** stage, added actions under the gender section
		2	E.g. Based on input received from x at the **announcement of opportunity** stage, added/removed/edited x
		3	E.g. Based on input received from x at the **investment authorisation** stage, added/removed/edited x

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?
e.g. Update application form to include questions on additional support and reasonable adjustments	December 2023	Applications manager	Updated form published and submissions reflect individual needs	Individual needs can be addressed. Inform inclusive design of the activity