



UK Research  
and Innovation

# UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form



Overview of activity

	Response
Name of activity being assessed	EPSRC Optical Wireless Communications Research and Testing Facility TFS Call
Council/department/project team	EPSRC, Future Communications Team
Aims and objectives of the activity	<p>EPSRC Future Comms Team plans to launch an open call for an £7.125M (indicative) investment to establish a national research and testing facility enabling experimental investigation of communication systems operating in three-dimensional environments.</p> <p>This call is part of the Integrated Security Fund, a government-wide fund that addresses the highest-priority threats to UK national security, at home and abroad. External stakeholders such as Cabinet Office, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, defence and security sector stakeholders are informed as required.</p> <p>This funding opportunity may require considering equality as part of application process, expert peer review, building a panel, hosting panel meetings etc.</p>
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals eligible to apply for EPSRC funding and others who may be employed using funding awarded as a result of this call.</li> <li>• Research office/institutions and staff</li> <li>• External expert reviewers and panel members</li> <li>• There may be significant interaction with government, industry, academia and the wider innovation landscape. Government bodies including Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL), National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT).</li> <li>• UKRI staff running the opportunity, including EPSRC Future Comms Team, Research Infrastructure Team, Resilience and Security Team.</li> </ul>
What data and consultation have you used?	This is a new funding call. EPSRC Future Comms Team developed this opportunity and consulted with both internal stakeholders (Research Infrastructure Team, Resilience and Security Team) and external partners including Cabinet Office, DSIT, NCSC, DSIT and EPSRC Future Connectivity Hubs.

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.
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No known impact	
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Access to interview panel venue could potentially have a negative impact on participation	<p>Interview panels tend to be held at Polaris House, which is accessible, however if we do need to hold the panels elsewhere, we will ensure the venue chosen for the panel meeting is accessible. All interviewees and panel members will be asked to highlight any personal circumstances that may affect their ability to participate and how this can be accommodated.</p> <p>EPSRC will have a point of contact for people who need to discuss their specific requirements/queries.</p>

Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No known impact	
Marriage or civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No known impact	
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Participation in the call may be negatively affected if potential applicants, peer reviewers or panel members are unavailable at key assessment stages.	<p>The call is an open call with key dates for published via Funding Finder allowing for early engagement with EPSRC on specific personal impact from applicants.</p> <p>Interviewees are contacted in advance of the interview stage to schedule interviews on a preferred day/time (within the limitation of the interview dates). EPSRC will endeavour to accommodate adjustments, such as virtual presence or deputising. EPSRC will offer support for people with caring responsibilities.</p> <p>EPSRC will have a point of contact for people who need to discuss their specific requirements/queries.</p>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The opportunity includes a nationality-based restriction in the eligibility requirement due to the facility having a national security and defence focus nature.</p> <p>The nationality requirements are stated as: Project lead, project co-lead and any project team role upon application for this award must be citizens of one of the following Alliance Nations: Andorra, Australia, Canada, the European Economic Area (EEA), Monaco, New Zealand, San Marino, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America or Vatican City.</p>	<p>The 'eligibility requirements' control is developed in response to national security and defence (NSD) users requirements where 'nationality-based restrictions' are applied to the project lead, project co-lead and project teams who will oversee the 'operation and governance of the facility and sensitive research activities'. 'At least one UK national in the project team' is required in response to NSD users requirement on 'the facility should actively encourage and enable participation from UK nationals, including through skills development, access opportunities, and leadership roles'.</p>

			<p>Applicants should not have dual nationality with any country on the UK Government's list of countries subject to trade sanctions, arms embargoes and other trade restrictions (<a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/current-arms-embargoes-and-other-restrictions">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/current-arms-embargoes-and-other-restrictions</a>).</p> <p>Dual nationality with other countries is allowed but will be subject to security checks. This applies for countries not on the sanction list and outside of Alliance Nations listed, providing that at least one of their citizenships is from one of Alliance Nations.</p> <p>The project team is required to include at least one UK national with a leadership role. This eligibility requirement supersedes all other requirements or guidance related to applicant eligibility.</p> <p>This nationality-based restriction applies to all 12 role types defined in the UKRI Funding Service guidance, including named and unnamed staff on the project who will have direct responsibilities for the management and operation of the facility. The nationality-based restriction does not apply to all facility users.</p>	<p>The nationality restriction scope of the alliance nations is adopted from previous learning from the EPSRC Resilience and Security theme, and better supports providing the 'strong and diverse knowledge base' required by NSD users. Furthermore, these two alliances were requested in discussion with NSD users.</p> <p>The dual nationality content is adopted from a previous UKRI-MOD CDT activity as part of the approved grant conditions library. UKRI Legal was consulted to ensure that the proposed eligibility requirement does not discriminate in respect of a protected characteristic under Equality Act 2010. The Legal advice received is that the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 provides that UKRI may give funding on such terms as it thinks appropriate and the Equality Act 2010 provides that no breach will occur where anything is done for the purpose of safeguarding national security, as long as that action is proportionate. Specifically, this means the National Requirement should be proportionate for the National Security requirements for the funding opportunity.</p>
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>People with certain religious beliefs may be negatively affected by the timing of the meeting (time of day or time of year, due to religious festivals, prayer time etc).</p> <p>Religious practice may involve access to spaces for worship and appropriate washing facilities.</p>	<p>The timeline has been drawn up with due consideration of all religious festivals during the lifecycle of the activity.</p> <p>EPSRC will endeavour to avoid days of religious significance to enable participation from people of different faiths.</p>

			Dietary requirements may need to be considered for example, Halal, Kosher or vegan food.	<p>EPSRC will also endeavour to accommodate adjustments for religious practices.</p> <p>EPSRC will have a point of contact for people who need to discuss their specific requirements/queries.</p>
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No known impact	
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Potential Unconscious Bias of panel members and convenors may affect the decision process	<p>EPSRC will provide unconscious bias guidance at the assessment stages.</p> <p>In line with EPSRC policies both the expert peer review and interview panel will be mixed gender.</p> <p>EPSRC will use inclusive language to ensure inclusion of same-sex couples.</p> <p>EPSRC will ensure benefits and rights are inclusive of different relationships.</p>

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).
Geographical location and place (consider UK and international offices)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stakeholders with a more distant base to the interview panel venue may experience additional travel delays.	EPSRC will offer hybrid or virtual options to promote inclusion for people in different geographical locations.
Socio-economic status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No known impact	
Education background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No known impact	
Parent/guardian responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	People with parental responsibilities may have less time to prepare a proposal, write a review or attend a panel meeting.	<p>Where possible EPSRC will aim to keep the call open for an extended period to allow sufficient time for preparing proposals and provide panel members the opportunity to attend virtually.</p> <p>Where possible EPSRC will also aim to organise calls, panels outside of school holidays to enable full participation of people with caring responsibilities.</p>
Carer/parent carer responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Carers may have less time to prepare a proposal or attend a panel meeting.	Where possible EPSRC will aim to keep the call open for an extended period to allow sufficient time for preparing proposals and provide panel members the opportunity to attend virtually.
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No known impact	



Other characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No known impact	
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Are there general or overarching impacts on multiple groups? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?	In-person panel meetings can present as negative barriers for disabled people, as well as those with parental or caring responsibilities. EPSRC will mitigate this by allowing hybrid or virtual meeting attendance to avoid access issues, travel and overnight stay requirements, and facilitate the use of personal equipment.
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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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Adapt or change the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The activity has been adapted following the actions described in the previous section.
3. Stop the activity because the evidence shows bias or negative impact towards one or more groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	



<p>What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?</p>	<p>The impact is being monitored throughout the activity and evaluate the outcomes of any actions identified in the EIA. For example, during September 2026 – Jan 2027:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan regular reviews of the EIA and action plan</li> <li>• Review the EIA as part of any closure or lessons learned activity.</li> <li>• Continue to consult with the groups affected by the activity and use new insights to review and update the EIA.</li> </ul>
<p>Next review date:</p>	<p><i>December 2026</i></p>

<p>Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Point of contact</p>	<p>Dr Li Convey, Future Communications Team, EPSRC, UKRI</p>
<p>Signed off by (name and date):</p>	<p>Maisie England, Future Communications Team, EPSRC, UKRI (26.6.26)</p>

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Dr Li Convey	03/07/2026	1	Based on input received from consultation groups at the funding planning stage, added actions under the relevant section



Name	Date	Version	Change



**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?