



UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form

About your activity

Title of your activity

BBSRC Applicant-Led: Responsive Mode Open Call

Council or business area

BBSRC

Aims and objectives

To assess applications submitted to BBSRC's Applicant-Led: Responsive Open opportunity.

Key features:

- Research grant applications can be submitted at any time for assessment by one of the Research Committees, on any topic within our portfolio.
- There are two parallel opportunities. A standard research grant and new investigator award.
- Research Committees meet three times a year.
- Committee members use their own knowledge and experience to evaluate the proposal, reviewer's comments, and applicant response against set assessment criteria.
- The Committee provide recommendations for funding which are considered internally by the BBSRC and a final decision is taken on the list of awards to be supported.

Who is affected?

- Applicants to the scheme
- External peer reviewers



- Committee members and Chairs
- BBSRC employees supporting delivery of the funding opportunity
- External national and international organisations with co-interest or offering co-funding for applications submitted to the opportunity.

What data and consultation have you used?

- All councils and schemes are expected to adhere to the '[Principles of assessment and decision-making](#)', and to have processes in place that support the principles outlined in the policy.
- UKRI also has outlined the principles of decision making for Applicant-Led opportunities: [How we make decisions – UKRI](#)
- Any EDI implications for BBSRC's move of the Applicant-Led: Responsive scheme have been considered both discretely and as part of a wider RM reform project, for which all potential changes are considering EDI changes centrally.
- BBSRC has consulted with the [BBSRC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expert Advisory Group – UKRI](#) regarding our move to Open calls and for the wider implementation of assessment process changes to this opportunity.
- Consultation with a member of UKRI-BBSRC's Equality and Inclusion Policy Group to review the EIA and the Applicant-Led: Responsive assessment processes.
- Consultation with UKRI-BBSRC events management team to ensure that if required, committee meetings allow in-person attendance and participation from a diverse range of people.
- Consultation with Committee members to understand potential barriers and take action, where possible, to enable attendance and participation.
- Maintenance of two-way channels of communication between UKRI-BBSRC and stakeholders, including our Applicant-Led: Responsive committee chairs.
- Learning from good practice in objective decision making from across UKRI, supported by external independent advice.
- BBSRC uses published [UKRI diversity statistics](#) to identify known challenges such as reduced success rates for certain groups, as well as evidence from other sources such as Higher Education Statistic Agency and Census data.

Impact on specific groups

Are there general impacts on multiple groups?

UKRI is committed to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion 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 Responsive Mode scheme 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 college members time commitments ensuring that, where possible, the preparation of applications, closing dates, assessment periods and all committee meetings take into consideration school holidays.

Materials for applicants and assessors are provided online where possible, and in accessible formats where required. Virtual settings for committee training and for committee 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.

Reviewers must avoid any bias in their final reports due to; gender, disability, age, racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation and religious belief. Reviewers' comments must not break this policy or be defamatory or otherwise actionable. Any reviews that break this rule are marked unusable and will not be used in the assessment process. Any other inappropriate comments provided elsewhere will also be disregarded.

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 Responsive Mode funding 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

- This opportunity is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience, with information online relating to maximum time for decision
- Key deadlines for information will be communicated to applicants as soon as possible
- Applicants can submit proposals at any time
- 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
- Applicants can contact the funding opportunity lead to discuss individual needs and support in the application process
- Applicants can contact peer review support to provide sensitive information, for example unavailability due to parental leave

For assessors: reviewers

- Reviewers are drawn from as wide a pool as possible
- The guidance provided clearly states the expectations of reviewers
- UKRI-BBSRC provides support to reviewers as much as possible, to assist them in the assessment process.

For assessors: Committees

- 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
- Committee members are asked to inform UKRI-BBSRC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation
- UKRI-BBSRC consults with Committee members on a regular basis regarding business improvements including a questionnaire sent after each meeting for feedback
- UKRI-BBSRC consults with the Committee chairs informally throughout the committee meeting period and formally via a Committee chairs meeting at the end of each round
- UKRI-BBSRC provides regular training and guidance on new or revised ways of working.

Impact on protected characteristics

Complete the table for all characteristics. You only need to add details if there is a positive or negative impact.

Protected characteristic	Impact (positive, negative, none or unknown)	Details of impact	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Age	Potentially negative	UKRI Diversity data indicate that older applicants aged 50+ have a higher success rate than younger applicants.	BBSRC's committee members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. BBSRC staff remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the



		<p>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.</p> <p>Partial randomisation may positively impact age.</p>	<p>assessment process, both at external peer review and panel stage. Reviewers who are part of the peer review college also receive information about unconscious bias as part of their training.</p> <p>BBSRC has increased the diversity of the Pool of Experts, which has resulted in a larger number of younger members, who may subsequently be involved in the assessment process.</p> <p>Career breaks and other factors are considered during the assessment process to ensure applicants are not negatively impacted.</p> <p>The New Investigator scheme, although not directly linked with age, provides additional support for new applicants.</p>
Disability	Potentially negative	<p>People with disabilities are under-represented in HESA academic staff (5%) compared to the general labour population (13%) and represent a smaller number of BBSRC grant applications. For BBSRC, UKRI diversity data suggests that applicants with known disabilities are no less likely than those without a disability to be awarded a grant as a PI.</p> <p>General issues regarding UKRI's grant application systems and provisions for flexibility are addressed through policies designed to apply across our organisation.</p>	<p>Under the equality act 2010, employers are expected to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled applicants and employees. This might include having a scribe to help write the application or using specialist software to support the writing of an application. Applicants are encouraged to speak to their research support services about the support available to them. BBSRC can also make reasonable adjustments for applicants, for example giving more time for a PI response under these circumstances.</p> <p>Applicants, reviewers and panel members are encouraged to speak to BBSRC staff if accommodations</p>



		<p>Committee members and 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.</p> <p>If an applicant's disability 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 committee members, with the exception of prior consented disclosure in the application by the applicant.</p> <p>Open call deadlines may allow applicants with fluctuating health, chronic conditions or access needs more control over submitting and preparing their application.</p>	<p>can be made to enable them to participate in the process. BBSRC will respond to individual support needs on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Applicants with a disability (inclusive of physical or neurological) can cost for additional support required that is directly related to the grant.</p> <p>Reviewers and committee 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.</p> <p>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 reviewers or committee members.</p> <p>Currently UKRI-BBSRC will: Use a virtual meeting format following UKRI's Virtual -first policy. However, a return to accessible face -to -face meetings based on business needs may be considered. If this happens, information will be shared where possible virtually and support will be provided. If in-person, we will ensure accessibility requirements are met (e.g. step-free access, quiet rooms, scheduled breaks). We will allow for potential use of screen readers for participants of committee meetings who are visually impaired.</p>
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Gender reassignment	Potentially negative	<p>Based on the England and Wales census 2021 data, 262,000 people indicated that their gender identity was different from their sex registered at birth. Additionally, according to a YouGov (2021) survey of 410 trans employees across the UK, 65% said they have had to hide their trans status at work, 32% had experienced discrimination in the last 5 years and 43% had quit because their work environment was unwelcoming.</p> <p>If an applicant's gender reassignment became known to the committee or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or committee members.</p>	<p>We will ensure to use gender neutral language in all call materials and engagement with the community.</p> <p>BBSRC's committee members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. BBSRC staff remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process, both at external peer review and panel stage. Reviewers who are part of the peer review college also receive information about unconscious bias as part of their training.</p> <p>As per UKRI's policies we take care to adopt gender neutral language and protect applicant personal details.</p> <p>We will ensure to use gender neutral language in all call materials and engagement with the community.</p> <p>Questions related to protected characteristics in The Funding Service will be in line with ONS guidance¹</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	Potentially negative	<p>Applicants are not required to declare their marital or civil partnership status.</p>	<p>BBSRC's committee members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. BBSRC staff remain vigilant to,</p>



		<p>Reviewers and committee members are provided the opportunity to declare conflicts of interest, but never directly asked to provide their marital or civil partnership status.</p> <p>If an applicant, reviewer or committee member's marital or civil partnership status became known to UKRI-BBSRC, there is no point during the assessment process where this is disclosed.</p>	<p>and address, any bias during the assessment process, both at external peer review and panel stage. Reviewers who are part of the peer review college also receive information about unconscious bias as part of their training.</p> <p>UKRI's policies protect applicant and committee members' personal data, and UKRI's Conflict of Interest policy safeguards against undue influence.</p>
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially negative	<p>Open calls can coincide with pregnancy/maternity leave, creating participation barriers. Without fixed deadlines, those returning from leave could initially struggle to identify when is best to apply.</p> <p>Open calls do allow more flexibility to apply around periods of leave.</p> <p>Committee members who are pregnant or on maternity leave may be discouraged from participating in committee meetings.</p> <p>If an applicant's pregnancy or maternity leave status became known to the committee or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or committee members.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Currently UKRI-BBSRC will: Use a virtual meeting format following UKRI's Virtual -first policy. However, a return to accessible face -to -face meetings based on business may be considered. If this happens, UKRI-BBSRC will consult all participants to understand and cater for their requirements for in-person meetings participation.</p> <p>UKRI-BBSRC will ensure that the date of the meetings does not coincide with school holidays.</p> <p>We encourage applicants to contact the BBSRC office as required and please keep an eye on</p>



		<p>Career breaks in applicant track records due to parental leave may result in the potential for unconscious bias.</p>	<p>our website for information relating to Open Calls.</p> <p>If exceptional circumstances mean that applicants cannot meet a deadline for a PI response, there will be a workaround in place to allow flexibility with deadlines at the request of the applicant.</p> <p>Committee 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.</p> <p>Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI) has an optional additions section, where applicants may provide context, such as details for career breaks.</p> <p>Guidance to be provided to the committee to ensure appropriate assessment of applicant track record without bias against career breaks due to parental leave/caring responsibilities and others.</p> <p>UKRI-BBSRC extends Pool of Experts membership period if Maternity leave is taken during their appointment.</p>
Race	Potentially negative	<p>UKRI award data and HESA data show that there is a significant under-representation of Black researchers within the biosciences. These data also show a significant over-representation of White researchers. Due to the significant under-representation, we may</p>	<p>UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of committee members and applicants to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion. It is important that selection of panel members and peer reviewers is from a diverse community which represents the community and UK as a whole.</p>



		<p>receive fewer applications from Black individuals.</p> <p>UKRI Diversity data also indicate that applications from White Principal Investigators are more likely to be successful than applications from other ethnic groups.</p> <p>If an applicant's race or ethnicity became known to the committee or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or committee members.</p> <p>Depending on the aspect, partial randomisation has the potential to both positively and negatively impact, specifically those applications categorised in tier 2.</p>	<p>BBSRC's committee members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. BBSRC staff remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process, both at external peer review and panel stage. Reviewers who are part of the peer review college also receive information about unconscious bias as part of their training.</p> <p>The use of partial randomisation has the potential to reduce unconscious bias in the decision-making process for applications assigned in tier 2 and therefore awarded via randomisation.</p>
Religion or belief	Potentially negative	<p>Assessment timelines may fall over religious holidays resulting in applicants and/or committee members being unable to, or requiring flexibility to participate.</p>	<p>UKRI-BBSRC ensures that religious observances are considered as much as possible when timetabling major activities.</p> <p>Applicants are provided with estimated timeline outlining the maximum amount of time expected for a decision on their application. We will inform applicants of key dates during the assessment period which will require their participation as soon as possible.</p> <p>Committee members are provided an outline of the key dates during the assessment period which will require their participation upon</p>



			<p>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 requirement.</p> <p>BBSRC's committee members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. BBSRC staff remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process, both at external peer review and panel stage. Reviewers who are part of the peer review college also receive information about unconscious bias as part of their training.</p>
Sex	Potentially negative	<p>HESA data indicate that women are under-represented in the academic bioscience population. UKRI data indicate that 25% of applications for BBSRC grants are received from Principal Investigators who are women, and that award rates are lower for women than for men.</p> <p>The awards are open to new investigators and project leads at lecturer level and above but 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 applicants to the scheme.</p> <p>During committee building in preparation for a meeting, gender is considered to</p>	<p>UKRI-BBSRC will monitor the diversity of committee 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.</p> <p>BBSRC's committee members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. BBSRC staff remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process, both at external peer review and panel stage. Reviewers who are part of the peer review college also receive information about unconscious bias as part of their training.</p> <p>UKRI will continue monitor and evaluate the success rates of funding opportunities that use partial randomisation to identify any emerging impacts.</p>



		<p>ensure equal representation as far as practicable.</p> <p>If an applicant's sex became known to the committee or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or committee members.</p> <p>The use of partial randomisation has the potential to both positively and negatively impact sex.</p>	
Sexual orientation	Potentially negative	<p>If an applicant's sexual orientation became known to the committee or reviewers, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to reviewers or committee members.</p>	<p>BBSRC's committee members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. BBSRC staff remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process, both at external peer review and panel stage. Reviewers who are part of the peer review college also receive information about unconscious bias as part of their training.</p>

Impact on additional characteristics

Complete the table for all characteristics. You only need to add details if there is a positive or negative impact.

Additional characteristics	Impact (positive, negative, none or unknown)	Details of impact	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact



Geographical location and place	Potentially negative	<p>Pool of Experts members may be prevented from participating due to the travel requirement associated for in-person meetings, disadvantaging those in more remote locations and with higher travel costs.</p> <p>Tiered randomisation has potential to neutralise the impacts on geographical location for applications assigned to tier 2.</p>	<p>Currently UKRI-BBSRC will: Use a virtual meeting format following UKRI's Virtual-first policy. However, a return to accessible face-to-face meetings based on business needs may be considered. If this happens, we will provide early notice of dates and support staff and committee members to ensure any travel and accommodation costs are covered appropriately.</p> <p>During committee building in preparation for a meeting, geographical spread across the UK is considered as far as practicable to ensure representation.</p>
Socio-economic status	Potentially negative	<p>Socio-economic status is not collected and does not form part of the assessment. However, differences in access to institutional support, facilities, or available time may indirectly reflect socio-economic circumstances. Where such disparities influence application preparation or participation, there is a potential for unconscious bias.</p> <p>Randomisation reduces the potential for subjectivity in the ranking for those applications categorised into tier 2. In 'traditional' ranking someone's socio-economic status may be unconsciously influential to an outcome.</p>	<p>BBSRC's committee members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. BBSRC staff remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process, both at external peer review and panel stage. Reviewers who are part of the peer review college also receive information about unconscious bias as part of their training.</p>
Education background	Potentially negative	<p>Project lead applicants must have a contract of employment at lecturer level or equivalent.</p>	<p>The Resume for Research and Innovation enables applicants to describe their track record, and additionally to describe any</p>



		<p>The Pool of experts from which panels are built from may have underrepresentation of all education backgrounds.</p> <p>Randomisation reduces the potential for subjectivity in the ranking for those applications categorised into tier 2. In 'traditional' ranking someone's education may be unconsciously influential to an outcome.</p>	<p>factors that provide context, such as career breaks.</p> <p>The Pool of Experts membership from which committee members are drawn is open and advertised to a wide range of backgrounds (academia, industry, early career researchers, and those with a non-traditional background).</p> <p>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.</p>
Parent or guardian responsibilities	Potentially negative	<p>Committee members may find it difficult to participate if they have caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Open calls have the potential to allow applicants to work around childcare cycles and/or school terms. However, the potential lack of clear funding cycles could discourage timely submission. People with heavy parent or guardian responsibilities may delay indefinitely.</p>	<p>UKRI-BBSRC ensures that school holidays are considered where possible when timetabling panel meetings.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>UKRI-BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on UKRI-BBSRC business.</p>
Carer responsibilities	Potentially negative	<p>Committee members and interview candidates may find it difficult to participate if they</p>	<p>UKRI-BBSRC ensures that school holidays are considered where possible when timetabling panel meetings.</p>



		<p>have caring responsibilities (for adults or children).</p> <p>Open calls may have the potential to support applicants with ongoing or fluctuating caring duties. The potential lack of clear funding cycles could discourage timely submission. People with heavy caring responsibilities may delay indefinitely.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Where possible, UKRI-BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours.</p> <p>UKRI-BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on UKRI-BBSRC business.</p>
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	Unknown	<p>Political opinion is not collected. In Northern Ireland, political opinion is a protected characteristic. Although not relevant to assessment, if political views were inferred, this could create an environment where unconscious bias may occur.</p>	<p>Maintain strict confidentiality and conflict of interest processes, no political information is disclosed or collected.</p> <p>BBSRC's committee members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. BBSRC staff remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process, both at external peer review and panel stage. Reviewers who are part of the peer review college also receive information about unconscious bias as part of their training.</p>
Other characteristics			

Final decision

Make a decision on whether to proceed with the activity

Yes - adapt or change the activity in a way which will eliminate negative impact or promote equality



Review and sign off

How will you monitor and review the impact of your activity?

- UKRI-BBSRC will review this equality impact assessment annually (or if there are any changes to the RM open call structure before the annual review) to identify any further actions or interventions that are required to improve the diversity and inclusion of Applicant-Led: Responsive Mode.
- UKRI-BBSRC monitors, analyses and publishes data to better understand the diversity of our applicant and assessor community, [Equality, diversity and inclusion – BBSRC – UKRI](#)
- UKRI will continue monitor and evaluate the success rates of funding opportunities that use partial randomisation to identify any emerging impacts.
- UKRI-BBSRC is proactive in increasing the diversity of our reviewers and Committee members. Committee membership for each meeting is published on the website after the funding decisions have been made and all outcomes communicated to applicants.

What is the EIA review date?

1st May 2027

Contact

Amelia Townley-Taylor: Amelia.townley@bbsrc.ukri.org

Charlotte Cooper: Charlotte.cooper@bbsrc.ukri.org

Will the EIA be published?

Yes this will be published.

Who has this been signed off by?

Amelia Townley-Taylor and Charlotte Cooper, Senior Portfolio Managers, BBSRC

This EIA has also been reviewed by the [BBSRC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Expert Advisory Group](#).

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Amelia Townley-Taylor	01/04/2026	1	Document created
		2	
		3	



Action plan

Add the actions you intend to take (or have taken) to address the negative impact you have identified. Actions should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound).

Action	Deadline	Owner	How will it be monitored?	What is the outcome?
Review unexpected impacts of Open calls after a year and add additional interventions if required.	1 May 2027	ATT CC	Evidence gathered after each panel meeting and engagement with policy.	Additional interventions/changes to scheme and guidance if required.
Engage with UKRI central regarding impacts of tiered decision making.	1 May 2027	ATT CC	Evidence gathered after each panel meeting and engagement with policy.	Additional interventions/changes to scheme and guidance if required.