



EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

• Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	Call for Proposals: Building responsible neurotechnology research capability
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>EPSRC, in partnership with MRC, invite proposals for network “plus” grants that build capability for responsible research across the breadth of neuro-technologies. These will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide support for growing or building new collaborations • initiate new research and innovation activities • draw significantly on engineering, physical sciences, information and communications technologies or mathematical sciences. • stimulate debate, exchange of ideas and collaborations between researchers and stakeholders • build future capacity and inform the strategy for neurotechnology development. <p>We are particularly encouraging activities which target health needs.</p>
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (<i>e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders</i>)	The call is based on consultation with MRC and the Neurotechnologies KTN.
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>Individuals eligible to apply for EPSRC funding and scientific professionals who may be employed using funding awarded as a result of this call. It is expected that applicants to this call will comprise both existing members of the neuro-technologies research community and individuals working in related disciplines.</p> <p>Also: Expert panel members; Interview panel members</p>
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	The call and all associated documents will be available on UKRI websites and available to all interested parties to support their applications. Contact details will be provided to support queries related to the call. The assessment process has

been designed to ensure unconscious bias is minimised and managed.

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.
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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	An applicant's disability may impact their ability to perform at interview.	Opting to have a virtual panel meeting may address physical difficulties. All applicants invited to interview will be asked to inform EPSRC if they have specific requirements and reasonable adjustments will be made (e.g. additional time)
Gender reassignment	Potential negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage individuals who have undergone gender reassignment or whose gender identity differs	Applicants are not asked to disclose whether they have undergone gender reassignment. Standard EPSRC policies will be followed at all stages of the process.

		from their sex assigned at birth, if an applicant's possession of such protected characteristics is known to the panel.	
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	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Panel members may not be able to participate in panels due to accessibility issues or maternity leave.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions.</p> <p>We should ensure the use of gender neutral language – parental leave, irrespective of sexual orientation.</p> <p>EPSRC policies for offering support to those with caring responsibilities will be followed and panel members and applicants will be made aware of these.</p>
Race	No known negative impact	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations (particularly in relation to panel composition and mitigations against unconscious bias)
Religion or belief	Potential negative	<p>See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Participation could be affected by coincidence with religious holidays.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>A timeline is provided in the call document.</p> <p>EPSRC endeavours to select dates that do not clash with major holidays.</p>

			Applicants are not asked to disclose their religious beliefs. Standard EPSRC policies will be followed at all stages of the process.
Sexual orientation	No known negative impact	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.
Sex (gender)	Potential negative	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Use of language can present a barrier to participation and it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged.</p> <p>Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities.</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations, particularly regarding panel composition.</p> <p>Ensure use of gender neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc.</p> <p>Standard EPSRC policies will be followed at all stages of the process.</p>
Age	Potential negative or positive depending on scheme eligibility requirements	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Early career researchers may be disadvantaged as they don't have the same track record to draw on as an experienced researcher.</p> <p>(It is assumed that early career researchers are generally younger than their more experienced peers, although this by no means always the case. This is why this point has been included under 'age').</p>	<p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p> <p>Track record is not an explicit criterion, given likely relationship to career stage and hence (indirectly) age. Panel members are briefed to make clear that they should be assessing the application</p>
Additional aspects (not covered by a	Parental responsibilities	The call will open at the end of August and may overlap with the end of school summer holidays.	The call opens during the Summer Holidays, however, it will close in November to mitigate this fact. It was felt

protected characteristic)			that opening earlier would give maximum notice and planning time.
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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 .		See the potential negative impacts outlined above.
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	✓	See the mitigations outlined above.
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:	24/8/2021
Review date (if applicable):	

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Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Kate Reading	When published	1	