

Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	ISCF Manufacturing Made Smarter Research Centres call
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>Call for 4-5 Research Centres in the area of digital manufacturing. The aims of the centres are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge the gap between basic research and its application in manufacturing to provide a pipeline of digital technologies for the future. • Co-create projects with industry, focusing on addressing user needs. • Integrate technological and societal aspects of manufacturing research, ensuring technologies are developed with people in mind to improve adoption and acceptance of new ways of working. • Network with the portfolio of Manufacturing Made Smarter (MMS) investments and other relevant projects, to ensure connectivity across the landscape and leverage the maximum benefits.
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	<p>ISCF MMS Project Team – call development, including alignment to overall MMS Challenge</p> <p>ISCF MMS Programme Board – oversight and sign-off of high-level call plans</p> <p>ISCF MMS External Advisory Group – oversight and advice provided on high-level call plans</p> <p>EPSRC Business Improvement Team – oversight and advice on detail of call plans and peer review arrangements</p>
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>Potential call applicants</p> <p>Potential project partners</p> <p>University research office staff</p> <p>Peer reviewers (postal peer reviewers and panel members)</p> <p>UKRI staff</p>
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	

As a funder of research, EPSRC remain committed to attracting the best potential researchers from a diverse population into research careers. The Research Councils have together developed the ambitious [RCUK Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan](#) to outline our collective aspirations for working with the research community, and partners throughout the sector. For policy changes, funding activities and events EPSRC will aim to:

- Select venues that are accessible and where possible accommodate any specific requirement in our planning and organisation of an initiative to support wider participation.

- Offer support available for people with caring responsibilities, further details are available [here](#)
- Clearly communicate the timeline and key milestones for funding activities
- Ensure attendees have an opportunity to raise any specific requirements in advance e.g. cover letter and joining instructions
- Support for flexible working of stakeholders
- Ensure diversity of peer review assessment and interview panels
- Abide by the Principles of peer review
- Unconscious Bias training for EPSRC staff and clear guidance for assessors
- Handle personal sensitive information in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation 2018

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	Potential negative impact	The interview panel meeting is likely to be conducted as a remote panel via teleconferencing. This could disproportionately disadvantage applicants/panel members with some disabilities.	<p>Ask panel participants if they have any special requirements in advance of the panel.</p> <p>Give good notice of panel arrangements and processes to all participants.</p> <p>Ensure regular breaks between sessions to minimise sensory/ cognitive load.</p> <p>Use the accessibility features of Zoom (e.g. supports many common screen readers; closed captioning options, etc.) to aid visually impaired participants.</p>
Gender reassignment	Potential negative impact	As the assessment includes an interview panel, there is a possibility of discrimination based on individuals' gender presentation. This may disproportionately disadvantage people who have undergone gender reassignment.	<p>All panel members will receive guidance on avoiding unconscious bias and will be explicitly reminded that assessment must be evidence-based and linked to the assessment criteria.</p> <p>UKRI staff will be trained in unconscious bias.</p> <p>All those present at the panel will be encouraged to challenge any comments/discussion that is not evidence-based, is unrelated to the assessment criteria, or is otherwise inappropriate.</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	No expected impact		

Pregnancy and maternity	Potential negative impact	Pregnant applicants/assessors may not be able to take part if timings/dates conflict with leave/medical appointments.	As much advance notice as possible will be given of key dates. Due consideration will be given to requests for flexibility in dates due to pregnancy, where these can be accommodated without adversely affecting the assessment process.
Race	Potential negative impact	As the assessment includes an interview panel, there is a possibility of discrimination based on race.	Actions as for Gender reassignment.
Religion or belief	Potential negative impact	Some applicants/assessors may not be able to take part if timings conflict with religious holidays. The timing of the panel is likely to coincide with Ramadan 2021. We do not anticipate this would prevent observant Muslims from taking part in the panel but it is possible they may have additional requirements.	Dates will be chosen to avoid major religious holidays as far as possible. Applicants and panel members attending the interview panel will be given the opportunity to highlight any special requirements they have.
Sexual orientation	Potential negative impact	As the assessment includes an interview panel, there is a possibility of discrimination based on sexual orientation.	Actions as for Gender reassignment.
Sex (gender)	Potential negative impact Potential positive impact	As the assessment includes an interview panel, there is a possibility of discrimination based on sex or gender. EPSRC single gender panel policy will be followed	Actions as for Gender reassignment.
Age	Potential negative impact	As the assessment includes an interview panel, there is a possibility of discrimination based on age.	Actions as for Gender reassignment.
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)	People with caring responsibilities – potential negative impact	Applicants with caring responsibilities may be deterred from applying if they require non-standard working arrangements.	The call document specifies that applicants may request non-standard working arrangements, such as: job shares, part-time contracts, alternative working patterns, flexible working.

	<p>Effect of COVID-19 – potential negative impact</p>	<p>Applicants/assessors with caring responsibilities may not be able to travel to attend a panel. The panel is likely to be conducted as a virtual, remote panel, so there is only a small risk of negative impact.</p> <p>Applicants and project partners may not be able to conduct in-person meetings, which may hinder their ability to form collaborations. Project partners may also be less able to commit to a project in the current climate.</p> <p>Applicants and assessors who are quarantining/socially distancing may not be able to attend an in-person panel.</p> <p>Recruitment of staff (particularly from overseas) may be more difficult if COVID-19 restrictions are still in place when successful projects start.</p>	<p>In the event of a physical panel and where employers cannot cover these costs, EPSRC may reimburse reasonable costs for additional caring costs incurred. It may also be possible to participate in the panel virtually if required (even if the other panel participants attend in person).</p> <p>The call will be open for a longer period than usual in order to allow additional time for forming collaborations and preparing proposals, given the difficulties posed by COVID-19.</p> <p>Only 25% co-funding from project partners will be required upfront. The remaining co-funding requirement may be secured during the lifetime of the project (50% required by the end).</p> <p>It is expected that the interview panel will be conducted as a virtual panel, depending on the circumstances and government advice at the time. Even if the panel is held in person, efforts will be made to allow individuals to participate remotely if required.</p> <p>EPSRC will consider requests for delayed starts on a case by case basis.</p>
	<p>Technological issues – potential negative impact</p>	<p>Technical problems encountered due to virtual nature of event, which may limit participation, e.g. familiarity with software, internet access.</p>	<p>Arrange webinars for panel members in advance of the meeting to ensure they understand the panel processes and to test any technical issues.</p> <p>Ensure a staff member is available to deal with technical issues on the day.</p> <p>Ensure alternate channels of communication for panel members and participants exist.</p>

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	A number of risks have been identified that could potentially have a negative impact on the participation of prospective applicants and panel members. These risks have been mitigated as far as possible.	
Final Decision:	Tick the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No barriers identified, therefore activity will proceed .		
2. You can decide to stop the policy or practice at some point because the data shows bias towards one or more groups		
3. You can adapt or change the policy in a way which you think will eliminate the bias	X	Measures have been put in place as described above, therefore the call will proceed.
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 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* Yes/Not required (*EIA's should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events:	Yes
Date completed:	29 July 2020
Review date (if applicable):	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Laura Totterdell	29 July 2020	1	Created document
Richard Bailey	16 September 2020	2	Reviewed for publishing with full call