



UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form

About your activity

Title of your activity

Economic Research on the Returns to R&D Investment

Council or business area

Economic and Social Research Council

Aims and objectives

ESRC is seeking to support research that can help develop consensus estimates of the return on investments in research and development (R&D). This funding opportunity aims to spur rigorous, empirical studies that can narrow the range of existing estimates and inform public and private R&D investment decisions.

This funding opportunity is solely supported by UKRI but has been created in collaboration and alongside the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation's opportunity of the same name. UKRI award holders will be encouraged to engage with award holders funded directly by the Sloan Foundation.

The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for this activity should consider the full lifecycle of the opportunity, including:

- advertising and promotion
- the application process
- peer review and assessment
- establishing and hosting the panel
- post-award monitoring and support

Who is affected?

- Applicants to the opportunity
- Research Office staff within organisations eligible for UKRI funding
- UKRI staff involved in the commissioning process and attending the panel meeting
- Panel members participating in the review and funding decision-making process
- The wider research community and public as beneficiaries of the evidence, outputs and outcomes generated through the funded research

What data and consultation have you used?

The opportunity has been developed in consultation with colleagues across ESRC, alongside engagement with relevant stakeholders and the academic community (including the US stakeholders at Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and Coefficient Giving). This collaborative approach has ensured that the scope, design and delivery model reflect sector needs, policy priorities and emerging evidence.

In preparing this EIA, we have followed current UKRI guidance and best practice by reviewing comparable EIAs across UKRI and undertaking the relevant UKRI EIA training.

The EIA has been reviewed in consultation with ESRC EDI.

Impact on specific groups

Are there general impacts on multiple groups?

UKRI's research commissioning processes are designed with fairness in mind.

ESRC staff receive Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training so they can respond effectively to the requirements of all participants.

The Funding Finder opportunity webpage includes information on [UKRI's commitment to achieving equality of opportunity](#); support to personal circumstances such as career breaks, support for people with caring responsibilities, flexible working, alternative working patterns; and signposting to [UKRI disability and accessibility support](#).

Eligibility and criteria

The opportunity is open to eligible individuals at all stages of their careers, and to research and innovation communities across all UKRI research councils and Innovate UK.

Panel recruitment

- We will aim to ensure that the composition of the commissioning panel is diverse, within the constraints of quality and appropriateness.
- Whilst panel members are appointed first and foremost based on expertise, decisions will aim to balance the panels by gender and geography and seek to ensure a diversity of career stages and institutions. We will only make recruitment decisions which compromise diversity when it is objectively justified by the necessity to ensure the required breadth of subject expertise with high-quality candidates.

Panel meeting

- The Panel meeting will be virtual, and adjustments will be incorporated to ensure that the meeting is inclusive, including briefing the Chair to ensure that the session is facilitated to take equality and diversity considerations into account.
- All panel members will receive the code of practice and guidance with regard to safeguarding the peer review process, aiming to ensure fairness and objectivity, and mitigate against unconscious bias.
- It is the role of panel members to assess the quality of applications against the opportunity assessment criteria. Panel members will be briefed on identifying and managing unconscious bias and empowered to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it. The Panel Chairs and Panel Convenors play a particularly important role in this respect.

UKRI's policies and guidance have been included in the funding opportunity, including guidance on:

- [Research Integrity](#)
- [Preventing Harm in Research](#)
- [Good Research Resource Hub](#)
- [Managing Conflicts of Interests](#)
- [ESRC Framework for Research Ethics](#)
- [ESRC's further guidance on research ethics](#)

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	Negative	Perceptions of older and younger people can be influenced by stereotypes which may impact behaviours and decision making towards them. For instance, there might be an age bias whereby it is assumed that an Early Career Researcher is younger.	This opportunity aligns with UKRI's eligibility requirements. Application and assessment criteria have been designed to be inclusive with respect to career stage. We will ensure that, within the constraints of quality and appropriateness, a diverse panel is recruited to represent different career stages.
Disability	Negative	Individuals with disabilities may face challenges in accessing documents or digital platforms. Inaccessible formats can exclude participation. Panel meeting members with neuro-divergence may experience difficulties	The Funding Service is compliant with accessibility standards. Information on disability and accessibility support for UKRI applicants and grant holders has been included in the Funding Finder page.



		with concentration and focus during panel assessments.	The opportunity has been designed to be inclusive of part-time and flexible working. We will keep the opportunity open as long as possible to give applicants sufficient time to prepare proposals. For the panel meeting, we will ensure that closed captions are available and that regular breaks are scheduled. Documents are provided in sans serif, dyslexia friendly fonts and formats. We will confidentially invite panel meeting participants to share any additional requirements or adjustments they may need to participate fully.
Gender reassignment	Negative	There may be a risk of bias or discrimination against a trans or non-binary panel member or applicant. Trans individuals may be absent from work as a consequence of transition. UKRI records may show the wrong gender.	We will ensure the use of gender-neutral language in the opportunity specification and guidance. We will ask panel members to share pronouns if they feel comfortable and use gender neutral pronouns (they/them) when we haven't been informed of someone's pronouns. We will provide panel members with guidance on fair and objective assessment. Panel members and UKRI staff will safeguard the integrity of the assessment process by watching for bias and raising any concerns. UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature and allow for absence as a result of medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be covered by the Research Organisation's absence policy and strongly encourage ROs to treat absence relating to transition like any other medical absence.

			UKRI has a legal obligation under the UK GDPR and DPA 2018 to process accurate personal data; the obligation is on the account holder to provide any updates to personal data to us for this purpose. For successful applications, UKRI would expect any successful investments to ensure the use of inclusive practices in all of its operations.
Marriage or civil partnership	None	Individuals are not asked to disclose their marital status.	
Pregnancy and maternity	Negative	Individuals may be on parental leave whilst the Funding Opportunity is open, potentially affecting their awareness of these opportunity and ability to participate. Career breaks associated with pregnancy and maternity may impact on an applicant's perceived track record. Pregnancy and maternity may impact on an individual's ability to attend a panel meeting.	Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions. The costs of additional childcare for grant holders, beyond that required to meet the normal contracted requirements of the job, and that are directly related to the project, may be requested as a directly incurred cost by the institution or project. For panel meetings, we will schedule regular breaks, including for breastfeeding/expressing if required. We will provide panel members with guidance regarding the assessment of career breaks within applications. We will ensure the use of gender-neutral language, e.g. parental leave, irrespective of sexual orientation.
Race	Negative	There may be a risk of bias or discrimination arising from an individual's ethnicity, colour, nationality and ethnic group or national origins.	We will address unconscious bias by ensuring that the selection criteria used are objective, transparent and robust; providing guidance and reminding all assessors about not bringing in personal biases; and providing a panel briefing in objective decision making.



			We will ensure that, within the constraints of quality and appropriateness, a diverse panel is recruited. We will encourage panel participants to share names and pronunciation during introductions.
Religion or belief	Negative	Funding opportunity and assessment timelines could fall over religious holidays with applicants and / or panellists requiring reasonable adjustments to fully participate.	Religious observances are considered when planning the opportunity timeline. If the opportunity is open during a festive period, we will ensure the closing date has been extended as far as possible. We will ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning panel meetings. Considerations might include scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals and enabling prayer breaks if requested.
Sex	Negative	There may be a risk of bias or discrimination arising from an individual's sex. Caring responsibilities may have direct and indirect impact on sex as a protected characteristic. People with caring responsibilities (which falls disproportionately on women) may have less time to prepare a proposal or attend a panel meeting.	We will ensure that, within the constraints of quality and appropriateness, a diverse panel is recruited to avoid single sex panels.
Sexual orientation	Negative	There may be potential for bias, bullying or harassment if the sexual orientation of an applicant or panel member is known or assumed.	Applicants and panel members are not asked to disclose their sexual orientation.

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	Negative	Individuals based in remote or poorly connected regions may face barriers to participation in panel meetings. Research projects may involve researchers or partners in countries with different regulatory environments for gambling.	UKRI is committed to effective international collaboration, ensuring that it takes place with integrity and within strong ethical frameworks. The trusted research and innovation principles set out our expectations of UKRI-funded organisations in relation to due diligence for international collaboration. The panel meeting will be held virtually. We will ensure that, within the constraints of quality and appropriateness, a diverse panel is recruited to include participation of post-1992 and Russell Group institutions and from across the four nations of the UK.
Socio-economic status	None		
Education background	None	This opportunity aligns with UKRI's eligibility requirements .	



Parent or guardian responsibilities	Negative	People with parental responsibilities (which falls disproportionately on women) may have less time to prepare a proposal or attend a panel meeting. Career breaks associated with parental responsibilities may impact on an applicant's perceived track record.	For panel meetings, we will schedule regular breaks, including for breastfeeding/expressing if required.
Carer responsibilities	Negative	Carers may have less time to prepare a proposal or attend a panel meeting.	The panel meeting will be held virtually, and regular breaks will be built in.
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	None		
Other characteristics	None		



Final decision

Make a decision on whether to proceed with the activity

State which one of the following outcomes applies and give a reason for your decision.

1. No negative or positive impact identified therefore, activity will proceed
- ~~2. Adapt or change the activity in a way which will eliminate negative impact or promote equality~~
- ~~3. Stop the activity because the evidence shows bias or negative impact towards one or more groups.~~
- ~~4. Barriers and impact identified, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the activity. Proceed with caution with this activity knowing the impact~~

Review and sign off

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

We will review the EIA document every 6 months throughout the funding opportunity process from development through to the close of awards.

What is the EIA review date?

06 February 2027

Contact

Hollie Doell, EconomicROI@esrc.ukri.org

Will the EIA be published?

The EIAs will be published alongside the relevant funding opportunity.

Who has this been signed off by?

Peter Ethelston and Flo Bradley Sutton, ESRC EDI Team.



Submitting the form

You need to [submit the form to the central repository](#)

EIAs for the International Science Partnership Funds should be emailed to: ISPF@ukri.org

Change log

Include changes as you've reviewed the EIA. For example, based on input received from x at the announcement of opportunity stage, x was added

Name	Date	Version	Change
		1	
		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?