



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	Connect Awards (pilot)
Council/department/project team	ESRC Grants Delivery Team
Aims and objectives of the activity	<p>Connect awards aim to foster connections between researchers to scope, seed and grow emerging research fields and new areas of inquiry. The opportunity provides a space for early collaboration on ideas within and beyond the social sciences that are novel, exploratory and high-risk, helping to build the foundations for future strategically important research and innovation.</p> <p>This EIA will need to cover equality as part of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising the funding opportunity • The application process • The review process (done by the applicants as distributed peer review) • The moderation and decision making process to ensure that the process is fair
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants and award holders • Research Office staff in organisations eligible for UKRI funding • Internal moderators • ESRC staff managing the opportunity
What data and consultation have you used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with ESRC colleagues on the appropriateness of this EIA • Internal EIA guidance and previous EIAs • Consultation with UKRI Metascience Unit for the assessment process • Input from the lesson learned from previous opportunities including lesson learned from the distributed peer review



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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Early career researchers may face some disadvantages as they may not have the networks to establish the collaboration.	There is no reference made to age in the documentation. A preannouncement has been published so that the researchers can start making connections to establish a collaboration.
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The Funding Service is compliant with relevant accessibility standards for RO staff and applicants. However, it may raise some difficulties when applicants have to review up to 8 applications through DPR.	Applicants will be signposted to Disability and accessibility support for UKRI applicants and grant holders – UKRI , which provides guidance and practical support throughout the funding lifecycle. Applicants 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



				<p>adjustments implemented wherever feasible to remove barriers to engagement.</p> <p>Digital Accessibility and Inclusive Participation</p> <p>We will take steps to ensure that all digital guidance relating to the application and assessment processes are accessible and inclusive. This includes adherence to recognised digital accessibility standards and best practice. Considerations include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring all digital materials meet recognised accessibility standards, enabling equal access for all users. • Ensuring staff have sufficient EDI training to be able to respond effectively to requirements of all applicants and assessors. <p>The requirement of DPR and expected workload have been included in the Funding Opportunity text so that applicants can plan and distribute their workload.</p>
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No reference is made to gender in our documents.</p> <p>We will work to ensure the use of gender-neutral language in our documents.</p>	N/A
Marriage or civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No reference is made in our document, and we do not ask any disclosure on their marriage or civil partnership status.</p>	N/A

Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The short-term pilot nature of the opportunity may pose 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, both in terms of those in research organisations as well as partner organisations.</p> <p>Childcare responsibilities could also be a barrier to application submission or in terms of application assessment.</p>	<p>Provision for parental leave are covered in UKRI terms and conditions.</p> <p>A preannouncement has been published so that applicants can start making connections to establish a collaboration. The opportunity will be open for at least 8 weeks for applicants to have sufficient time to prepare their applications.</p>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Applicants are not asked to disclose their race. However, there is potential risk of bias by reviewers against an applicant based on name and perceived race.</p>	<p>Reviews referencing the race of the applicant or displaying bias will be marked as 'Unusable'.</p>
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Risk of discrimination because it is known that somebody (either a research applicant or research participants) has a particular faith or belief. Risk of bias by scheduling key dates on or around religious holidays.</p>	<p>Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning funding opportunity timelines, including scheduling key dates to avoid major religious festivals (if impossible to avoid, otherwise consider mitigations)</p>
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Applicants are not asked to disclose their sexual orientation. However, there may be potential for bias, bullying or harassment if the sexual orientation of an applicant is known or assumed.</p>	<p>Reviews referencing the sexual orientation of the applicant or displaying bias will be marked as 'Unusable'.</p>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Use of gendered language can present a barrier to participation.</p> <p>Risk of bias by reviewers against an applicant based on name and sex.</p>	<p>Ensure use of gender-neutral language in our documents.</p> <p>Review reference gender negatively or displaying bias will be marked as 'Unusable'.</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).
	Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown			
Geographical location and place (consider UK and international offices)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	This funding opportunity is open to those organisations with standard eligibility. Potential reviewer bias based on university ranking or location.	Reviews displaying bias based on university ranking or location will be marked as 'Unusable'. There is no requirement to travel for assessment so there is no impact.
Socio-economic status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Potential reviewer bias based on university ranking or location.	Applicants are expected to apply through the Research Organisation, which helps to remove many potential accessibility barriers providing institutional support. Reviews displaying bias based on university ranking or location will be marked as 'Unusable'.
Education background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Potential for reviewer bias based on whatever is disclosed in the application about applicants' educational backgrounds.	Reviews displaying bias based on educational background will be marked as 'Unusable'. Applicants are asked to use plain English in their applications so that those with other expertise can understand what it is proposed.

Parent/guardian responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Potentially conflict with childcare commitment to write an application and take on the distributed peer review.	<p>The timeline of the opportunity is shared in advance, and the requirement and timing of the DPR is explained in the opportunity text.</p> <p>The DPR has been scheduled in July to avoid school holidays in as much of the UK as possible.</p>
Carer/parent carer responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Potentially conflict with caring responsibilities to write an application and participate in the distributed peer review to complete the reviews in required timeframe.	<p>The timeline of the opportunity is shared in advance, and the requirement and timing of the DPR is explained in the opportunity text.</p> <p>The DPR has been scheduled in July to avoid school holidays.</p>
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A
Other characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There may be other characteristics that we have not considered that may have negative impact. Additionally, people with more than one protected or additional characteristics may have more negative impacts. We should not assume that everyone has equal access to technological devices and internet.	Where possible, alternative formats for information will be considered.

Are there **general or overarching impacts on multiple groups**? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?

ESRC's research commissioning processes are designed with fairness in mind. If potential applicants find this opportunity is not suitable, there are other opportunities within UKRI that they may wish to apply. Please see [Opportunities – UKRI](#)

Eligibility and criteria

- The opportunity is open to all eligible research organisations (ROs). Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of a recognised RO, but applicants who are not an established member of a recognised RO must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research.

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 esrcconnect@esrc.ukri.org

Standard Grant Terms and Conditions

- UKRI standard Grant Terms and Conditions comply with UK equality legislation and include provisions designed to mitigate against potential negative impacts (e.g. sick pay, parental and adoption leave, the possibility of part-time and flexible working, and grant extensions).
- Research Organisations are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. RGC 8 states that 'The Research Organisation must assume full responsibility for staff funded from the grant and, in consequence, accept all duties owed to and responsibilities for these staff, including, without limitation, their terms and conditions of employment and their training and supervision, arising from the employer/employee relationship.' Universities are therefore required to make reasonable adjustments as required to support their staff.

	<p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All reviewers will receive the code of practice and guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias. • Where possible reasonable adjustment and alternative formats for information are considered. • Case Officers will play an important role in ensuring consistency and fairness. They will read comments to check that they adhere closely to the published scoring criteria and definitions and check any reviewer comments display any bias. • Moderators will be briefed on unconscious bias and encouraged to feel empowered to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it.
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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 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	



<p>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.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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Continued below...



Review and sign off

What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?	This EIA will be monitored on a monthly basis during the management of the funding opportunity by the project team. Responsibility for this will rest with the Opportunity Delivery Manager. The funding opportunity is a pilot and the EIA will also be reviewed as part of the final evaluation process.
Next review date:	

Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes/Not required *EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities for example funding opportunities and events.
Point of contact	Chiaki Beis
Signed off by (name and date):	Jen Gold, SRO, 05/03/2026

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