



UK Research and Innovation

Equality Impact Assessment Form

Title of your activity

Data sandpit for metascience

Council or business area

Metascience Unit (ESRC)

Aims and objectives

A sandpit event will be hosted by UKRI's Metascience Unit as an assessment stage for a funding opportunity. An 'Expression of Interest' stage, via a MS Form and found via the UKRI Funding Finder website, will be an open call to the public for register their interest in attending the sandpit.

Participants will be selected from the pool of EOI submissions. Criteria will be used to shortlist the participants.

Attendance at the sandpit will involve collaborating with other participants, to develop research project ideas and then pitch them for assessment. The sandpit will take place in March 2027, across five days (three in-person and two remote). Post-sandpit, successful project teams will be invited to apply for funding via a fast-track funding opportunity on The Funding Service.

This EIA will cover the event logistics, the mentor recruitment, the selection of participants to invite, and the treatment of the sandpit participants.

Who is affected?

- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) data teams
- UKRI Simpler Better Funding team
- Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) research resilience team
- Higher Education staff
- Administrative Staff
- Academics from across disciplines relevant to the funding opportunity
- UKRI staff
- Mentors that will make up our assessment panel

What data and consultation have you used?

We have reviewed other Equality Impact Assessments published for UKRI opportunities and consulted colleagues who have run successful sandpit funding processes to ensure the assessment is comprehensive.

External consultation around the opportunity and specification has taken place with relevant identified external stakeholders.

Impact on specific groups

Are there general impacts on multiple groups?

A number of risks have been identified and actively considered as part of the sandpit opportunity design and internal management processes for delivery. These risks have been mitigated as far as possible. These include:

- Making the sandpit a hybrid event over 2 weeks to reduce digital fatigue
- Covering travel and accommodation for the in-person component
- Running the event outside of school holidays in UK where possible
- Running the between event 9:30am-5pm, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday to accommodate flexible working as much as possible.

A satisfaction survey will be sent out to all participants to gather feedback about the event, its facilitation, organisation and the participants' experience of the sandpit for the in-person and virtual sessions. The survey will also measure how each particular event met its outcomes and outputs from the stakeholder, participant, mentor and funder viewpoints.

Impact on protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	Impact (positive, negative, none or unknown)	Details of impact	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact
Age	Negative	Potential negative or positive depending on scheme eligibility requirements. There may be potential for bullying and harassment and/or exclusionary	We will encourage people from diverse backgrounds to apply for the sandpit and diversity of background will be considered when selecting participants to attend. We will consider individuals from different career stages at the

		practices to occur during the in-person event and subsequent online events/follow up activities. 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').	participant and mentor selection stages. Track record is not an explicit criterion, given the likely relationship to career stage (indirectly age). Mentors will be briefed to make clear that they should be assessing the project according to criteria and not reading between the lines. They should assess an individual's capability to deliver their proposed research.
Disability	Negative	There could be potential bias or discrimination because somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) has a disability. Issues of access (to physical venue, to printed or visual materials and so on). Sandpit attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during sessions. People with visual or hearing disabilities may find it difficult to access	We will consider venue to ensure appropriate access. Solicit information from sandpit participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have to participate fully. Consider format and variety of materials used to ensure they can be accessed and engaged with appropriately. The virtual element of the sandpit will contain appropriate breaks. Frequent breaks will also be built into the agenda and we have spaced out 5 sessions across 2 weeks. We will ensure that it is possible to print online documents and they are in a form that text can be enlarged, and any

		and view/ hear the online materials.	information displayed by screen sharing can be zoomed as needed. Captions will also be used for the hearing impaired. We will avoid lighting that may trigger migraines and epilepsy.
Gender reassignment	Negative	There could be potential bias or discrimination to 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. Trans people may be absent from work because of transition and UKRI records may show the wrong gender.	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. Mentor selection: we will strive to achieve a gender balance in mentor selection, with all considerations to ensure mentors are representative of the wider UK population. Inclusive practices: For successful applications, we would expect any successful investments to ensure the use of inclusive practices in all of its operations. Medical Treatment: 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	Negative	This is unlikely to affect the inclusion of those who are married or in civil partnerships. If there are participants who are in a marriage or civil partnership who both attend, there may be caring responsibilities to manage which are impacted by the event. 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. There may be bias (positive or negative) if participants are in or have been in a relationship with each other.	We will require participants to work in the spirit of professionalism and inclusivity throughout the process. Design of the sandpit is such that in-person attendance is only required for three days, which is published in the opportunity for expressions of interest.
Pregnancy and maternity	Negative	Participation in the sandpit may be negatively affected, if potential applicants or mentor reviewers are unavailable at key stages. Inability to attend due to childcare commitments may affect who can participate. Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions.	We should ensure the use of gender-neutral language during the sandpit. Timelines of all events will be provided in advance, allowing early engagement with UKRI on specific mitigations. UKRI will do its best to accommodate adjustments. Childcare costs: The costs of additional childcare for participants, beyond those required to meet the normal contracted requirements of the job may be requested as a directly incurred cost if the institutional policy is to reimburse them. However, childcare costs associated with normal working patterns may not be sought.

			Breastfeeding/Expressing: On request, we will ensure facilities are provided at the sandpit venue
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. We will encourage people from diverse background to apply for the sandpit and diversity of backgrounds will be considered when selecting participants to attend. We will also share guidance with mentors on unconscious bias.	We will encourage people from diverse backgrounds to apply for the sandpit. We will also share guidance with mentors on unconscious bias. We will require participants to work in the spirit of professionalism and inclusivity throughout the process. We would expect any successful investments to ensure the use of inclusive practices in all of its operations.
Religion or belief	Negative	Participation in the sandpit may be affected, if potential applicants or mentors are unavailable at key assessment stages. (Activities could coincide with religious holidays, for example). There could be potential bias or discrimination because somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) has a particular faith or belief.	UKRI will ensure that religious observances are considered such as prayer times and catering. UKRI will do its best to accommodate adjustments and will seek input from participants and mentors. We will ensure that religious observances are considered when planning the sandpit including catering to provide choice, accounting for religious considerations. Catering will include vegetarian food if kosher or halal food cannot be provided. Prayer times will be accommodated for.
Sex	Negative	Use of language in call for expressions of interest	We will encourage people from diverse backgrounds to apply for the sandpit.

		can present a barrier to participation. Attendees may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities. 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.	We will encourage and remind attendees to be respectful and inclusive during the sandpit process. We will ensure the use of gender-neutral language in the call specification, guidance documents and during delivery of the sandpit. We will design the sandpit so that in-person attendance is only required on three days, and publish this in the opportunity for expressions of interest. In line with UKRI policy we will aim to ensure fair representation across genders.
Sexual orientation	Negative	Applicants are not asked to disclose their sexual orientation. However, there may be potential for bias, bullying or harassment if the sexual orientation of an applicant is known or assumed.	We will encourage people from diverse backgrounds to apply for the sandpit. We will also share guidance with mentors on unconscious bias. We will require participants to work in the spirit of professionalism and inclusivity throughout the process. We would expect any successful investments to ensure the use of inclusive practices in all of its operations.

Impact on additional characteristics

Additional characteristics	Impact (positive, negative, none or unknown)	Details of impact	Actions to reduce negative or increase positive impact

Geographical location and place	Unknown	-	The opportunity is open to academia, research organisations, eligible organisations, individuals operating in the field with suitable expertise and experience, and independent research organisations across the UK who meet the eligibility requirements. Participants' accommodation and subsistence will be paid to ensure participation is not hampered by costs. Swindon is selected as a venue because of the data requirements for the sandpit. Travel and subsistence from any UK location will be covered in line with UKRI policy to minimise negative impact of this southeast England location.
Socio-economic status	Unknown	-	Paid accommodation, travel, and subsistence will support participants' attendance on the in-person days.
Education background	Unknown	-	The requirement for participating is that individuals have the expertise and experience in the subject matter. There is no requirement to hold a post-graduate degree or have links to higher education. It is also open to UK-based researchers in the UK from other nationalities who meet the requirements.
Parent or guardian responsibilities	Unknown	Dependent on individual circumstances	As this is a hybrid meeting, it is hoped that the event's impact on caring responsibilities is minimised through the option of participating remotely from home for part of the event. UKRI can offer support for people with caring responsibilities. It is an individual's responsibility to check

			with UKRI and confirm what costs can be reimbursed prior to attendance at an event. Further details are available at this link here .
Carer responsibilities	Unknown	Dependent on individual circumstances	UKRI can offer support for people with caring responsibilities. It is an individual's responsibility to check with UKRI and confirm what costs can be reimbursed prior to attendance at an event. Further details here .
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	None	-	The sandpit will focus on data and research questions. Political opinion or discourse will not apply.
Other characteristics	Unknown	Dependent on individual circumstances	Reasonable adjustments and accommodations will be provided upon request. Materials, equipment and resources will be designed to accommodate or be adapted to varying needs. 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. Captions will also be used for the hearing impaired. We will avoid colours and lighting that may trigger migraines and/or epilepsy. Sandpits are intense with a high cognitive load. Sufficient rest time will be allocated in the sandpit agenda, and any specific requirements for rest can be taken into consideration by UKRI.



			We have also spaced our 5 sessions out across 2 weeks.
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Final decision

Make a decision on whether to proceed with the activity

We have done our best to make this funding opportunity inclusive and are very happy to receive feedback on any changes that can be made to improve.

We will adapt or change the activity in a way which will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.



Review and sign off

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

- Plan regular reviews of the EIA and action plan
- Review the EIA as part of any closure or lessons learned activity.
- Be transparent: continue to consult with the groups affected by the sandpit and use new insights to review the EIA.

What is the EIA review date?

01/02/2027

Contact

Lauren Curtis, via metascience@UKRI.org

Will the EIA be published?

Yes

Who has this been signed off by?

Lucy Gresley

Metascience Unit Programme Delivery Lead

01/10/2026

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
		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?