



EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	Mathematical Sciences Small Grants Scheme
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	The mathematical sciences community has clearly stated a need for a mechanism for funding small grants in a timely fashion to support mathematical sciences research which does not require funding at the level normally supported by EPSRC. The objective of this scheme is to address this community need.
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	The idea of a Small Grants scheme originated from the Mathematical Sciences Strategy Workshop held in March 2019, a summary report of which can be found here . The scheme has been developed following community consultation through the Mathematical Sciences Strategic Advisory Team, Learned Societies, and the Advisory Group for the Additional Funding for Mathematical Sciences Programme. Small grants were specified in the letter from Minister Chris Skidmore in relation to the £300m Additional Funding for Mathematics programme, stating “there will be freedom to grant small amounts for initial research and early-stage idea generation”.
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	EPSRC Mathematical Sciences research community.
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	The assessment process has been designed to ensure unconscious bias is minimised and managed. Research outcomes are collected through Researchfish, and standard mode will be monitored for subsequent submissions. The scheme will be evaluated as part of a wider evaluation exercise for the Additional Funding for Mathematical Sciences programme.

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)
Disability	Potential Negative Impact	<p>For applicants – all information provided is in a written format.</p> <p>For panel members – access requirements for panel meeting.</p>	<p>Document provided (scheme call document) produced in black and white and in line with EPSRC formatting guidelines.</p> <p>Expert panels to be held remotely and reasonable adjustments made to logistics to support participation (e.g. live transcript during virtual panel).</p> <p>Additional care requirements could occur if individuals are required to: Participate in events on what would normally be a non-</p>

		<p>Relatively short timescales for opening of the scheme to first batching date may affect ability to participate e.g. if on sick leave or reduced hours.</p>	<p>working day or work extended hours on a normal working day. It is an individual's responsibility to check with EPSRC and confirm what costs can be reimbursed prior to attendance at a panel. Further details on the support EPSRC will offer for those with caring responsibilities can be found here. To minimise the impact, the panel will be held remotely and be less than a whole working day in duration. A rotating expert panel will be convened providing flexibility to those with additional care requirements.</p> <p>A pre-launch announcement published on the website to maximise the time applicants have to draw up proposals. This is a scheme rather than a specific call where proposals can continually be submitted i.e. there is no deadline. As such, applicants can continue to submit throughout the year. Proposal batching dates will be set taking into account standard holiday periods and potential difficulties in submitting proposals during these times.</p>
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Gender reassignment	Potential negative impact	Gender specific language within communications	Gender neutral language will be used throughout and will be encouraged at panel meetings.
Marriage or civil partnership	No known negative impact	No disclosure of marital status required for any stage of the process	
Pregnancy and maternity	Potential negative impact	<p>For applicants – relatively short timescales for opening of the scheme to first batching date may affect ability to participate e.g. or parental leave.</p> <p>For panel members – additional requirements for those with caring responsibilities or pregnancy.</p>	<p>A pre-launch announcement published on the website to maximise the time applicants have to draw up proposals. This is a scheme rather than a specific call where proposals can continually be submitted i.e. there is no deadline. As such, applicants can continue to submit throughout the year. Proposal batching dates will be set taking into account standard holiday periods and potential difficulties in submitting proposals during these times</p> <p>Expert panels to be held remotely to remove travel requirements. Additional care requirements could occur if individuals are required to: Participate in events on what would normally be a non-working day or work extended hours on a normal working day. It is an individual's responsibility to check with EPSRC and confirm what costs</p>

			<p>can be reimbursed prior to attendance at a panel. Further details on the support EPSRC will offer for those with caring responsibilities can be found here. To minimise the impact, the panel will be held remotely and be less than a whole working day in duration. A rotating expert panel will be convened providing flexibility to those with additional care requirements.</p>
Race	No known negative impact	Potential risk – lack of diversity of ethnicity and race of panel members and/or applicants	Efforts will be made to draw up an expert panel pool which is ethnically diverse in line with EPSRC peer review guidance. The scheme is open to all eligible UK researcher organisations.
Religion or belief	Potentially negative impact	Participation could be affected by coincidence with religious holidays	EPSRC endeavours to select panel dates and proposal batching dates that are cognisant of major holidays. This is a scheme rather than a specific call where proposals can continually be submitted i.e. there is no deadline. As such, applicants can continue to submit throughout the year.
Sexual orientation	No known negative impact	No disclosure of sexual orientation required for any stage of the process	
Sex (gender)	Potentially negative impact	Gender diversity of the assessment panels.	Efforts will be made to draw up an expert panel pool which mixed gender in line

			with EPSRC peer review guidance.
Age	No known negative impact	No disclosure of age required for any stage of the process.	
Neurodiversity	Potential positive impact	Potential mitigation of sensory/cognitive overload by holding panel virtually rather than in person (dependent on individual circumstances)	

Additional comment: EPSRC recognises that we are in an unprecedented situation as a result of COVID-19. There is awareness that this situation is rapidly evolving, and we will do our best to accommodate any changes as they occur.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	<p>Several risks and potential biases have been identified that could potentially have a negative impact on both the applicants and the panel, predominantly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disability - Parental or other caring responsibilities <p>Several risks and potential biases have been considered when designing the scheme and have been mitigated as far as possible. There has been no evidence found to show that this scheme would discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people.</p>	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified; therefore, activity will proceed .		
2. You can decide to stop the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
3. You can adapt or change the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias	X	Possible risks and biases associated with the call have been identified and the scheme adapted accordingly. ED&I aspects will be considered throughout the lifetime of the scheme and this EIA will be reviewed accordingly.
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 proceed with caution with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.		

Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes
Date completed:	15 June 2020
Review date (if applicable):	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Marianne Rolph	When published	1	