



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**

|  | <b>Response</b>   |
|--|---|
| Name of activity being assessed                        | Future Data Services Sandpit: Transforming Discovery and Access to Data   |
| Council/department/project team                        | ESRC Data Strategy and Infrastructure Programme   |
| Aims and objectives of the activity                    | <p>The aims and objectives of the activity are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create and deliver an open funding opportunity</li> <li>• Convene a sandpit to co-create proposals</li> <li>• Commission projects that:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ will make a step change in how researchers can discover, access and use social science data</li> <li>○ advance the transition to technology-enabled data pipelines that support data management, curation, discovery and access</li> <li>○ in turn, will develop and upskill data service infrastructure workforce to support the research community in the future.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UKRI staff</li> <li>• Applicants</li> <li>• Mentors that will make up our assessment panel</li> <li>• Awardees</li> <li>• Stakeholders, user communities and collaborators</li> <li>• Existing UKRI investments</li> </ul>   |
| What data and consultation have you used?              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have spoken with colleagues who have run successful sandpits, taking on their advice and learning.</li> <li>• EDI UKRI and ESRC guidance and best practice on recruiting diverse advisory groups and holding panel meetings, guidance for recruiting advisor reviewers, guidance for peer review panels, UKRI Inclusion materials, ESRC Code of Practice for Reviewers.</li> </ul>  |

- ESRC [EDI guidance](#)
- Previous funding opportunity EIAs
- Funding opportunity leads
- DS&I EDI team lead

## 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                      | <input type="checkbox"/>                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <p>Age bias can come into play in all aspects of the commissioning:</p> <p>The ESRC may have unconscious bias when considering who is an 'expert' based on age. At sandpit stage there may be unconscious bias from senior academics towards those perceived as less experienced.</p> | <p>See also general considerations which includes guidance for managing meetings so that all voices are heard through effective facilitation.</p> <p>We will consider individuals from different career stages at the participant and mentor selection staged.</p> <p>Track record is not an explicit criterion, given likely relationship to career stage and</p> |

|            |                          |                                     |  |   |
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|            |                          |                                     | <p>The study team composition may include predominately senior staff due to research culture and hierarchy of an 'expert'.</p> <p>Early career researchers* may be disadvantaged as they don't have the same track record to draw on as an experienced researcher.</p> <p>(*It is assumed that early career researchers are generally younger than their more experienced peers, although this by no means always the case. This is why this point has been included under 'age').</p> | <p>hence (indirectly) age. Guidance to mentors will make clear applications should be assessed on the merit of the individual application. They should assess an individual's capability to deliver their proposed project, not their previous track record.</p> <p>The opportunity will be widely advertised through the UKRI funding finder and a diverse communications approach to encourage broad reach</p> <p>Also see below, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations, including on unconscious bias guidance.</p>  |
| Disability | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <p>Panel meeting attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during the sandpits.</p> <p>People with disability may find it difficult to attend due to location and the physical need to be in person for one day.</p>  | <p>Use UKRI <a href="#">accessibility guidelines</a> to ensure materials are suitable for all audiences.</p> <p>Applicants are not required to disclose a disability at any point in the application process but have the opportunity to do so if they require reasonable adjustments. Where applicants choose to disclose their disability, this data is stored confidentially.</p> <p>We will host the sandpit in a location that has disability access and ensure that the sandpit has appropriate breaks.</p> <p>Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabling the chat function and closed captioning, and adjusting the</li> </ul> |

|   |                          |                                     |  |   |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|
|   |                          |                                     |  | <p>volume, to support those with hearing requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate lighting, alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers (ensure any images are well described so that text-to-speech applications can recognise them).</li> <li>• Provision of documents in sans-serif dyslexia-friendly fonts; and dyslexia-friendly formats.</li> <li>• Avoiding colours, lighting etc. that may trigger migraines, epilepsy etc.</li> <li>• Consideration of the length of any activities, shortening if necessary and ensuring that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda.</li> </ul> <p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations, including on unconscious bias guidance.</p> |
| <p>Gender reassignment (Trans identity)</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <p>Trans people may be absent from work because of transition.</p> <p>UKRI records may show the wrong gender which could lead to accidental misgendering and discrimination.</p> <p>There may be micro-aggression's or unconscious bias towards participants in the process.</p> <p>A person's pronouns may be used incorrectly in the sandpit context and correspondence.</p> | <p>Also see below, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations, including on unconscious bias guidance.</p> <p>Applicants are not requested to disclose whether they identify as a different gender to their sex recognised at birth or have undergone gender reassignment.</p> <p>We will work to ensure the use of gender-neutral language where possible in our documents and funding opportunity and</p>  |

|                               |                          |                                     |   |  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
|                               |                          |                                     |   | <p>encourage participants to share their preferred pronouns.</p> <p>UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature and permit absence as a result of medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be covered by the Research Organisation’s relevant policies and strongly encourage ROs to treat absence relating to transition like any other health-related absence.</p>   |
| Marriage or civil partnership | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | This is unlikely to influence the inclusion of those who are married or in civil partnerships   |  |
| Pregnancy and maternity       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <p>Childcare and costs may be a barrier to people attending the sandpit.</p> <p>Participation in the sandpit may be negatively affected if potential applicants or mentor reviewers are unavailable at key stages. Inability to attend due to childcare commitments may affect who can participate.</p> | <p>Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions for successful awards.</p> <p>Dates will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow participants to make arrangements to attend and allow early engagement with UKRI on specific mitigations. UKRI will do its best to accommodate adjustments.</p> <p>Regular breaks in the panel meetings for parental duties including breastfeeding/expressing if required</p> |



|      |                          |                                     |   |   |
|------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|
|      |                          |                                     |   | <p>Sandpits are intense with a high cognitive load. Sufficient rest time will be allocated to the sandpit agenda, and any specific requirements for rest can be taken into consideration by UKRI. Participants will also be able to leave the Sandpit to deal with any issues related to their pregnancy</p> <p>Sensitivity may be needed around pregnancy or maternity, for example people who have experienced pregnancy loss, or people who are not ready to share that they are pregnant.</p> <p>Provide appropriate facilities for people who are nursing, needing to express or store milk.</p> <p>UKRI offers support available for people with caring responsibilities and reimbursement of childcare costs if the participant is unable to attend. Individuals should get in contact with UKRI if they have any queries.</p> <p>Also see below, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations, including on unconscious bias guidance.</p> |
| Race | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | There could be potential bias or discrimination because somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) is from a particular ethnic background. There may be opportunities for bullying and harassment during the sandpit or project. | Diversity of backgrounds will be considered as is possible when selecting participants to attend.   |

|                           |                          |                                     |  |  |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
|                           |                          |                                     |  | <p>Also see below, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations, including on unconscious bias guidance.</p>  |
| <p>Religion or belief</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <p>Participation in call may be affected, if potential applicants or mentors are unavailable at key assessment stages. (Activities could coincide with religious holidays, for example).</p> <p>There could be potential discrimination because it is known that somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) has a particular faith or belief.</p> | <p>UKRI will ensure that religious observances are considered. A full timeline will be provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with UKRI on specific mitigations. UKRI will do its best to accommodate adjustments.</p> <p>See to foster an environment of respect so that people who do or do not hold a belief can feel included and welcomed, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dietary requirements may need to be considered for example, Halal, Kosher or vegan food.</li> <li>• Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning workshops and meetings and use a <a href="#">religious holiday dates calendar</a>.</li> <li>• Scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals; (if impossible to avoid then consider mitigations – ie. during Ramadan ensuring that meetings finish early so that participants are able to get home to break their fast);</li> <li>• Avoiding scheduling meetings when they would conflict with religious attendance or observance on specific days or times (e.g. Jewish Sabbath on Friday evenings or Islamic Friday prayer)</li> <li>• Allowing prayer breaks if requested.</li> </ul> |

|                    |                          |                                     |  |  |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
|                    |                          |                                     |  | Also see below, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations, including on unconscious bias guidance.   |
| Sexual orientation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | There may be micro-aggressions or unconscious bias towards panel members and applicants because of their sexual orientation at any point during the commissioning. | Ensure use of inclusive language<br><br>Also see General Equality and Diversity Considerations, including in relation to on unconscious bias.  |
| Sex                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | .  | In line with UKRI policy, we will aim to ensure fair representation across genders. We will aim for (at worst) 60/40 split across our mentors and a gender balance within participants at the sandpit.<br><br>Diversity of background will be considered when selecting participants to attend and when selecting mentors.<br><br>Also see below, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations, including on unconscious bias guidance. |

### 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <p>Participants may find it difficult to attend if the location of the sandpit is far away from them.</p> <p>The four nations may not be well represented at the sandpit.</p>   | <p>We will endeavour to find a “central” location that is accessible from as many areas of the country as possible.</p> <p>We will cover travel costs for participation in-person and where necessary accommodation.</p> <p>Timelines will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow attendees to make arrangements to attend.</p> <p>The opportunity will be widely advertised through the UKRI funding finder and a diverse communications approach to encourage broad reach</p> |
| Socio-economic status   | <input type="checkbox"/>                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <p>Socio-economic status may intersect with other characteristics such as geographical locations, for example the north-south wealth divide.</p>  | <p>The opportunity will be widely advertised through the UKRI funding finder and a diverse communications approach to encourage broad reach.</p> <p>We will cover travel costs for participation in-person</p>  |
| Education background  | <input type="checkbox"/>                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <p>Panel members/ sandpit members may have unconscious bias towards applicants from certain Research Organisations based on where they are located that may disadvantage the applicant, in turn creating a bias towards educational background.</p> | <p>Avoid unnecessary jargon in call specification and panel information.</p> <p>Use of the Résumé for Research and Innovation (R4RI) format for capability.</p> <p>The opportunity will be widely advertised through the UKRI funding finder and a</p>  |

|   |                          |                                     |   |  |
|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|
|   |                          |                                     | Use of unnecessary jargon and academic language could impact inclusion.   | diverse communications approach to encourage broad reach   |
| Parent/guardian responsibilities          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Parental/guardian responsibilities may prevent people from attending the sandpit or feeling that they cannot participate due to caring for children/attending appointments. | <p>UKRI offers support available for people with caring responsibilities and reimbursement of childcare costs if the participant is unable to attend. Individuals should get in contact with UKRI if they have any queries.</p> <p>We should ensure the use of gender-neutral language – parental leave, irrespective of gender.</p> <p>Timelines will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow meeting attendees to make arrangements to attend. This will also ensure applicants have advanced notice of deadlines and key dates related to the funding opportunity.</p> |
| Carer/parent carer responsibilities       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |   | See above  |
| Political opinion (Northern Ireland only) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | Event unlikely to be held in Northern Ireland   |  |
| Other characteristics                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            | None identified   |  |

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**

The EIA should be considered by **ALL** colleagues who are working on the delivery of the commissioning of this funding opportunity, including those who join the delivery at a later stage. It is the responsibility of ALL to ensure the considerations are implemented wherever possible.

**Eligibility and criteria**

- You must be based at a UK research organisation eligible for ESRC funding  
For full details, visit [Eligibility as an individual](#) and [Check if your organisation is eligible](#).

**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).
- ROs are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. RGC 8 states that ‘The RO 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.

**Selection:**

- We will aim to ensure that the composition of the mentors are diverse, with at least a 60:40 gender balance, in line with UKRI guidelines.
- We will aim to appoint a diverse group of participants and mentors. Final decisions will take into account trying to balance gender, geography, career stage, and institutions, consulting best practice guidance as referenced under the *data and consultation used* section of the Overview of Activity.

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We will only make selection decisions which compromise diversity when it is objectively justified by the necessity to ensure the required breadth of subject expertise with high quality candidates.</li> <li>• Relevant guidance will be considered when appointing mentors.</li> </ul> <p><b>Process:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings will follow ESRC guidance on hybrid and in-person meetings.</li> <li>• UKRI accessibility guidelines will be used to ensure materials are suitable for all audiences.</li> <li>• Mentors and facilitators will be briefed on unconscious bias and encouraged to feel empowered to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it. The facilitators and ESRC office will play a particularly important role in this respect. An implementation intention statement will be read out at the beginning of the commissioning panel meeting which sets the tone for discussions and requires that mentors pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions. Mentors will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and <a href="#">unconscious bias</a>.</li> <li>• The Chair will be briefed on ‘Charing Inclusive Meetings’ in order that all mentors feel their voices are heard.</li> <li>• We will require participants to work in the spirit of professionalism and inclusivity throughout the process.</li> </ul> <p><b>Opportunity dates:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The call dates and sandpit will as much as possible be organised around school holidays and <a href="#">significant religious holidays</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EDI considerations will be embedded throughout the design of the funding opportunity.</li> <li>• R4RI (the Resume for Research and Innovation) will be used in place of traditional CVs for invited applicants which provides more flexibility and inclusivity, enabling a broader range of people to evidence a wider variety of skills and experience, along with the added benefit to include context around career breaks, periods of long-term sickness or absence etc.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p><b>Successful projects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We would expect any successful project to ensure the use of inclusive practices in all of its operations.</li> </ul> <p>Mitigations are outlined above.</p> <p>A number of risks have been identified and actively considered as part of the sandpit design and management. These risks have been mitigated as far as possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making the sandpit a hybrid event over 2 weeks to reduce digital fatigue</li> <li>• Covering travel and accommodation (where necessary) for the in-person component</li> <li>• Running the event outside of school holidays in the UK where possible</li> </ul> |
|--|---|



Continued below...

**Evaluation**

| Final Decision:  | Select the relevant box             | Include any explanation / justification required   |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. No negative or positive impact identified; therefore, activity will <b>proceed</b> .  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |  |
| 2. <b>Adapt or change</b> the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | See the mitigations outlined above. Further risks that are brought to the attention of UKRI as the process proceeds will be addressed and this policy updated. |
| 3. <b>Stop</b> 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 <b>extreme cases</b> or where <b>positive action</b> is taken). Therefore, you are going to <b>proceed with caution</b> with this activity knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision. | <input type="checkbox"/>            |  |

Continued below...



**Review and sign off**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?</b></p> | <p>Contact details will be provided alongside the information relevant to the sandpit to support queries related to the call.</p> <p>An EIA is a live document and should regularly be reviewed throughout the life cycle of an activity.</p> <p>We will re-evaluate prior to the participant selection to check for EDI and again at the end of the sandpit to cover any lessons learned to feed into future calls.</p> |
| <p><b>Next review date:</b></p>   | <p>July 2026</p>   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required</b></p> | <p>Yes</p>  |
| <p><b>Point of contact</b></p>                               | <p><a href="mailto:fds@esrc.ukri.org">fds@esrc.ukri.org</a></p> |
| <p><b>Signed off by (name and date):</b></p>                 | <p>Mollie Rawlins 13/05/2026</p>                                |

**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](mailto:ISPF@ukri.org)**



### Change log

| Name | Date | Version | Change |
|------|------|---------|--------|
|------|------|---------|--------|

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?  |
|---|---------------|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Review diversity information in the funding opportunity | May 2025      | Opportunity owner and managers  | Ensure requirements from the EIA are embedded in the funding opportunity.                           | Inform inclusive design of the activity.   |
| Review when recruiting mentors                          | July 2026     | Opportunity owner and managers  | Through the use of this EIA.  | A diverse group of mentors is recruited that reflects the diversity of our research community.   |
| Review when selecting participants                      | July 2026     | Opportunity owner and managers. | Through the use of this EIA.  | A diverse group of participants is selected that reflects the diversity of our research community.   |
| Planning for the sandpit                                | August 2026   | Opportunity owner and managers  | Through the use of this EIA and the incorporation of sandpit documents.                             | EDI is embedded in the planning materials for the sandpit.   |
| Sandpit   | October 2026  | Opportunity owner and managers  | Through the use of this EIA and the incorporation of EDI into the sandpit guidelines and documents. | ESRC runs an inclusive sandpit in which everyone has a chance to fully participate.<br><br>The design is assessed by the mentors in line with the requirements set out in the funding opportunity. |
| Lessons learned   | February 2026 | Opportunity owner and managers  | Through the use of this EIA.  | Lessons learned for supporting EDI will be shared to support future processes.   |



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