



UK Research
and Innovation

UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form



Overview of activity

	Response
Name of activity being assessed	Sandpit: AI decision support for UK national security and defence
Council/department/project team	EPSRC
Aims and objectives of the activity	<p>Call for Participants for a Sandpit on AI decision support for UK national security and defence, followed by funding of projects.</p> <p>The Sandpit will be held over five days, with some days being in-person, and other days being virtual.</p> <p>The broad aims of the sandpit are to generate research proposals which can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form new collaborations between researchers and innovators in diverse research areas; • Create new and innovative research ideas to address real challenges; • Allow researchers to pitch projects for seed funding to test ideas; • Address the key research challenges that are identified; • Consider co-design with end-users; • Address the current issues around scale up and adoption
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	<p>UK HEIs;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Admin Staff o Academics (social scientists, physical scientists, materials scientists/engineers, engineers, computer scientists and innovators) as sandpit participants or mentors. <p>EPSRC staff Government stakeholders Contracted facilitators</p>
What data and consultation have you used?	<p>Consultation has taken place across UKRI with EPSRC discussing the remit of the sandpit with other research councils within UKRI and the academic community. Government input has been provided and facilitated by NSTix, with discussion into other Government- funded bodies such as DSTL.</p> <p>Academics and industrialists have been approached for input via various EPSRC Strategic Advisory Teams and utilising portfolio manager knowledge and suggestions of relevant community members. Further input has been and will continue to be sought through the Sandpit director and mentors.</p>



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

Protected characteristics

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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The opportunity is open to applicants from all career stages.	We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias.
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	People with visual disabilities may find it difficult to access and view the online materials. People with physical disabilities may find it difficult to attend in person, especially if poor transport links.	The virtual element of the sandpit will contain appropriate breaks. We will ensure that it is possible to print the online documents and they are in a form that text can be enlarged, and any information displayed by screen sharing can be zoomed as needed. Where possible, consideration will be given to the use of weblinks and acronyms (such

				<p>as in the Call Document) as this information is not readily compatible with text readers.</p> <p>For the in-person days, EPSRC will select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation e.g. surtitles for presentations.</p> <p>We have welcomed applications and enquiries from individuals with additional needs for whom specific provisions may need to be made.</p>
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<p>For the in-person days, EPSRC will select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation e.g. gender neutral toilets.</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Participation in the sandpit may be negatively affected, if potential applicants or peer reviewers are unavailable at key stages.</p> <p>Inability to attend due to childcare commitments may affect who can participate.</p> <p>Dietary restrictions related to pregnancy</p>	<p>Full timeline provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with EPSRC on specific mitigations. EPSRC will do its best to accommodate adjustments.</p> <p>EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries.</p> <p>Sandpits are intense with a high cognitive load. Sufficient rest time will be allocated to the sandpit agenda, and any specific</p>

				requirements for rest can be taken into consideration by EPSRC.
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from diverse backgrounds. Guidance will be provided to assessors to eliminate unconscious bias.
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Participation in the opportunity may be affected, if potential applicants or peer reviewers are unavailable at key assessment stages (Activities could coincide with religious holidays, for example)	EPSRC will ensure that religious observances are taken into account during the event. A full timeline will be provided of all key milestones, allowing early engagement with EPSRC on specific mitigations. EPSRC will do its best to accommodate adjustments
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		We will include wording in the funding opportunity to encourage applications from those from diverse backgrounds. In line with EPSRC policy we will aim for a 30% representation of the underrepresented gender for the panel members (mentors) at the sandpit.

Additional characteristics

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).
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	Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown			
Geographical location and place (consider UK and international offices)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sandpit will be in a physical location, requiring travel.	When selecting the venue, transport links will be a key consideration, aiming for a range of transport options to be available to cater to different needs.
Socio-economic status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Education background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Parent/guardian responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sandpit participation will include a 4-day residential period.	EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries
Carer/parent carer responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sandpit participation will include a 4-day residential period.	EPSRC offers support available for people with caring responsibilities. Individuals should get in contact with EPSRC if they have any queries
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		



Are there **general or overarching impacts on multiple groups**? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?

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Continued below...

Evaluation

Final Decision:	Select the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No negative or positive impact identified; therefore, activity will proceed .	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Adapt or change the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Mitigating actions have been identified to promote inclusion, and will be implemented throughout the process as identified in the table above.
3. Stop the activity because the evidence shows bias or negative impact towards one or more groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
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.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Continued below...



Review and sign off

What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?	Review EIA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before participant selection panel • Before in-person event • Evaluate after event and funding decisions have been completed
Next review date:	

Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes
Point of contact	Rhys Perry
Signed off by (name and date):	Rhys Perry, 2 nd September 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



Name	Date	Version	Change
Rhys Perry	02 September 2024	1	Completion of EIA Assessment for Activity

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?
Timetable of key dates made available to applicants and panel members as far in advance as possible.	October 2024	Staff involved in delivering this funding opportunity.	Key dates will be identified when call is published	Applicants have as much time as possible to prepare applications.
Unconscious bias training to be delivered to panel members. EPSRC members of staff will monitor all meetings and highlight instances of bias in conversations.	January 2025	Staff involved in delivering this funding opportunity	Unconscious bias training within panel briefing. EPSRC staff presence at meetings.	Preventing unconscious bias as much as possible in panel discussion.