

**EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment**

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	Prosperity Partnerships: Early-Stage Collaborations 2023
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	Aimed at relatively new industry-academic relationships, this looks to fund a set of business-led projects co-created with a main academic partner that will encourage the development of the relationship, bring benefits to the research base strategy of EPSRC and wider benefits to the UK economy. This pilot will also trial an expedited process to deliver funding in a shorter period than the main Prosperity Partnerships (PP) call.
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g., with relevant groups and stakeholders)	This is a pilot opportunity. Feedback from the community (including previous applicants) suggested the standard PP process is longer than they like (it is difficult for industry to ring-fence money for research for such a long waiting period). It was also clear from the community that the PP requirement for strong, established, strategic partnerships was a high barrier to many, particularly SMEs.
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>A wide research community including business – for the changes in the process.</p> <p>Panel members and applicants- for their involvement in the process.</p> <p>EPSRC staff - running and helping in the competition.</p>
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>An evaluation survey will be given to panel members, and they will be actively encouraged to fill these out and return them.</p> <p>EPSRC Business Engagement staff are running this call and will meet on a regular basis to review the various stages of the process. They will also consider the feedback from panel members.</p> <p>Following the completion of this pilot, we will review what we learned from the process, and make suitable adjustments before this model of PP is integrated into the PP round 6 call scheduled for early 2024.</p>

As a funder of research, EPSRC remains committed to attracting the best potential researchers from a diverse population into research careers. The Research Councils have together developed the

ambitious [RCUK Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#) to outline our collective aspirations for working with the research community, and partners throughout the sector. For policy changes, funding activities and events EPSRC will aim to:

- Select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation. This includes for applicants, reviewers, panel members and staff. Included in the interview invitation letter is a request for any access issues to be notified.
- All participants in the process are asked to inform staff if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation.
- Offer support for people with caring responsibilities, further details are available [here](#).
- Clearly communicate the timeline and key milestones for funding activities, advertise these widely to reach the largest possible audience.
- Support and encourage panel members to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. Staff will work closely with the Panel Chair(s) to agree approaches that are designed to minimize opportunities for bias and improve transparency of the decision-making process. This includes managing environmental conditions, such as providing appropriate breaks.
- Support flexible working of stakeholders.
- Ensure diversity of peer review assessment and interview panels. Staff will adhere to a mixed panel policy and endeavour to achieve the minimum 30% for the underrepresented gender on the panel.
- Abide by the principles of peer review
- Provide EPSRC staff with tailored unconscious bias training for Peer Review processes and clear guidance for assessors.
- Handle personal sensitive information in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation 2018.

Protected Characteristic Group	Is there a potential for positive or negative impact?	Please explain and give examples of any evidence/data used	Action to address negative impact (e.g., adjustment to the policy)
<b>Disability</b>	<p>Possible negatives:</p> <p>If panels are in person...</p> <p>Venue accessibility issues for those with limited mobility.</p> <p>Long distances for some representatives to travel.</p> <p>During panels, the speaker volume may affect those with sight or hearing impairments.</p>	<p>DST support coordinating the process will request details of any mobility concerns so that provisions can be made where required, but we will also be aware that some individuals may choose not to disclose this information.</p>	<p>There will be two panel stages: prioritisation (likely remote), and interview (likely in person).</p> <p>Live panels will probably be held in Polaris House, Swindon where there are clear provisions for those with mobility concerns.</p> <p>Make the schedule and expectations of the panel process and agenda for the panel days well in advance to support neurodiverse individuals or those with anxiety.</p> <p>If this call involves multiple days of panels, ensure panellists have suitable accommodation.</p>
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	<p>Possible Negative:</p> <p>Availability of non-gender specific bathroom facilities.</p> <p>Panel members may be biased with prejudices affecting their decision-making.</p>		<p>Ensure we provide the location of non-gender specific bathroom facilities within Polaris House.</p> <p>Panel members will be provided with an unconscious bias document and will be briefed by the panel convenors. EPSRC members of staff assisting the process must have completed the unconscious bias training.</p>
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	None Identified		
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	<p>Possible Negative:</p> <p>Some attendees may have breastfeeding schedules.</p> <p>Some attendees may have parenting</p>	<p>DST support coordinating the process will request details of any dietary requirements, but we will be</p>	<p>Ensure there are sufficient breaks built into the schedule and, for in-person panels, ensure that an adequate room is available for any breastfeeding requirements.</p>

	<p>responsibilities (see below for caring responsibilities).</p> <p>Pregnant attendees may have specific dietary requirements or need more breaks than those scheduled in the agenda.</p>	<p>aware that some individuals may choose not to disclose this information</p>	<p>Choose an easily accessible location to run in-person panels, and have appropriate start/finish times, so that attendees travel a reasonable distance and can return on the same day.</p> <p>If this call involves multiple days of panels, ensure panellists have suitable accommodation.</p>
<b>Race</b>	<p>Possible negative:</p> <p>Panel members can be biased by the race of applicants.</p>		<p>Panel members will be provided with an unconscious bias document and will be briefed by the panel convenors. EPSRC members of staff assisting the process must have completed the unconscious bias training.</p>
<b>Religion or belief</b>	<p>There are no religious festival or holiday dates that we are aware of that clash with the panel dates.</p> <p>Panels members: Panel members can be biased by the religious beliefs (or lack thereof) of applicants.</p>		<p>Unconscious bias awareness, as above.</p>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	<p>Panels members: Panel members can be biased by the sexual orientation of applicants.</p>		<p>Unconscious bias awareness, as above.</p>
<b>Sex (gender)</b>	<p>Panel members: Panel members can be biased by gender of applicants.</p>		<p>EPSRC to aim for the panels to be 50:50 male/female.</p> <p>Unconscious bias awareness, as above.</p>
<b>Age</b>	<p>Panel members: Panel members can be biased by age of applicants.</p>		<p>Unconscious bias awareness, as above.</p>
<b>Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)</b>	<p>Possible negative:</p> <p>Pre-work for panel members may affect</p>	<p>DST support coordinating will request details of any</p>	<p>Ensure we are clear in what the panel is assessing, and what is required of them.</p>

	<p>those with anxiety. Overly large workloads, and/or a lack of clarity from EPSRC, may affect decision-making.</p> <p>Some individuals have care-giving responsibilities that may coincide with the panels.</p> <p>Some attendees may have dietary requirements for health or lifestyle reasons.</p> <p>All considerations above should be applied to both panel members or applicants or EPSRC member of staff.</p>	<p>dietary requirements and other potential issues, but we will be aware that some individuals may choose not to disclose this information.</p>	<p>Aim to give panellists a reasonable number of proposals to assess and introduce, and ensure there is sufficient time for them to do so.</p> <p>Leave sufficient travelling time at the end of the panels and be aware that some attendees may require leave sooner.</p> <p>Ensure there are good provisions for those with dietary requirements.</p>
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**Evaluation:**

Question	Explanation / justification	
<p>Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?</p>	<p>We think this funding opportunity has a low risk of discriminating or unfairly disadvantaging anyone.</p> <p>This is a new pilot competition which has similarities to the established PP opportunity. It aims to have a lower entry bar than the main PP call, so we expect it to be open to a great number of applicants.</p> <p>Panels will be held in venues with good accessibility and connection. Agendas will ensure that it is possible for most attendees to return home on the same day. The dates have been chosen to avoid known school or bank holidays that might affect the childcare responsibilities of attendees. Attendees will be given as much notice as possible.</p>	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
<p>1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will <b>proceed</b>.</p>	<p>X</p>	
<p>2. You can decide to <b>stop</b> the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups</p>		
<p>3. You can <b>adapt or change</b> the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias</p>		
<p>4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the policy or practice (e.g., in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore you are going to <b>proceed with caution</b> with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.</p>		

<p><b>Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required</b> (*EIAs should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g., calls and events:</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>Date completed:</b></p>	<p>23/01/2023</p>
<p><b>Review date</b> (if applicable):</p>	

**Change log**

Name	Date	Version	Change