# Equality Impact Assessment

| **Question** | **Response** |
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| 1. **Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed** | Innovation adoption in Professional and Financial Services 2023 |
| 1. **Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event** | The aim of the call is to award funding for two social science led Innovation Adoption accelerators in Professional and Financial services (PFS).  The role of the accelerators will be to design and deliver a targeted and ambitious innovation adoption programme that will work with, and support, firms in PFS. The accelerators will act as centres of expertise; unlocking the potential of the social sciences to better support firms to innovate and build capabilities for business impact, and help businesses be more confident, skilled and knowledgeable in becoming greater adopters of innovation and new, specifically digital, technologies.  £3.75m of funding is available for this call, to be awarded to two accelerators for a duration of 28 months. |
| 1. **What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy?** *(e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)* | ESRC and Innovate UK managed the Next Generation Services challenge in Wave 2 of the Industrial strategy challenge fund. This challenge was concluded in 2022 and the new call will build on lessons learned from it. This will be done by identifying the key barriers to innovation adoption and working with businesses to facilitate collaboration with social scientists through mechanisms such as sandpit events. Increasing digital delivery of services can create greater productivity, and new, tailored services can increase access for under-served businesses and consumers  It is also seeking to expand on, and engage with, learnings from a pilot project we have been conducting: “Transforming business through social science”. This is a pilot programme that runs two strands of projects with external partners. It is governed by an advisory group consisting of senior professionals from across the KE landscape, business and academia. As part of the terms of reference they seek to promote a diverse and inclusive approach that underpins the objectives of the project and ensure that the two partner strands consider this.  The above past activities and work with stakeholders helped inform the approach taken for this call. |
| 1. **Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?** | Applicants to Innovation Adoption in PFS 2023  Commissioning Panel Members for Innovation Adoption in PFS 2023.  ESRC and Innovate UK staff attending the Panel meeting(s) for Innovation Adoption in PFS 2023.  Businesses benefiting from the accelerators to be funded by Innovation Adoption in PFS 2023. |
| 1. **What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?** | This is an open call open to all eligible and interested applicants. The assessment process has been designed to ensure unconscious bias is minimised and managed. All Panel members will receive an unconscious bias briefing. The proposal will be reviewed by the Panel. The Panel will then provide a recommendation for interview stage to ESRC and Innovate UK. A funding decision will be made following Panel interview for shortlisted applicants. Contact details will be provided alongside the call document. We will engage with all applicants to monitor the process of applications. |

**GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS**

ESRC’s standard Grant Assessment Panel process is designed with fairness in mind.

**Eligibility and criteria**

* The Research Grants scheme is open to all eligible research organisations (RO). Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of a recognised RO, but applicants who are not an established member of a recognised RO must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research.
* Panels are instructed to assess the application in front of them and not to ‘read between the lines’ or give the benefit of the doubt based on the reputation of the individual applicant or team, as this would be a form of confirmation bias.

**Standard Grant Terms and Conditions:**

* UKRI standard Grant Terms and Conditions comply with UK equality legislation and include provisions designed to mitigate against potential negative impacts (e.g. sick pay, parental and adoption leave, the possibility of part-time and flexible working, and grant extensions).
* Research Organisations are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. RGC 8 states that ‘The Research Organisation must assume full responsibility for staff funded from the grant and, in consequence, accept all duties owed to and responsibilities for these staff, including, without limitation, their terms and conditions of employment and their training and supervision, arising from the employer/employee relationship.’ Universities are therefore required to make reasonable adjustments as required to support their staff.

**Panel recruitment:**

* We aim to ensure that the composition of the panels are diverse, with each panel having at least a 60:40 gender balance.
* Where possible we ensure (if possible) that the chair and vice chair of each panel are not the same gender.
* Whilst panel members are appointed, first and foremost, based on expertise, we will aim to appoint a diverse panel membership. Final decisions take into account trying to balance the panels by gender and geography and seek to ensure a diversity of career stage and institutions. We will only make recruitment decisions which compromise diversity when it is objectively justified by the necessity to ensure the required breadth of subject expertise with high quality candidates.

**Process**

* Funders will hold a webinar for potential applicants. This will be in an online format allowing for virtual attending and recording. Live transcription will be enabled.
* Those who are unable to attend can request to be sent the webinar materials and/or recording by email after the event.
* Applications will be reviewed by both academic specialists and those with expertise in innovation and research funding policy, and knowledge exchange.
* It is the role of panel members to moderate and assess the quality of applications and to agree final scores for each proposal. Other expert reviewers will be engaged in the assessment process if the volume of applications requires it. Panel members and, if applicable, expert reviewers will receive full guidance for the process. The guidance emphasises the importance of timely, objective, fair and informed review.
* Panel members will be briefed on unconscious bias and encouraged to feel empowered to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it. The Panel Chairs and Panel Secretaries play a particularly important role in this respect. An implementation intention statement will be read out at the beginning of the commissioning panel meeting which sets the tone for discussions and requires that panel members pay close attention to the scoring criteria and definitions.
* Panel members and expert reviewers are required to evidence their views and scores in their assessment. ESRC staff conduct usability checks on all assessment comments and where there is evidence of bias or a reviewer has failed to provide evidence for their scores the review will be marked as ‘unusable’.
* All panel members participate in an induction which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
* For each proposal we appoint two panel introducers who formally assess and score the proposal, and three readers who are asked to participate in discussions in order to ensure that a diverse range of views are represented.

| **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)** |
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| **Disability** | Potentially negative | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Je-S does not currently comply with disability accessibility schemes. This will be picked up by The Funding Service.  Applicants should seek support from their own institution’s research support office.  As the panel is likely to be held virtually, may have a positive impact on accessibility.  Panel meeting attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during panel assessments. | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Solicit information from panel meeting participants (in confidence) about any additional requirements they may have in order to fully participate.  All meetings will take place virtually via Zoom.   * Suitable measures in place for the hearing impaired e.g. closed captions; * alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers for the visually impaired * Provision of documents in sans-serif, dyslexia-friendly formats * Ensuring that plenty of breaks are built into meeting agendas |
| **Gender reassignment** | Potentially negative | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Trans people may be absent from work as a consequence of transition and UKRI records may show the wrong gender. | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.    UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature and absence as a result of medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be covered by the Research Organisation’s absence policy and strongly encourage ROs to treat absence relating to transition like any other health-related absence.  Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted. |
| **Marriage or civil partnership** | No expected impact |  |  |
| **Pregnancy and maternity** | Potential negative impact on those with caring responsibilities |  | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Provision for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions.  We should ensure the use of gender-neutral language – parental leave, irrespective of sexual orientation.  The costs of additional childcare for grant-holders, beyond that required to meet the normal contracted requirements of the job, and that are directly related to the project, may be requested as a directly incurred cost if the institutional policy is to reimburse them.  However, childcare costs associated with normal working patterns may not be sought. (See RCUK fEC FAQs)  The Panel meeting is taking place via Zoom so it can be ensured there are sufficient breaks in any online meeting to provide breaks for breastfeeding/expressing if necessary. |
| **Race** | Potentially positive | See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. | See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations  Considerations in relation to panel composition. All panel members will receive guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias. |
| **Religion or belief** | Potential negative | There could be potential discrimination because it is known that somebody (either a panel member, a research applicant or research participants) has a particular faith or belief. | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations (particularly in relation to panel composition and mitigations against unconscious bias) |
| **Sexual orientation** | Potential negative | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Restate considerations of unconscious bias by briefing the panel at the start of the meeting. |
| **Sex (gender)** | Potential negative | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Restate considerations of unconscious bias by briefing the panel at the start of the meeting. |
| **Age** | Potential negative or positive depending on scheme eligibility requirements | Early career researchers\* may be disadvantaged as they don’t have the same track Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Track record is 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 in record to draw on as an experienced researcher. (\*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’) | Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.  Track record is 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 in front of them and not reading between the lines. They should assess an individual’s capability to deliver their proposed research.  Use of a variety of different communication strategies including social media to ensure that our messages reach the widest possible target audience. |

## Evaluation:

| **Question** | **Explanation / justification** | |
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| Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people? | **See the potential negative impacts outlined above. There are ways we can mitigate those impacts by taking action in how we conduct and support the panel during shortlisting and interview meetings and applicants during interviews.** | |
| **Final Decision:** | **Tick the relevant box** | **Include any explanation / justification required** |
| 1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will **proceed**. |  |  |
| 1. You can decide to **stop** the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups |  |  |
| 1. You can **adapt or change** the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias | **ü** | **See the mitigations outlined above.** |
| 1. 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\***  \*EIAs should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events. | **Yes, will be published alongside funding call** |
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| **Date completed:** | **31 August 2022** |
| **End date of activity:** (if applicable) | **30 September 2025** |
| **Review date** (if applicable): | **Annually, or if any significant changes are made to the scheme** |