



EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
<p>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</p>	<p>Materials Innovation Partnerships</p>
<p>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</p>	<p>Aim</p> <p>This funding forms part of the National Materials Innovation Programme (NMIP), announced as part of the Advanced Manufacturing Sector Plan in the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy.</p> <p>Objectives</p> <p>Through this funding opportunity, EPSRC aims to support a portfolio of at least four ambitious, collaborative, fundamental research programmes, spanning the breadth of the six high-growth opportunity themes identified in the National Materials Innovation Strategy (NMIS).</p> <p>These projects must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • co-created and co-delivered by business and academic partners and; • add value under at least one of the six high-growth opportunity themes <p>By co-investing in basic and applied research projects alongside business, we aim to create long-term prosperity for the UK, for example by bringing jobs and revenue growth, or addressing broader societal and sustainability issues.</p> <p>Projects should aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accelerate advanced materials research and development, focusing on real-world challenges • speed up the translation of materials innovation towards industrial application • develop novel or enhanced materials solutions to meet business needs
<p>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</p>	<p>As part of the National Materials Innovation Programme (NMIP), the approach of this opportunity has been consulted with the National Materials Innovation Programme board, the</p>

	Materials Innovation Leadership Group, and UKRI Exco.
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>A wide range of stakeholders, including businesses of any size, academia and other project partners, can apply for the opportunity.</p> <p>Assessment will be done by panel members.</p> <p>EPSRC staff will be responsible for managing the opportunity.</p>
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>Feedback from panel members will be requested.</p> <p>There is a dedicated project team that will manage the opportunity and at least once a week check-in meetings are planned to review the various stages of the process.</p>

As a funder of research, EPSRC remains committed to attracting the best potential researchers from a diverse population into research careers. The Research Councils have together developed the ambitious [RCUK Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#) to outline our collective aspirations for working with the research community, and partners throughout the sector. For policy changes, funding activities and events EPSRC will aim to:

- Select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation. This includes for applicants, reviewers, panel members and staff. Included in the interview invitation letter is a request for any access issues to be notified.
- All participants in the process are asked to inform staff if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation.
- Offer support for people with caring responsibilities, further details are available [here](#).
- Clearly communicate the timeline and key milestones for funding activities, advertise these widely to reach the largest possible audience.
- Support and encourage panel members to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. Staff will work closely with the Panel Chair(s) to agree approaches that are designed to minimize opportunities for bias and improve transparency of the decision making process. This includes managing environmental conditions, such as providing appropriate breaks.
- Support flexible working of stakeholders.
- Ensure diversity of peer review assessment and interview panels. Staff will adhere to a mixed panel policy and endeavor to achieve the minimum 30% for the underrepresented gender on the panel.
- Abide by the principles of peer review
- Provide EPSRC staff with tailored unconscious bias training for Peer Review processes and clear guidance for assessors.
- Handle personal sensitive information in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
Disability	<p>If panels are in person then it could have a negative impact for example...</p> <p>Venue accessibility issues for those with limited mobility.</p> <p>Long distances for some representatives to travel.</p> <p>During virtual panels, the speaker volume/quality may affect those with hearing impairments</p>	<p>The assessment panel will take place virtually.</p> <p>EPSRC staff will coordinate elements of the process and they will provide assistance needed to the best of their ability.</p> <p>We will also be aware that some individuals may choose not to disclose this information.</p>	<p>EPSRC staff will ensure the panel guidance, agenda, panel member guide to TFS, slides for pre-panel briefing and other relevant documents are available well in advance to support neurodiverse individuals or those with anxiety.</p> <p>Pre-panel briefing for all panel members, including the panel chair, will be organised by EPSRC staff.</p> <p>Aim for diversity in the panels.</p>
Gender reassignment	<p>If holding in-person meetings, availability of non-gender specific bathroom facilities could have a negative impact.</p> <p>Panel members may be biased with prejudices affecting their decision-making.</p>	<p>EPSRC staff co-ordinating the process will be available for details of any particular requirements, but we will be aware that some individuals may choose not to disclose this information.</p>	<p>Panel members will be provided with an unconscious bias document and will be briefed by EPSRC staff.</p> <p>EPSRC members of staff assisting the process will have knowledge of how to manage unconscious bias in peer review.</p> <p>Aim for diversity in the panels.</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	<p>No known negative impact</p>		
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Possible Negative:</p> <p>Some attendees may have breastfeeding schedules.</p> <p>Some attendees may have parenting responsibilities (see below for caring responsibilities).</p> <p>Pregnant attendees may have specific</p>	<p>Timescales for the opportunity may affect the ability to participate e.g. if on parental leave or if they have childcare responsibilities</p>	<p>Ensure there are sufficient breaks built into the schedule.</p> <p>Choose an appropriate panel day including start/finish times and avoid school holiday period and religious holidays.</p> <p>Additional care requirements could occur if individuals are required to: participate in events on what would normally be a nonworking day,</p>

	<p>dietary requirements or need more breaks than those scheduled in the agenda.</p>		<p>or work extended hours on a normal working day.</p> <p>Further details on the support EPSRC will offer for those with caring responsibilities can be found here Evolving and upholding fairness in peer review – UKRI</p>
Race	<p>Possible negative:</p> <p>Panel members can be biased by the race of applicants.</p>	<p>Potential for unconscious bias in panel process</p>	<p>EPSRC has undertaken an analysis to better understand the disparity of gender and race in our funding portfolio. Our aim is to ensure that the ethnic diversity in our grant portfolio and of those who engage in our peer review, advisory and governance processes is at least as representative of the engineering and physical sciences academic researcher population.</p> <p>Our award rates across different ethnicities show no disparity. More information is available at Ethnicity and race equality in our portfolio – UKRI</p> <p>Aim for diversity in the panels.</p> <p>Panel members will be provided with an unconscious bias document and will be briefed by EPSRC staff.</p> <p>EPSRC members of staff assisting the process will have knowledge of how to manage unconscious bias in peer review.</p>
Religion or belief	<p>There are no religious festival or holiday dates that we are aware of that clash with the panel dates.</p> <p>Panel members can be biased by the</p>	<p>Potential for unconscious bias in the panel process.</p> <p>Participation could be affected by religious holidays.</p>	<p>Unconscious bias awareness, as above.</p> <p>As much detail on key dates will be provided when the opportunity is published, allowing early engagement with EPSRC on specific</p>

	religious beliefs (or lack thereof) of applicants.		mitigations. EPSRC will do its best to accommodate adjustments. EPSRC will check for and avoid significant dates.
Sexual orientation	Panel members might be biased by the sexual orientation of applicants.	Potential for unconscious bias in panel process.	Unconscious bias awareness, as above. Aim for diversity in the panels.
Sex (gender)	Panel members might be biased by gender of applicants.	Potential for unconscious bias in panel process.	Unconscious bias awareness, as above. Ensure EPSRC's mixed gender panel policy is followed.
Age	Panel members might be biased by age of applicants.	Potential for unconscious bias in panel process.	Unconscious bias awareness, as above. Aim for diversity in the panels.
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)	<p>Pre-work for panel members may affect those with anxiety.</p> <p>Overly large workloads, and/or a lack of clarity from EPSRC, may affect decision-making.</p> <p>Some individuals have care-giving responsibilities that may coincide with the panel dates.</p> <p>Some attendees may have dietary requirements for health or lifestyle reasons.</p> <p>All considerations above should be applied to panel members, applicants, and EPSRC staff.</p>	EPSRC staff co-ordinating the process will be available for any request/potential issues raised, but we will be aware that some individuals may choose not to disclose this information.	<p>Ensure we are clear in the panel guidance on assessment criteria and expectations.</p> <p>Aim to give reviewers/introducers a reasonable number of applications to assess and introduce, and ensure there is sufficient time in the panel schedule for them to do so.</p> <p>Have sufficient time at the start and end of the panels and be aware that some attendees may require joining later and/or leave sooner.</p> <p>Aim for diversity in the panels.</p>

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
<p>Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?</p>	<p>We think this funding opportunity has a low risk of discriminating or unfairly disadvantaging anyone.</p> <p>This opportunity will support collaborative partnerships between the primary partner organisations which have been established for at least six months which allows for a greater pool of potential applicants collaborating with SMEs.</p> <p>The dates have been chosen to avoid known school, bank, and religious holidays that might affect the childcare responsibilities of attendees. Attendees will be given as much notice as possible.</p>	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
<p>1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will proceed.</p>	X	<p>As per the comments in the section above, we will make adjustments to mitigate possible issues as much as possible.</p>
<p>2. You can decide to stop the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups</p>		
<p>3. You can adapt or change the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias</p>		
<p>4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g. in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore you are going to proceed with caution with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.</p>		

<p>Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:</p>	Yes
<p>Date completed:</p>	05/02/2026
<p>Review date (if applicable):</p>	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change