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

	Response
Name of activity being assessed	Transforming Global Evidence: AI-Driven Evidence Synthesis for Policymaking
Council/department/project team	ESRC Public Policy and Engagement Team
Aims and objectives of the activity	*Provide a brief outline of your activity being considered and its rationale and aims.* • *What is the activity?* • *If it is an existing activity, when was it originally introduced? What changes are you proposing and why?* • *What are the aims and objectives?* This opportunity will fund one consortium to drive the development of a transformative global evidence synthesis infrastructure capable of providing the latest, relevant, high-quality evidence to national and international policymakers to address key policy challenges and accelerate delivery of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will harness the potential of AI and build the capability of researchers to produce faster, more relevant and more cost-effective evidence synthesis. The opportunity also aims to accelerate the use of evidence to inform decision-making by policymakers, including through capacity strengthening. We are looking to fund one consortium to build a transformational infrastructure and a global framework which will, over five years: (i) Advance evidence synthesis capabilities (ii) Deliver nationally and internationally relevant evidence synthesis products (iii) Improve the accessibility and useability of evidence synthesis for decision makers (iv) Build trusted relationships across the global and national evidence ecosystem, especially between researchers and policymakers. *Outline the aspects of your activity that need to be covered by the EIA. For example:*

	a funding opportunity may require you to consider equality as part of advertising, application process, external review, building a panel, hosting panel meetings etc. *introducing a new system may involve equality considerations as part of assessing a supplier, accessibility, user testing, training, communication and how to guides.* As part of a standard funding opportunity, we will be considering equality as part of advertising, application process, external review, building a panel and hosting panel meetings. As part of the call design, there are applicant team requirements. It is expected that the leadership team will include a diversity of skills and experience. This includes, but is not limited to; - internationally-recognised experts in evidence synthesis methodology to accelerate cutting edge developments in methods - expertise in the innovative use of AI-powered research tools, with a good understanding of ethical considerations - at least one suitably expert international project co-lead - cutting edge expertise in bridging research, evaluation and policymaking - demonstrable expertise in synthesizing evidence, including evaluative evidence, for policymakers
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	*For example, staff, visitors, contractors, businesses, applicants, panel members, awardees, wider beneficiaries* Applicants to the opportunity. Research office staff in organisations applying to this opportunity Those involved in the commissioning process – Peer Reviewers, Panel members and Interview Panel members ESRC staff facilitating the Panel and Interview meetings

	Key partners/stakeholders - United Nations staff, UK Government staff. The winning consortium will be expected to work with existing ESRC investments who support evidence synthesis such as the What Works Network; and the Local Policy Innovation Partnerships. The wider research community, policy community and public as beneficiaries of the outputs and outcomes.
What data and consultation have you used?	*Detail the evidence used and any consultation that was done related to the equality impact of your activity. This could include (not an exhaustive list):* • *UKRI data and reports. For example, UKRI workforce profile or funding diversity data* • *External data e.g. HESA, BEIS, sector reports* • *Survey results or feedback from networks or people who share a protected characteristic, subject matter experts, diverse user groups, unions* • *Previous consultations, outcomes or lessons learned from similar projects* • *Previous EIAs both within and outside UKRI* • *Legal precedent and case studies - seek advice from legal or HR if you're unsure* We have used lessons learnt from similar projects and have put measures in place to ensure a fair commissioning process and structures. For example, we have built in a longer timeline for reviewers and panel members.

Analysing your impact

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

GENERAL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

UKRI's research commissioning processes are designed with fairness in mind.

ESRC staff receive Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training so they can respond effectively to the requirements of all participants.

ESRC uses a variety of different communication strategies to ensure that our messages are inclusive and accessible.

The Panel meeting will be virtual and adjustments will be incorporated to ensure that the meeting is inclusive, including briefing the Chair to ensure that the session is facilitated to take equality and diversity considerations into account.

Eligibility and criteria
- The Institutes Review opportunity 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.

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 will aim to ensure that the composition of the commissioning panel is diverse, with at least a 60:40 gender balance.
- We will ensure (if possible) that the chair and vice chair of the commissioning 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 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
- All panel members will receive the code of practice and guidance which covers issues including fairness, objectivity and unconscious bias.
- It is the role of panel members to agree final scores for each proposal. 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.

UK Research and Innovation

Protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown	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.
Age	☐	☐	None identified	None identified
Disability	☐	☒ *Potential*	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. The Funding Service is compliant with relevant accessibility standards. Applicants should seek support from their own institution's research support office.	Solicit information (in confidence) from online panel meeting participants and applicants attending the panel meeting about any additional requirements they may have in order to fully participate. Online meeting platforms offer an accessible and inclusive environment for participants. Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include: • Enabling the chat function and closed captioning, and adjusting the volume, to support those with hearing requirements.

				Panel meeting attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience difficulties with concentration and focus during panel assessments	• Adequate lighting, alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers (ensure any images are well described so that text-to-speech applications can recognise them) for the visually impaired.
				Additional care requirements could occur if individuals are required to:	• Provision of documents in sans-serif dyslexia-friendly fonts; and dyslexia-friendly formats.
				• Participate in events on what would normally be a non-working day.	• Avoiding colours, lighting etc. that may trigger migraines, epilepsy etc.
				• Work extended hours on a normal working day.	• Consideration of the length of any online meetings, shortening if necessary and ensuring that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda.
				• Attend meetings with overnight stays and/or travel overseas	• Ensure that ESRC staff have had sufficient EDI training so they can respond effectively to the requirements of all participants.
					• Ensure ESRC staff are encouraged to be flexible with scheduling and in implementing

				any reasonable adjustment requests.
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	☐	☒Potential	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	We will work to ensure the use of gender-neutral language where possible in our documents.

At virtual panel meetings, members may wish to include pronouns in biography or in their Zoom name.

UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature and permit absence as a result of medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be covered by the Research Organisation's relevant policies 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	☐	☐	None identified	None identified
Pregnancy and maternity	☐	☒ Potential	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	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.

Regular breaks will be built into the panel meetings for parental duties, including breastfeeding/expressing if required.

Timelines will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow meeting attendees to make arrangements to attend. This will also ensure applicants have advanced |

				notice of deadlines and key dates related to the funding opportunity.

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. |
| Race | ☐ | ☒Potential | 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).

ESRC will ensure that, where possible, a diverse panel is recruited.

During panel meetings, ask people to introduce themselves to check correct pronunciation of name. |

Religion or belief	☐	☒Potential	See above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. 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) Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning panel meetings. Considerations might include: • Scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals; (if impossible to avoid then consider mitigations – i.e. during Ramadan ensuring that meetings finish early so that participants are able to get home to break their fast); • Not scheduling meetings when they would conflict with religious attendance or observance on specific days or times (e.g. Jewish Sabbath on Friday evenings or Islamic Friday prayer) Allowing prayer breaks if requested

Sexual orientation	☐	☒Potential	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.
Sex	☐	☒Potential	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Use of language can present a barrier to participation.	Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations. Ensure use of gender-neutral language in call specification, guidance, etc. Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation. ESRC will, at a minimum, ensure that the panel maintains a 60:40 split in regards to gender.

Additional characteristics

Additional characteristics	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown	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).

Geographical location and place (consider UK and international offices)	☐	☒		ESRC will work to ensure that panels are balanced as far as possible (within the constraints of quality and appropriateness) across the range of protected characteristics, and across broader characteristics including participation from post1992 and Russell Group institutions, ensuring that we have a good geographical spread of panel members across the UK, and across a diversity of career stages and paths. Where international panel members are used, this will be considered in the scheduling of meetings.
Socio-economic status	☐	☐		
Education background	☐	☐		Applicant eligibility is defined as 'PhD or equivalent experience' and encourages applicants from nonstandard career trajectories to apply.
Parent/guardian responsibilities	☐	☒	Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities. Those with caring responsibilities may need longer time periods to carry out peer review.	Meetings will be scheduled within the working day. Reimbursement of additional childcare costs will be considered by UKRI on a case-by-case basis, if the meeting

| | | | | participant is otherwise unable to attend.

Peer reviewers will be given sufficient time to carry out their work. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Carer/parent carer responsibilities | ☐ | ☒ | See above - 'Parent/guardian responsibilities' | See above - 'Parent/guardian responsibilities' |
| Political opinion (Northern Ireland only) | ☐ | ☐ | | |
| Other characteristics | ☐ | ☐ | | |

Are there **general or overarching impacts on multiple groups**? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?	*For general impacts and actions that affect more than one protected characteristic, please use this space.* *For example, in-person meetings can present as negative barriers for disabled people, as well as those with parental or caring responsibilities. You may wish to mitigate this by allowing hybrid or fully virtual meetings to avoid access issues, travel and overnight stay requirements, and facilitate the use of personal equipment (e.g. allowing caption use).*

For specific impacts and actions for individual characteristics, please use the table below.

Your assessment could encompass:
- *How your activity supports UKRI or Council's EDI objectives*
- *positive impacts. Think about how you promote equality and foster good relations between people who do or do not share a characteristic.*
- *negative impacts*
- *no impact. Share evidence to support this*
- *actions you are going to consider/put in place to remove disadvantages or minimise negative impacts. You should consider whether you need to change* |

	the activity, change how it is implemented or whether the aims could be achieved in a different way • ***outcomes and outputs***. *Share how you will measure these*

Evaluation

Final Decision:	Select the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No negative or positive impact identified; therefore, activity will **proceed**.	☐	
2. **Adapt or change** the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.	☒	The activity has been adapted following the actions described in the previous section.
3. **Stop** the activity because the evidence shows bias or negative impact towards one or more groups.	☐	
4. 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.	☐	

Continued below…

Review and sign off

What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?	*An EIA is a live document and should regularly be reviewed throughout the life cycle of an activity*

	Consider how you monitor the impact identified in your EIA. Put a plan in place to ensure that the impact is being monitored throughout the activity and evaluate the outcomes of any actions identified in the EIA. For example, you could: • *Plan regular reviews of the EIA and action plan* • *Review the EIA as part of any closure or lessons learned activity.* • *Be transparent: continue to consult with the groups affected by your activity and use new insights to review you EIA.*
Next review date:	

Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes *EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities for example funding opportunities and events.
Point of contact	For example, the person or group responsible for the EIA. This may or may not be the point of contact for the EIA. For example, workstream in a project or a team: Aievidencesynthesis@esrc.ukri.org
Signed off by (name and date):	For example, project board, committee, budget holder, Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) Alice Taylor 16/08/2024
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** **EIAs for ODA and non-ODA ISPF programmes should be emailed to: ISPF@ukri.org**	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
		1	E.g. Based on input received from consultation groups at the **business case** stage, added actions under the gender section
		2	E.g. Based on input received from x at the **announcement of opportunity** stage, added/removed/edited x
		3	E.g. Based on input received from x at the **investment authorisation** stage, added/removed/edited x

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).

Action	Deadline	Owner	How will it be monitored?	What is/will be the impact/outcome?
e.g. Update application form to include questions on additional support and reasonable adjustments	December 2023	Applications manager	Updated form published and submissions reflect individual needs	Individual needs can be addressed. Inform inclusive design of the activity