

UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form

About your activity

Title of your activity

Mid-range equipment for biosciences research: ALERT 2026

Council or business area

Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)

Aims and objectives

The ALERT scheme is an equipment only grant that aims to support the purchase of mid-range equipment for research across BBSRC's remit. A key component of this is advanced, multi-user equipment that addresses the shared needs of research organisations, industry and end user communities.

This funding opportunity involves a multidisciplinary panel-only assessment, which will lead to the awarding of funding to successful applicants and institutions. It therefore requires consideration of equality, diversity, and inclusion as part of the application process and assessment processes such as panel building, expert panel review and hosting the panel meeting.

The following aspects should be considered as part of this equality impact assessment (EIA):

- Ensuring that the submission, peer review and awarding processes are free from unintentional bias
- Ensuring the process enables rigorous and fair 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 ALERT 2026 funding opportunity.

Who is affected?

- Applicants to the scheme
- Submitting organisations
- Research offices
- Panel chairs
- Panel members
- BBSRC employees supporting the delivery of the ALERT 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 published principles of decision making when assessing funding applications [How we make decisions – UKRI](#).
- Reviewed previous EIAs developed within BBSRC for comparable funding opportunities and peer-review activities
- Learning from good practice in objective decision across BBSRC peer review activities, including previous ALERT opportunities
- Consultation with BBSRC's Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and peer review policy experts on barriers to inclusion, participation and potential bias in the decision-making process
- Feedback from panel chairs to take learnings from ALERT 2025
- Consultations to adopt best practices in equality have been incorporated from other UKRI/BBSRC reviews, for example: [UKRI people and teams action plan – UKRI](#), which addresses how UKRI will deliver on our support for technicians and RTPs as a signatory of the Technician Commitment, and [BBSRC equality, diversity and inclusion action plan – UKRI](#), where a key action is ensuring accessibility to all BBSRC activities and programmes.

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 ALERT 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](#).

For ALERT 2026, demand management measures have been implemented to manage the high number of applications submitted. A maximum limit of three applications per research organisation has been introduced. This may have an indirect negative impact on some groups and, as such, the effects of this measure will be monitored and reviewed.

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 and religious holidays or cultural events.

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 relating to protected characteristic including 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 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 ALERT funding opportunity 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 including the [UKRI future research and innovation funding opportunities](#) webpage
- The call text and guidance clearly state the eligibility and assessment criteria and ask questions in a clear and descriptive way
- The UKRI funding finder 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 will receive 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 assessment and 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
Age	Potentially negative	UKRI Diversity data indicate that older applicants aged 50+ have a higher success rate than younger applicants. 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.	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. Career breaks and other factors are considered during the assessment process to ensure applicants are not negatively impacted.

Disability	Potentially Negative	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 Project Lead. General issues regarding UKRI's grant application systems and provisions for flexibility are addressed through policies designed to apply across our organisation. Panel members 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. 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.	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. 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. Applicants with a disability (inclusive of physical or neurological) can cost for additional support required that is directly related to the grant. 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. 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 panel members. For the in-person meeting, UKRI-BBSRC will: Strive to enable an accessible face-to-face panel meeting. In person is preferred for ALERT 2026 due to
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			business needs (quality of discussion) and in response to panel feedback. Choose a meeting venue that can accommodate any potential accessibility requirements. Ensure that there is step-free access throughout the venue. A quiet room for people needing quiet space will be made available. Gather information from meeting participants about any additional requirement they may need to fully participate. Ensure that electronic information is accessible. Ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the panel meeting agenda. Allow for potential use of screen readers for participants of panel meetings who are visually impaired. 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
Gender reassignment	Potentially Negative	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	We will ensure to use gender neutral language in all call materials and engagement with the community. 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. As per UKRI's policies we take care to adopt gender neutral language

		discrimination in the last 5 years and 43% had quit because their work environment was unwelcoming. 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.	and protect applicant personal details. Questions related to protected characteristics in The Funding Service will be in line with ONS guidance .
Marriage or civil partnership	Potentially Negative	Applicants are not required to declare their marital or civil partnership status. Panel members are provided the opportunity to declare conflicts of interest, but never directly asked to provide their marital or civil partnership status. 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. UKRI's policies protect applicant and panel members' personal data, and UKRI's Conflict of Interest policy safeguards against undue influence	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. UKRI's policies protect applicant and committee members' personal data, and UKRI's Conflict of Interest policy safeguards against undue influence.
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially Negative	Panel members who are pregnant or on maternity leave may be discouraged from participating in panel meetings.	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

		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. Career breaks in applicant track records due to parental leave may result in the potential for unconscious bias.	funding subject to our prior written approval. BBSRC consults with all participants to understand and cater for their requirements for participation. 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. Resume for Research and Innovation (R4RI) has an optional additions section, where applicants may provide context, such as details for career breaks. 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.
Race	Potentially Negative	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. UKRI Diversity data also indicate that applications from White Principal Investigators are more likely to be successful than	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. 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

		applications from other ethnic groups. 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.	
Religion or belief	Potentially Negative	Assessment timelines may fall over religious holidays resulting in applicants and/or panel members being unable to or requiring flexibility to participate.	BBSRC ensures that religious observances are considered as much as possible when timetabling major activities. 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. 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. 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.
Sex	Potentially Negative	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	BBSRC will ensure that the call text highlights the importance of a diverse team. 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

		rates are lower for women than for men. 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.	not be used during virtual meeting discussions. 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. UKRI will continue monitor and evaluate the success rates of funding opportunities that use partial randomisation to identify any emerging impacts.
Sexual orientation	Potentially Negative	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.	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

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	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	BBSRC will provide early notice of dates and support staff and panel members to ensure any travel and accommodation costs are covered appropriately. During panel building in preparation for a meeting, geographical spread across the 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	UKRI's individual eligibility policy should make it simpler and fairer for individuals to apply for funding. Suitability is based on experience rather than qualification. However, this is a new policy, which applicants and the panel may not be fully aware of. Panel members are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds (academia, RTPs, early career researchers, and those with a non-traditional background). However, some of these areas may be underrepresented.	Highlight the new individual eligibility policy in the opportunity guidance and during applicant and panel webinars. 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. 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.
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. 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. Where possible, BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours. BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on BBSRC business.
Carer 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. 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. Where possible, BBSRC aims to schedule meetings in standard working hours. BBSRC will pay the cost of additional caring responsibilities incurred while on UKRI-BBSRC business.
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	Maintain strict confidentiality and conflict of interest processes, no political information is disclosed or collected. 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.
Other characteristics			



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.

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

Potential for negative impact has been evaluated. Actions to address negative impacts identified are being applied as per the previous section and alternative or additional means of mitigation will be considered where required.

Should additional impacts be identified throughout the ALERT26 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 conduct post-meeting surveys for chairs, panel members and post submission survey to applicants to gain feedback about the opportunity. Any feedback received will be reviewed and used to inform updates to future EIA for repeated opportunities.

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 reviewers and 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: [Equality, diversity and inclusion – BBSRC – UKRI](#)

What is the EIA review date?

September 2027

Contact

Jennifer Swarbrick

Will the EIA be published?

Yes

Who has this been signed off by?

Tim Shuttleworth, BBSRC Head of Research Infrastructure

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
Jennifer Swarbrick	September 2026	1	EIA created for ALERT 2026
		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 impact of demand management measures	1 June 2027	JS	Data Analysis of applications received. Evidence gathered after panel meeting.	Review and revision of demand management measures if required