

UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form

About your activity

Title of your activity

Materials Innovation Programme Digital Materials Sandpit

Council or business area

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)

Aims and objectives

Call for Participants for a Sandpit on digital followed by funding of projects. The Sandpit will be held over four days, including a virtual session the week prior. The broad aims of the sandpit are to generate research proposals which can address the challenges and opportunities of integrating digital approaches in across the materials innovation pipeline. This EIA covers all aspects of the Sandpit including advertising, application process, participant selection, panel selection, hosting the sandpit activity, and peer review procedures.

Who is affected?

Applicants from businesses and academia from a diverse range of disciplines can apply to attend this sandpit opportunity.

Assessment will be done by a panel consisting of a director, mentors and EPSRC staff.

EPSRC staff will be responsible for managing the opportunity.

Industrial stakeholders, Government stakeholders, contracted facilitators will also be part of this opportunity.



What data and consultation have you used?

Consultation has taken place with EPSRC on the remit and format of the sandpit, drawing on input from the academic community, EPSRC Strategic Advisory Teams, and portfolio manager knowledge and recommendations of relevant community members. As part of the National Materials Innovation Programme (NMIP), the approach of this opportunity has been consulted with the National Materials Innovation Programme board, the Materials Innovation Leadership Group, Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade (BIST), Innovate UK, and UKRI ExCo. Further input has been and will continue to be sought through the Sandpit director and mentors. Previous Sandpit EIAs have been consulted.

Impact on specific groups

Are there general impacts on multiple groups?

Several overarching impacts have been identified and actively considered as part of the sandpit call design and internal management processes for call delivery. These risks have been mitigated as far as possible. These include:

Impacts related to the sandpit being held in a physical location

Mitigations:

- EPSRC will select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation.
- When selecting the venue, transport links will be a key consideration, aiming for a range of transport options to be available to cater to different needs.
- Accommodation will be provided to ensure participation is not hampered by costs.
- Full timeline provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with EPSRC on specific mitigations. EPSRC will do its best to accommodate adjustments.
- EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries.
- The sandpit will be held outside of school holidays.
- The sandpit will, where possible, be scheduled to avoid major religious festivals and will accommodate participants' religious observances and requirements.

Impacts related to the potential for discrimination against people with protected characteristics

Mitigations:



- Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit.
- We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias.

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	Early career researchers* may be disadvantaged in the application process as they don't have the same track record to draw on to demonstrate how they meet the assessment criteria. (*It is assumed that early career researchers are generally younger than their more experienced peers, although this is by no means always the case. This is why this point has been included under 'age'). There could be potential bias or discrimination against a participant (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants).	The opportunity has standard EPSRC eligibility with respect to career stages. We intend to ensure that the sandpit consists of a variety of career stages as opposed to solely highly experienced participants. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias.
Disability	Negative	There could be potential bias or discrimination against a participant (either a panel member, a research	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles

		applicant or research participants). There may be potential for bullying and harassment and/or exclusionary practices to occur during the in-person event and subsequent online events/follow up activities. People with visual disabilities may find it difficult to access and view the online materials. People with physical disabilities may find it difficult to attend in person, especially if poor transport links.	of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias. The virtual element of the sandpit will contain appropriate breaks. We will ensure that it is possible to print the online documents and they are in a form that text can be enlarged, and any information displayed by screen sharing can be zoomed as needed. Where possible, consideration will be given to the use of weblinks and acronyms (such as in the Call Document) as this information is not readily compatible with text readers. For the in-person days, EPSRC will select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation e.g. subtitles for presentations. We have welcomed applications and enquiries from individuals with additional needs for whom specific provisions may need to be made.
Gender reassignment	Negative	There could be potential bias or discrimination against a participant (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants). There may be potential for bullying and harassment and/or exclusionary practices to	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage

		occur during the in-person event and subsequent online events/follow up activities. Trans people may be absent from work because of transition and UKRI records may show the wrong gender.	applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias. We will work to ensure the use of gender neutral language where possible in our documents and funding opportunity and encourage participants to share their preferred pronouns. For the in-person days, EPSRC will select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation e.g. gender neutral toilets. We will strive to achieve a gender balance in mentor selection, with all considerations to ensure mentors are representative of the wider UK population. UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature on absence due to medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be covered by the Research Organisation's sick policy and strongly encourage research organisations to treat absence relating to transition like any other sick absence. Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted.
Marriage or civil partnership		No impact identified.	

Pregnancy and maternity	Negative	There could be potential bias or discrimination against a participant (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants). There may be potential for bullying and harassment and/or exclusionary practices to occur during the in-person event and subsequent online events/follow up activities. Participation in the sandpit may be negatively affected, if potential applicants or peer reviewers are unavailable at key stages. Inability to attend due to childcare commitments may affect who can participate. Health restrictions related to pregnancy.	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias. Full timeline provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with EPSRC on specific mitigations. EPSRC will do its best to accommodate adjustments. EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries. 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 EPSRC.
Race	Negative	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.	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias.

Religion or belief	Negative	There could be potential bias or discrimination because somebody (either a mentor, a research applicant or research participants) has a particular faith or belief. There may be opportunities for bullying and harassment during the sandpit or project. Participation in the opportunity may be affected, if potential applicants or peer reviewers are unavailable at key assessment stages (Activities could coincide with religious holidays, for example).	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias. EPSRC will ensure that religious observances are taken into account during the event. A full timeline will be provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with EPSRC on specific mitigations. EPSRC will do its best to accommodate adjustments.
Sex	Negative	There could be potential bias or discrimination against a participant (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants). There may be potential for bullying and harassment and/or exclusionary practices to occur during the in-person event and subsequent online events/follow up activities. Use of language in call for expressions of interest can present a barrier to participation. Attendees may be disadvantaged and unable	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias. We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from those from diverse backgrounds. In line with EPSRC policy we will aim for a 30% representation of the underrepresented gender for the

		to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities.	panel members (mentors) at the sandpit. We will ensure the use of gender-neutral language in the call specification, guidance documents and during delivery of the sandpit. EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries.
Sexual orientation	Negative	There may be potential for bullying and harassment and/or exclusionary practices to occur during the in-person event and subsequent online events/follow up activities.	Expectations of professional and appropriate behaviour from all participants: We will reiterate the expectations above and direct our facilitators to adhere to the principles of professionalism throughout the sandpit.

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	The sandpit will be in a physical location, requiring travel.	When selecting the venue, transport links will be a key consideration, aiming for a range of transport options to be available to cater to different needs. Accommodation will be provided to ensure participation is not hampered by costs.



Socio-economic status	Negative	Sandpit will be in a physical location, requiring nights away from home.	Accommodation will be provided to ensure participation is not hampered by costs.
Education background		No impact identified.	
Parent or guardian responsibilities	Negative	Sandpit participation will include a 4-day residential period. The short opening period of the Expression of Interest form may disproportionately affect those with less time available due to caring etc.	EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries. The sandpit will be held outside of school holidays if at all possible. The EOI form is designed to be quite light touch and not be onerous to complete.
Carer responsibilities	Negative	Sandpit participation will include a 4-day residential period. The short opening period of the Expression of Interest form may disproportionately affect those with less time available due to caring etc.	EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries. The EOI form is designed to be quite light touch and not be onerous to complete.
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)		N/A	
Other characteristics		N/A	



Final decision

Make a decision on whether to proceed with the activity

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

Mitigating actions have been identified to promote inclusion, and will be implemented throughout the process as identified in the tables above.

Review and sign off

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

Review EIA:

- Before participant selection panel
- Before in-person event
- Evaluate after event and funding decisions have been completed

What is the EIA review date?

31/07/2027

Contact

Emma Stone (materials@epsrc.ukri.org)

Will the EIA be published?

Yes

Who has this been signed off by?

Emma Stone, Senior Portfolio Manager, 20 October 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

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
Emma Stone		1	Completion of EIA Assessment for Activity
		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?
Timetable of key dates made available to applicants and panel members as far in advance as possible.	October 2026	Staff involved in delivering this funding opportunity.	Key dates will be identified when call is published.	Applicants have as much time as possible to prepare applications.



Religious observances and school holidays will be taken into account when meeting dates are chosen.				
Unconscious bias training to be delivered to panel members. EPSRC members of staff will monitor all meetings and highlight instances of bias in conversations.	November 2026	Staff involved in delivering this funding opportunity.	Unconscious bias training within panel briefing. EPSRC staff presence at meetings.	Preventing unconscious bias as much as possible in panel discussions.