



EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	Building Collaboration at the Physics of Life Interface: Call 2
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	The Building Collaboration at the Physics of Life Interface call will provide up to £15 million to support research projects that integrate cutting-edge physics with life sciences research, to address key challenges and advance our understanding of living systems. Funded grants will be of 36 month duration with expenditure between April 2022 and March 2025, with fixed expenditure to be met each year.
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	EPSRC is running this call on behalf of UKRI and has consulted at length with senior colleagues at BBSRC and MRC over the scope and timelines for this call. The case for this SPF programme relied upon significant engagement with the Physics of Life community to determine its scope and best mechanisms for delivery. We have also consulted with external expert advisory and evaluation boards to provide direction on the scope to obtain community buy-in.
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	Researchers working at the interface of the physics and life sciences who are eligible to apply are affected by this funding activity.
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	An internal programme management board for this investment, comprised of UKRI participants will oversee the Physics of Life programme. We have also put in place external advisory and evaluation boards comprised of stakeholders from across the physics, health and life sciences to monitor and review the impact of this activity.

As a funder of research, EPSRC remains committed to attracting the best potential researchers from a diverse population into research careers. 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 endeavor 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	<p>Potentially negative impact.</p> <p>Potentially positive impact.</p>	<p>Impact on individuals with learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia due to the speed at which the call must be delivered and the short deadlines for reviewing materials related to the call.</p> <p>Holding a virtual meeting will remove any accessibility issues associated with a physical meeting.</p>	<p>The length of time that the call is open for applicants to apply has been increased to 8 weeks, which is above the recommended duration. This has been maximised despite our condensed timelines for delivering this call to ensure applicants have as long as possible to review the call document and plan their submission. Internal timelines have been reduced to ensure the applicants have more time to apply.</p>
Gender reassignment	No known negative impact.	N/A	Standard EPSRC policies will be followed.

Marriage or civil partnership	No known negative impact.	N/A	Standard EPSRC policies will be followed.
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially negative impact.	Individuals on pregnancy, maternity and paternity leave whilst the call is open and in the duration of the grant, due to the fixed timeline of the programme.	The funding awards are personal awards to teams of individuals. Individuals on parental and maternity leave may not have the opportunity to apply. We envisage that proposals will each have a number of investigators and so we encourage applicants to involve colleagues who are not available during the application window, but can participate in the later years of the workplan. Grant recipients will be encouraged to dedicate some time within the project to encouraging new collaborations beyond the grant, which may be of benefit to individuals who were not available during the application window.
Race	No known negative impact.	N/A	Standard EPSRC policies will be followed.
Religion or belief	Potentially negative impact.		Activities are constrained by the strict timeline of the programme, however both stages of the call will be open long enough to ensure applicants observing religious holidays will not be impacted. Panel dates will be selected to avoid holidays.

Sexual orientation	No known negative impact.	N/A	Standard EPSRC policies will be followed.
Sex (gender)	Potentially negative impact.	Gender bias may be perceived.	The call text has been designed to be inclusive. Standard EPSRC policies regarding panel member selection and assessment of proposals will be followed.
Age	No known negative impact.	N/A	N/A
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)	<p>Potentially negative impact upon individuals with caring responsibilities.</p> <p>Potentially negative impact upon individuals affected by restrictions related to COVID-19 (e.g. individuals home-schooling children, individuals who are required to shield).</p>	Individuals with additional responsibilities, or who are otherwise unable to fully participate, due to the fixed timeline of the programme.	The funding awards are personal awards to teams of individuals. We envisage that proposals will each have a number of investigators and so we encourage applicants to involve colleagues who are not available during the application window, but can participate in the later years of the workplan. Grant recipients will be encouraged to dedicate some time within the project to encouraging new collaborations beyond the grant, which may be of benefit to individuals who were not available during the application window.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	A number of potential negative impacts have been identified and considered as part of the call design. As per the above, reasonable adjustments have been and will be made to mitigate these risks as far as possible.	
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	✓	The programme is bound by strict timelines, however activities have been adjusted as far as reasonably possible to mitigate all possible risks and bias associated with the call. ED&I aspects will be considered throughout the activity.
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:	25 February 2021
Review date (if applicable):	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Luke Boldock	When published	1	N/A