

# UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form

## About your activity

### Title of your activity

2026 Bioinformatics and Biological Resources (26BBR)

### Council or business area

Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)

### Aims and objectives

The Bioinformatics and Biological Resources (BBR) Fund aims to facilitate the implementation, improvement or consolidation of bioinformatics or biological resources in support of UK bioscience, helping to drive forwards progress in bioscience research and innovation.

A funding opportunity requires consideration of equality as part of the application process and assessment related processes, such as panel building, expert panel review and hosting panel meetings. There are three aspects to this equality impact assessment:

- Ensuring that the submission, peer review and awarding processes are free from unintentional bias
- Ensuring the process enables rigorous assessment of this investment
- Identifying and addressing any potential barriers to attendance and participation by a diverse range of people

BBSRC is committed to ensuring that the processes for funding are open and inclusive. Those engaged in the processes endeavour to conduct each stage in a fair manner and without prejudice or bias.

This EIA covers the application and assessment process for the 26BBR funding opportunity.

### Who is affected?

- Applicants to the scheme
- Research offices
- Submitting organisations

- Panel members and chairs
- the BBSRC secretariat and employees supporting delivery of the funding 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 targeted opportunities: [How we make decisions – UKRI](#). Specifically that we will use an expert assessment panel for the review process.
- Previous EIAs developed within BBSRC for comparable peer review activities
- Learning from good practice in objective decision across BBSRC peer review activities, including previous BBR opportunities
- Consultation with BBSRC's EDI and peer review policy experts on barriers to inclusion, participation and potential bias in the decision-making process.

## Impact on specific groups

### Are there general impacts on multiple groups?

UKRI is committed to embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) 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 BBSRC BBR 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 panel 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, and in accessible formats where required.

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.

Panel members must avoid any bias in their final reports due to gender, disability, age, racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation and religious belief. Panel members' comments must not break this policy or be defamatory or otherwise actionable.

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.

BBSRC is dedicated to ensuring that the processes for the BBR scheme 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:

- The call is advertised widely to reach the largest possible audience
- The call text and guidance clearly state the eligibility and assessment criteria and ask questions in a clear and descriptive way
- The BBSRC website conforms to accessibility requirements for websites, including the ability to adjust the text size or use a text reader on the page.
- 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 panel members:

- 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
- BBSRC is committed to enabling participation for people with alternative work patterns, including reduced working hours
- Panel members are asked to inform BBSRC if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation
- BBSRC consults with panel members on a regular basis regarding business improvements including a questionnaire sent after each meeting for feedback
- BBSRC consults with the panel chairs informally throughout the panel meeting period
- 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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| Age                      | Potentially negative                         | <p>UKRI Diversity data indicate that older applicants aged 50+ have a higher success rate than younger applicants.</p> <p>If an applicant's age became known to the panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <p>BBSRC's panel 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.</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>Panel members with physical disabilities may find it difficult to access a</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 and panel members are encouraged to speak to BBSRC staff if accommodations 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> |

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|  |  | <p>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, there is the potential for unconscious bias but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members, with the exception of prior consented disclosure in the application by the applicant.</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>Panel 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><a href="#">Disability and accessibility support for applicants</a> 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 panel members.</p> <p>For the in-person meeting, UKRI-BBSRC will:</p> <p>Strive to enable an accessible face-to-face panel meeting. In person is preferred for 26BBR due to business needs (quality of discussion) and in response to panel feedback.</p> <p>Choose a meeting venue that can accommodate any potential accessibility requirements. A quiet room for people needing quiet space will be made available.</p> <p>Gather information from meeting participants about any additional requirement they may need to fully participate.</p> <p>Ensure that electronic information is accessible.</p> |
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|                               |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | <p>Ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the panel meeting agenda.</p> <p>Allow for potential use of screen readers for participants of panel meetings who are visually impaired.</p> <p>Ensure that colours chosen, and other visual stimuli do not trigger migraines or affect those with colour blindness; different colours may assist with this if participants do not bring their own laptops to panel meetings</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 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 panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.</p> | <p>We will ensure to use gender neutral language in all call materials and engagement with the community.</p> <p>BBSRC's panel 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.</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 guidance.<sup>1</sup></p> |
| Marriage or civil partnership | Potentially negative | Applicants are not required to declare their marital or civil partnership status.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | BBSRC's panel members receive a briefing on unconscious bias in advance of the panel. BBSRC staff                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

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|                         |                      | <p>Panel 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 or panel member's marital or civil partnership status became known to BBSRC, there is no point during the assessment process where this is disclosed.</p> <p>UKRI's policies protect applicant and panel members' personal data, and UKRI's Conflict of Interest policy safeguards against undue influence</p> | <p>remain vigilant to, and address, any bias during the assessment process.</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>Panel members who are pregnant or on maternity leave may be discouraged from participating in panel meetings.</p> <p>If an applicant's pregnancy or maternity leave status became known to the panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.</p> <p>Career breaks in applicant track records due to parental leave may result in the potential for unconscious bias.</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>BBSRC consults with all participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation.</p> <p>Panel 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</p> |

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|      |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <p>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 panel to ensure appropriate assessment of applicant track record without bias against career breaks due to parental leave/caring responsibilities and others.</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 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 panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members.</p> | <p>BBSRC will monitor the diversity of panel members and applicants to ensure representation of the community and a diversity of opinion. It is important that selection of panel members is from a diverse community which represents the community and UK as a whole.</p> <p>BBSRC's panel 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.</p> |

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| Religion or belief | Potentially negative | <p>Assessment timelines may fall over religious holidays resulting in applicants and/or panel members being unable to or requiring flexibility to participate.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <p>BBSRC ensures that religious observances are considered as much as possible when timetabling major activities.</p> <p>Applicants are provided an outline of the key dates during the assessment period which will require their participation as soon as possible after the close date of the opportunity.</p> <p>Panel 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>BBSRC ensures that the venue caters for all dietary requirements. A quiet room for people needing quiet space or space for prayer will be made available.</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 all eligible researchers. However, 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 project leads to the scheme.</p> | <p>BBSRC will ensure that the call text highlights the importance of a diverse team</p> <p>BBSRC will monitor the diversity of panel 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 panel 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.</p> <p>UKRI will continue monitor and evaluate the success rates of funding opportunities that use partial</p>                                                              |

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|                    |  | <p>During panel building in preparation for a meeting, gender is considered to ensure equal representation as far as practicable.</p> <p>If an applicant's sex became known to the panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to panel members</p> | <p>randomisation to identify any emerging impacts.</p>                                                                                                                            |
| Sexual orientation |  | <p>If an applicant's sexual orientation became known to the panel, there is the potential for unconscious bias, but at no point during the assessment process is this disclosed to the panel members.</p>                                                                                                                   | <p>BBSRC's panel 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.</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                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| Geographical location and place | Potentially negative                         | <p>Panel 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>BBSRC will provide early notice of dates and support staff and panel members to ensure any travel and accommodation costs are covered appropriately.</p> <p>During panel building in preparation for a meeting, geographical spread across the</p> |

|                                     |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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|                                     |                      | During panel building in preparation for a meeting, geographical spread across the UK is considered as far as practicable to ensure representation.                                                                                                                                                                                               | UK is considered as far as practicable to ensure representation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Socio-economic status               | Potentially negative | 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 | BBSRC's panel 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Education background                | Potentially negative | Project lead applicants must have a contract of employment at lecturer level or equivalent.<br><br>Panel members are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds (academia, industry, early career researchers, and those with a non-traditional background). However, some of these areas may be underrepresented.                                    | The Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI) enables applicants to describe their track record, and additionally to describe any factors that provide context, such as career breaks.<br><br>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. |
| Parent or guardian responsibilities | Potentially negative | Panel members may find it difficult to participate if they have caring responsibilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | BBSRC ensures that school holidays are considered where possible when timetabling panel assessment activities.<br><br>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.                                                                       |

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|                                           |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>Where possible, BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours.</p> <p>BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on BBSRC business.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Carer responsibilities                    | Potentially negative | Panel members may find it difficult to participate if they have caring responsibilities.                                                                                                                                                            | <p>BBSRC ensures that school holidays are considered where possible when timetabling panel assessment activities.</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, BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours.</p> <p>BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on UKRI-BBSRC business.</p> |
| Political opinion (Northern Ireland only) | unknown              | 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>Maintain strict confidentiality and conflict of interest processes, no political information is disclosed or collected.</p> <p>BBSRC's panel 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</p>                                                                                                                                               |
| Other characteristics                     |                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## Final decision

### Make a decision on whether to proceed with the activity

2. Adapt or change the activity in a way which will eliminate negative impact or promote equality

A number of areas of potential negative impact have been identified, and care will be taken to a) implement the proposed mitigation strategies and b) consider alternative or additional means of mitigation where required.

Should additional impacts be identified throughout the 26BBR assessment process, ad hoc mitigations strategies will be discussed with EDI and peer review policy colleagues as required. These additional impacts will then be integrated into the EIA at its next revision point.

## Review and sign off

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

- BBSRC will review this equality impact assessment annually to identify any further actions or interventions that are required to improve the diversity and inclusion of the scheme.
- BBSRC monitors, analyses and publishes data to better understand the diversity of our applicant and assessor community.
- BBSRC is proactive in increasing the diversity of our panel members. Panel membership for each meeting is published on the website after the funding decisions have been made and all outcomes communicated to applicants.
- Further information: <https://bbsrc.ukri.org/about/equality-diversity/>

### What is the EIA review date?

August 2027

## Contact

Daniela Hensen

Or

Laurie O'Neill

## Will the EIA be published?

Yes

## Who has this been signed off by?

Strategy lead: Daniela Hensen, Joint Head of Transformative Technologies (interim), August 2026

## 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](mailto: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                 |
|----------------|-------------|---------|------------------------|
| Laurie O'Neill | August 2026 | 1       | EIA created for 26BBR. |
|                |             | 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? |
|--------|----------|-------|---------------------------|----------------------|
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UK Research  
and Innovation

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