

## MRC - Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
<b>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</b>	Funding opportunity: Artificial intelligence for better biomedical and health research
<b>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</b>	<p>This MRC funding opportunity will support robust, fast paced, agile, proof-of-concept 'sprint' projects that will unlock the potential of AI in biomedical and health research. Projects will deliver high impact outcomes by focusing on critical challenges in the use of AI in biomedical and health research. The funding (£1.0m) will support 5-7 projects for up to 6 months.</p> <p>There will be a two-stage process: Expression of Interest and Full Proposals. The assessment process will involve an independent expert review panel at the Expression of interest stage. Successful Expression of Interest applicants will be invited to submit full proposals which will be assessed by an independent expert review panel.</p>
<b>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</b>	As a part of the development of this funding call, MRC has consulted the MRC Data Science Strategic Advisory Group (which represents various different biomedical/health data science communities across academia and industry) as well as MRC Heads of Themes and MRC Strategy Board.
<b>4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</b>	Applicants to the call, assessment panel members, MRC/ UKRI employees involved in the commissioning, decision-making and monitoring activities.
<b>5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</b>	<p>MRC will deliver the assessment process, including attending the assessment panel meetings, to help ensure unbiased peer review. MRC will strive to assemble an appropriately representative and diverse panel.</p> <p>MRC will encourage applicants that can demonstrate multi-disciplinary, collaborative teams and approaches as well as teams that embody the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion.</p>

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	Potentially negative	Potential applicants and panel members with disabilities may encounter difficulties during the activities associated with the funding call.	<p><u>For example</u>  Dyslexia, visual impairment: MRC staff worked with UKRI content developers to ensure that all content is accessible.</p> <p>Hearing impairment: Due to the virtual setting of meetings for this funding call, captioning will be provided where available.</p> <p>Physical impairment, mobility issues: The panel meeting will take place virtually, and so will not require applicants and panel members to travel to a meeting.</p>
	Potentially negative	Disability may impact projects based on the focus of individual activities within the proposal.	Applicants should consider mitigation measures within their proposals.
	Potentially positive and negative	Data is collected regarding disability at the full application stage.	<p>Although data is collected about disability at the application stage, this is protected information and is not shared with the assessment panel.</p> <p>This could have conflicting impacts depending on the person's disability, On one hand it will protect applicant from bias related to the perception of their disability. However, this could also be disadvantaging, for example, an applicant's dyslexia leading to spelling and grammatical errors.</p>

<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage individuals who have undergone gender reassignment or whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth, if an applicant's possession of such protected characteristics is known to the panel.	Applicants are not asked to disclose whether they have undergone gender reassignment. Applicants are also not required to attend panel meetings.
	Potentially negative	A person's name/title may be used incorrectly or suitable options are not available on funding call documents.	Free-text option will be available when inputting details in documents.
<b>Marriage or civil partnership</b>	NA		Applicants are not asked to disclose their marital status.
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Potentially negative	A researcher on parental leave during the open call maybe unable to apply.	Timetable of key dates will be made available to applicants and panellists in advance as early possible.
	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage pregnant people, if this status is known to the panel.	Applicants are not asked to disclose pregnancy at any stage of the application. Applicants are also not required to attend panel meetings.
<b>Race</b>	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage specific racial or ethnic groups, where applicant ethnicity is known to the panel.	<p>Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation. MRC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased assessment.</p> <p>MRC actively encourages applicants from diverse racial background and endeavours to assemble an assessment panel that is racially diverse. Diversity information applicants submit is on a protected basis and is not made available to the funding panel.</p>

<b>Religion or belief</b>	Potentially negative	Key dates (open call closing, interview) coinciding with specific religious festivals/ events could disadvantage specific religious groups.	Key dates will be checked and chosen to avoid clashes with major religious events wherever possible.
	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage specific religious groups, if applicants' religious affiliation/ belief is known to the panel.	Applicants are not asked to disclose their religious beliefs.  All panel members will be asked to highlight any personal circumstances that may affect their ability to participate in meetings and how this can be accommodated.
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage individuals of specific sexual orientations, if this is known to the panel.	Applicants are not asked to disclose their sexual orientation.
<b>Sex (gender)</b>	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage applicants on the basis of gender.	In line with MRC policies, the assessment panel will be mixed gender.  MRC has a gender target for board/panel members to ensure diversity and further inclusion of people identifying as women.
<b>Age</b>	Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage applicants from specific age groups.	Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation.  This information is not shared with the assessment panel.  MRC presence at assessment meetings and during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased assessment.
<b>Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)</b>	Geographical location, Potentially negative	Unconscious bias on the part of panel members may disadvantage applicants from specific universities/institutes/organisations	Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation.  MRC presence at assessment meetings and

			<p>during interviews acts as an additional assurance to help ensure unbiased assessment.</p> <p>As part of short-listing for board/panel members, the MRC makes concerted effort to ensure a wide spread and include international individuals.</p>
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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?	Potential negative impacts and barriers have been identified but all actions to address negative impacts have been highlighted above and all alternative options have been carefully considered	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will <b>proceed</b> .		
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		
3. You can <b>adapt or change</b> the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias	X	Possible risks and bias associated with this activity have been identified and activities adapted accordingly. ED&I aspects will be considered throughout the activity and MRC will review this EIA accordingly. Reasonable adjustments will also be made wherever possible
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.		

<b>Will this EIA be published* Yes/Not required</b> (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes
<b>Date completed:</b>	09/09/2021
<b>Review date</b> (if applicable):	

**Change log**

Name	Date	Version	Change
Yan Yip	09/0/2021	1.0	