# UK Research and Innovation

# Equality Impact Assessment Form

\*See guidance document for detailed support.

\* Delete the guidance text in the response column when completing your EIA.

## Overview of activity

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|  | **Response** |
| Name of activity being assessed | UK Future Internet Network Plus |
| Council/department/project team | UKRI/EPSRC/DS&R Theme |
| Aims and objectives of the activity | This is the Network Plus Funding Opportunity and the objective is to fund 1 project. The opportunity is part of the Future of the Internet which is a new initiative, whose vision is to support a future internet that works for all across the UK and globally; is pro-prosperity; secure and resilient; globally governed; scalable and robust; and supports democratic, open societies and the public. The initiative and therefore this funding opportunity, falls under UKRI’s “[Creating Opportunities, Improving Outcomes](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ukri.org%2Fwhat-we-offer%2Fbrowse-our-areas-of-investment-and-support%2Fcreating-opportunities-and-improving-outcomes%2F&data=05%7C02%7CShilon.Bala%40epsrc.ukri.org%7C56e2f6e7120e401f34bb08dc3169f2ff%7C8bb7e08edaa44a8e927efca38db04b7e%7C0%7C0%7C638439578314425726%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=1JsuAsVgBftSFrL6Ph3EDExHGGVim6XrhKK%2B6VhmgvY%3D&reserved=0)” strategic theme. This strategic theme seeks to improve outcomes for people and places across the UK by identifying solutions that promote economic and social prosperity. The theme particularly targets economic growth and innovation, health inequalities and community connectedness.    We expect the Network Plus funding opportunity to address the following objectives:   * Develop a visible, collaborative, inclusive, diverse and interdisciplinary UK Future of the Internet research community, drawing on the wealth of existing expertise and providing effective connection, communication, engagement and knowledge exchange across academia, the UK security community, government, regulators and industry. * Develop a cutting-edge understanding of the challenges and opportunities posed for the UK by evolving internet technologies and their sociotechnical implications and drivers, through consultation, understanding the international context and developing strategic foresight. * Inform UKRI’s research strategy in the area of future internet, through collaborative thought leadership and the development of ideas with stakeholders, with the aim of supporting policymakers to create a positive future for the UK. * Engage with some specific places in the UK as case studies in place-based considerations for the future internet, to the mutual benefit of these places and the academic community, and to draw out learnings that may be transferable to other places.   These begin to address the longer-term objectives for the Future of the Internet initiative, which are detailed under Additional Information on the funding opportunity page. |
| Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event? | * Individuals eligible to apply for UKRI funding and scientific professionals who may be employed using funding awarded as a result of this call. It is expected that applicants to this funding opportunity will comprise both existing members of the Internet research community and individuals from other disciplines. * Research office staff * External expert reviewers and panel members * There will be significant interaction with government, industry, academia, and the wider innovation landscape. * UKRI staff running the opportunity. * A wider range of people nationally and elsewhere, in the 2030s and beyond, with the UK being on the front foot and benefiting from foresight and thought leadership. |
| What data and consultation have you used? | This Network Plus opportunity was developed following consultation with government stakeholders, as well as academia and industry through the Digital Security & Resilience Theme’s Interim Advisory Group, and internal stakeholders such as COIO programme board, ESRC, AHRC and EPSRC Heads of Regional Engagement. |

## Analysing your impact

In addition to data gathering and consultation, the guidance materials should be used to assist in identifying impacts on different groups.

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| Are there **general or overarching impacts on multiple groups**? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact? | The overall impact of this investment on equality, diversity and inclusion is expected to be positive, especially in the long term. This is because it aims to equip the academic community and policymakers to ensure that the future internet works for everyone in the UK. Particular anticipated positive impacts relevant to EDI include:   * Funding a network that is itself inclusive and has a robust and effective approach to EDI. * A particular objective to explore how place-based disparities and the social and economic marginalisation of groups can be mitigated in the future internet. * As a core part of the themes explored, a focus on people-centred considerations such as access and accessibility, inclusivity, personal control and agency, identity, security, and safety.   For the general impacts:   * UKRI will request and require the Network Plus grant holder to consider all the necessary requirements for equality, diversity, and inclusion, such as for in-person visits, travel, and meetings, to meet statutory requirements and to adopt best practice.   For the specific impacts:   * UKRI will expect the Network Plus grant holder to take a proactive, leadership role on equality, diversity, and inclusion within their work on the grant and, where relevant, in the wider community, ensuring that they have a suitable equality, diversity, and inclusion plan and that it is put into effect. Given that this is a UKRI network plus investment for the UK, the impacts of their ED&I plan should include their immediate team but should extend well beyond that to include their influence on the topic area within the UK research base.   This Network Plus is a UKRI opportunity and expectation is that a team will be built which includes multidisciplinary background expertise/research area covering various councils’ aspects. It is also expected that the Network Plus team will be made up of researchers from different career stages providing the balance and opportunities to all career levels to be the part of the team and the expectation is that they are supported by development and training.  Any potential negative impacts on specific groups as part of the assessment and award process are expected to be minimised using relevant UKRI policies and good practice. |

## Protected characteristics

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| **Protected characteristic** | **Positive impact or opportunity to benefit** | **Negative impact** | **Please explain the impact or why there is no impact including details of any evidence/data used** | **Detail actions taken/ that will be taken to increase positive or reduce negative impact (or why action is not possible). Detail how you plan to measure the relevant outcomes and outputs of your activity.** |
| **Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown** | |
| Age |  |  | Potential for unconscious bias in panel process.  Potential for early career researchers to be engaging and including either at the award stage or through its life. | Panel members will be provided with an unconscious bias document and will be briefed by the panel convenor**.** UKRI members of staff assisting the process must have completed the unconscious bias training and will work to empower all panel members to challenge potential bias.  There are no requirements for applicants to have a specific number of years of experience.    The funding opportunity requires that Early Career Researchers are engaged and included for example, by inclusion on the management team, or by provision of opportunities which particularly benefit ECRs. This will form part of the monitoring of the investment. |
| Disability |  |  | Applicants/panel members may find it difficult to participate in briefings/panels dependent on location selected.  Timescales for the call may affect ability to participate e.g., if on sick leave or reduced hours.    EPSRC support staff co-ordinating the process will request details of any requirements, but we will be aware that some individuals may choose not to disclose this information.  Potential for unconscious bias. | Panels are likely to be held virtually for outline stage and in-person for full proposal stage.  Virtual panel will be held to reduce the barriers associated with in-person meetings and if any meetings are not held remotely, all venues selected will be accessible and reasonable adjustment made to logistics to support participation.  Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias.  More information on disability and accessibility support for UKRI applicants and grant holders can be [found here.](https://www.ukri.org/apply-for-funding/how-to-apply/disability-and-accessibility-support-for-ukri-applicants-and-grant-holders/) |
| Gender reassignment (Trans identity) |  |  | Possible Negative:   If holding in person meetings, availability of non-gender specific toilet facilities.  Potential for unconscious bias. | Panels are likely to be held virtually for outline stage and in-person for full proposal stage.  Virtual panel will be held to reduce the barriers associated with in-person meetings and for in person meetings, we will ensure we provide the location of non-gender specific facilities, if they are available.  Panel members will be provided with an unconscious bias document and will be briefed by the panel conveners**.** UKRI members of staff assisting the process must have completed the unconscious bias training.    Applicants are not asked to disclose whether they have undergone gender reassignment. Anonymity is not practical at interview, but standard EPSRC policies will be followed at all stages of the process. |
| Marriage or civil partnership |  |  | No known impact | Unconscious bias briefing will be given as part of the panel guidance and panel presentation. Applicants are not asked to disclose their marital status. Standard EPSRC policies will be followed. |
| Pregnancy and maternity |  |  | Possibly negative, particularly if having in-person meetings:   * Some attendees may have breastfeeding schedules. * Some attendees may have caregiving/parenting responsibilities. * Pregnant attendees may have specific dietary requirements or need more breaks than those scheduled in the agenda.   For this, EPSRC support staff co-ordinating the process will request details of any particular requirements, but we will be aware that some individuals may choose not to disclose this information.  Timescales for the call may affect ability to participate e.g., if on parental leave or childcare. | We are likely to run the interview panel in person but can accommodate virtual attendance where needed. With virtual or physical meetings, we will have appropriate start/finish times, and make sure there are sufficient breaks built into the schedule.    Timetable of key dates will be made available to applicants and panellists in advance as early possible. The Outline Call is open for 11 weeks plus a few weeks' notice via pre-announcement to facilitate planning and preparation. Full Proposal Call will open for 8 weeks. |
| Race |  |  | Potential for unconscious bias in panel process. | Panel members will be provided with an unconscious bias document and will be briefed by the panel conveners**.** UKRI members of staff assisting the process must have completed the unconscious bias training.    EPSRC have undertaken analysis to better understand the disparity of gender and race in our funding portfolio. Our aim is to ensure that the ethnic diversity in our grant portfolio and of those who engage in our peer review, advisory and governance processes is at least as representative of the engineering and physical sciences academic researcher population and our award rates across different ethnicities show no disparity. More information is available at <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/edi-at-epsrc/ethnicity-and-race-equality/>.    Aim for diversity in the panels. |
| Religion or belief |  |  | Potential for unconscious bias in panel process.  Participation could be affected by religious holidays. | As much detail as possible on key dates will be provided in advance, allowing early engagement with UKRI on specific mitigations. UKRI will do its best to accommodate adjustments. UKRI has checked for and avoided significant dates.  Aim for diversity in the panels.  Standard EPSRC policies will be followed, including providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias and empowering all panellists to challenge potential bias. |
| Sexual orientation |  |  | Potential for unconscious bias in panel process. | Unconscious bias awareness, as above. |
| Sex |  |  | Potential for unconscious bias in panel process. | Unconscious bias awareness, as above.  In line with EPSRC policies, the assessment panel will have balanced gender representation.  Ensure use of gender-neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc. |

## Additional characteristics

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| **Additional characteristics** | **Positive impact or opportunity to benefit** | **Negative impact** | **Please explain the impact including details of any evidence/data used** | **Detail actions taken/ that will be taken to increase positive or reduce negative impact (or why action is not possible).** |
| **Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown** | |
| Geographical location and place (consider UK and international offices) |  |  | This opportunity sits under the UKRI Creating Opportunities, Improving Outcomes Strategic theme, which seeks to improve outcomes for people and places across the UK by identifying solutions that promote economic and social prosperity. It will involve some consideration of place-based disparities and it is therefore expected that the overall impact of the work will be positive. | UKRI will undertake good practice in this area as part of the assessment process, including aiming to achieve good geographic diversity in panel membership. The successful team will be expected to consider the geographical location and place aspects. |
| Socio-economic status |  | ☐ | The overall impact of this investment on diversity in socio-economic status is expected to be positive, especially in the long term. This is because it aims to equip the academic community and policymakers to ensure that the future internet works for everyone in the UK. The network is expected to explore how the future internet can create productivity and economic value for people throughout the UK.  The network itself is expected to be inclusive.  There may be barriers to participation in particular in-person activities for those with more limited financial resources. | The management team will be expected to have an active EDI plan, and there is the option within UKRI policies to meet travel costs for some participants, where needed.  The funding opportunity webinar will be held virtually. Panel members’ travel and subsistence costs are met by UKRI. We are likely to run the interview panel in person but can accommodate virtual attendance where needed to minimise the cost of participation for applicants.  The investment will aim to provide thought leadership and improved levels of understanding on how to reduce the chances of people being excluded from the future internet, including based on their socio-economic status. The network plus team will need to consider how to reach out to those that could inform their thinking, taking into account the potential disparities in engagement levels across various groups. |
| Education background |  |  | The general impact of the investment is likely to be positive, especially in the long term. This is because it aims to equip the academic community and policymakers to ensure that the future internet works for everyone in the UK. The network is expected to explore how the future internet can create productivity and economic value for people throughout the UK, and, for example, to consider public digital literacy.  The network itself is expected to be inclusive.  Eligibility for and successful application to this opportunity is likely to correlate strongly with educational background, as only those with academic appointments are eligible to apply. | The purpose of this investment is to lead the development of an academic community; therefore, the eligibility criteria we have used are appropriate. The assessors are expected to assess the applicants’ ability to deliver based on their relevant experience and skills, rather than focusing unduly on their education backgrounds.  The investment will aim to provide thought leadership and improved levels of understanding on how to reduce the chances of people being excluded from the future internet, including based on their educational background.  The network plus team will need to consider how to reach out to those that could inform their thinking, taking into account the potential disparities in engagement levels across various groups. |
| Parent/guardian responsibilities |  |  | Possibly negative, particularly if having in-person meetings:   * Some attendees may have breastfeeding schedules. * Some attendees may have care giving/parenting responsibilities.   For this, EPSRC support staff co-ordinations the process will request details of any particular requirements, but we will be aware that some individuals may choose not to disclose this information.  Timescales for the call may affect ability to participate e.g., if on parental leave/childcare or guardian responsibilities. | Outline stage panel meeting will be entirely virtual and for Interview panel meeting we are likely to run it in-person however there will be additional option for virtual attendance. We will have appropriate start/finish times, and make sure there are sufficient breaks built into the schedule.  Additional care requirements could occur if individuals are required to: Participate in events on what would normally be a non-working day, work extended hours on a normal working day, attend meetings with overnight stays and/or travel overseas. Further, details on the support EPSRC will offer for those with caring responsibilities can be [found here](https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/basics/caringresponsibilities/).  We will not put funding opportunity deadlines in School holidays.    Timetable of key dates will be made available to applicants and panellists in advance as early possible. The Outline Call is open for 11 weeks plus a few weeks' notice via pre-announcement to facilitate planning and preparation. Full Proposal Call will open for 8 weeks. |
| Carer/parent carer responsibilities |  |  | Possibly negative, particularly if having in-person meetings:   * Some attendees may have care giving or parent carer responsibilities.   For this, EPSRC support staff co-ordinations the process will request details of any particular requirements, but we will be aware that some individuals may choose not to disclose this information.  Timescales for the call may affect ability to participate e.g., if on guardian/parent carer responsibilities | The Outline stage panel meeting will be entirely virtually and for Interview panel meeting we are likely to run in person however there will be additional option for virtual attendance. We will have appropriate start/finish times, and make sure there are sufficient breaks built into the schedule.    Additional care requirements could occur if individuals are required to: Participate in events on what would normally be a non-working, work extended hours on a normal working day, attend meetings with overnight stays and/or travel overseas. Further details on the support, EPSRC will offer for those with caring responsibilities can be [found here](https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/applicationprocess/basics/caringresponsibilities/).  Timetable of key dates will be made available to applicants and panellists in advance as early possible. The Outline Call is open for 11 weeks plus a few weeks' notice via pre-announcement to facilitate planning and preparation. Full Proposal Call will open for 8 weeks. |
| Political opinion (Northern Ireland only) |  |  | N/A |  |
| Other characteristics |  |  | N/A |  |

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## Evaluation

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| **Final Decision:** | **Select the relevant box** | **Include any explanation / justification required** |
| 1. No negative or positive impact identified; therefore, activity will **proceed**. |  |  |
| 1. **Adapt or change** the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality. |  | Possible risks associated with this call have been identified and the guidance and peer review protocols have been adapted accordingly. |
| 1. **Stop** the activity because the evidence shows bias or negative impact towards one or more groups. |  |  |
| 1. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the activity (e.g. in **extreme cases** or where **positive action** is taken). Therefore, you are going to **proceed with caution** with this activity knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision. |  |  |

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## Review and sign off

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| **What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?** | The following arrangements will enable the monitoring and reviewing of the impact of this activity:   * This UKRI activity is being led for UKRI by the EPSRC Digital Security and Resilience (DS&R) Theme. The activity of the Network Plus will be monitored by DS&R theme from the set-up phase and through its life. * The Network Plus grant holder will establish an Independent Advisory Board with an EPSRC Project Officer on the Board. * The Network Plus grant will be required to submit progress reports to EPSRC detailing their progress against agreed non-financial performance metrics. The NetworkPlus grant will be required to include ED&I impacts in their annual reporting. * Research outcomes will be collected through Research fish and additional data through an annual data return. * The impact of this funding opportunity will be monitored and reviewed at the end of grant (3 years and 9 months). |
| **Next review date:** | *N/A* |

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| **Will this EIA be published? \* Yes/Not required** | Yes |
| **Point of contact** | Shilon Bala (EPSRC/DS&R Theme) |
| **Signed off by (name and date):** | Mark Gaskarth, Head of EPSRC Theme for Digital Security & Resilience  24th June 2024 |
| **Before publishing or archiving your EIA, please remove any sensitive or confidential information such as personal identifiable data.**  **Once your EIA is completed or updated:**   1. **Upload it to the UKRI central repository via [the EIA submission form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=juC3i6TajkqSfvyjjbBLfuzmJllr2UxPiagnQdB9dGBUMzFPRDY0RUJIRlpCRkwzN01WMTJWM1BKRCQlQCN0PWcu)**   **EIAs for ODA and non-ODA ISPF programmes should be emailed to: ISPF@ukri.org** | |

## Change log

| **Name** | **Date** | **Version** | **Change** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Shilon Bala | 25/06/2024 | 1 | Original version for publication |

Continued below…

## Action plan

Use the table below to define the actions you intend to take (or have taken) to address the indications of negative impact you have identified or to promote equality. Actions should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound).

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| **Action** | **Deadline** | **Owner** | **How will it be monitored?** | **What is/will be the impact/outcome?** |
| Will provide unconscious bias document to panel members for their age and this will be briefed by the panel conveners. | October 2024 | Panel convenor | Updated unconscious bias document will be provided to panel members. Some slides covering unconscious bias on pre-briefing presentation. | Empower all panel members to challenge potential bias.  This will form part of the monitoring of the investment. |
| Will request any details of disability requirements for those participating in panel process. | October 2024 | Panel convenor | Providing training materials for panellists on unconscious bias. | Individual needs can be addressed.  Empower all panel members to challenge potential bias. |
| In line with EPSRC policies, the assessment panel will have balanced gender representation. | October 2024 | Panel convenor | Updated spreadsheet with panel member list will be provided. | Empower all panel members to challenge potential bias. |
| Require and review successful team’s ED&I plan. | Before grant start in 2025 | DS&R Theme | ED&I action plan document will be provided by successful NetworkPlus team.  DS&R team to review the updated ED&I plan document. | Clear ED&I strategy established for the NetworkPlus  This will form part of the ED&I impacts monitoring of the investment. |
| Require and review the successful team’s engagement plan. | Before grant start in 2025 | DS&R Theme | Engagement plan document will be provided by successful NetworkPlus team.  DS&R team to review the updated engagement plan document. | Better engagement strategy addressed for the NetworkPlus.  This will form part of the engagement impacts/outcome monitoring of the investment. |