



EPSRC - Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	Identifying challenges for a Sustainable Digital Society – virtual workshop
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	Scope remit for an EPSRC call in the newly developed Digital Economy Theme Priority area entitled “Sustainable Digital Society” Call worth £5m, to commence March 2021 at the latest. This virtual workshop arises from the need to scope an upcoming call based on the Digital Economy Theme Priority area entitled “Sustainable Digital Society”.
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	This Priority area has been developed with the help of academic and industrial stakeholders within the Digital Economy community, primarily members of the Digital Economy Programme Advisory Board.
4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	UK research and innovation community and industry/business partners who could potentially apply for funding, government stakeholders, UKRI staff.
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	An Expression of Interest (EoI) for the virtual workshop will be open to any interested party (via Smart Survey), and applications and contact details will be provided alongside the information relevant to the event to successful applicants. Outcomes of the virtual workshop will be published on the EPSRC webpage and this information will be available to any interested party.

As a funder of research, EPSRC remains 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. This includes for applicants, reviewers, panel members and staff. Included in the interview invitation letter is a request for any access issues to be notified.
- All participants in the process are asked to inform staff if they have any additional needs to enable attendance or participation.
- Offer support for people with caring responsibilities, further details are available [here](#).

- Clearly communicate the timeline and key milestones for funding activities, advertise these widely to reach the largest possible audience.
- Support and encourage panel members to follow best practice in taking positive steps to safeguard funding decisions. Staff will work closely with the Panel Chair(s) to agree approaches that are designed to minimize opportunities for bias and improve transparency of the decision making process. This includes managing environmental conditions, such as providing appropriate breaks.
- Support flexible working of stakeholders.
- Ensure diversity of peer review assessment and interview panels. Staff will adhere to a mixed panel policy and endeavor to achieve the minimum 30% for the underrepresented gender on the panel.
- Abide by the principles of peer review.
- Provide EPSRC staff with tailored unconscious bias training for Peer Review processes 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants with physical disabilities – Potential positive impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual workshop reduces travel and level of physical activity required for workshop • Virtual workshop would mean attendee could remain at home with access to appropriate care or facilities 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants with physical disabilities – Potential negative impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical disability or chronic pain could impact participation in workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure regular breaks between sessions to allow participants to undertake any pain management or any other necessary activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants with full or partial visual, auditory or other sensory impairments – Potential negative impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty participating fully in discussions online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom will be used to host online workshop – equipped with a range of accessibility features (e.g. supports many common screen readers; closed captioning options, etc.) • Visually impaired participants can request documents that will be used in screen sharing to be distributed to them in advance of the meeting • Attendees will be invited to submit contributions in advance of the virtual workshop using the Well Sorted tool

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities will be provided for attendees to share additional contributions offline after the virtual workshop • A workshop report will be published after the workshop, capturing key outputs • Applicants will be given the opportunity to highlight any accessibility requirements ahead of the meeting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurodiverse participants – Potential negative impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for sensory/cognitive overload by holding workshop online (dependent on individual circumstances) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure regular breaks between sessions to minimise sensory/cognitive load • Actively encourage attendees to take screen breaks to minimise sensory/cognitive load • Applicants will be given the opportunity to highlight any accessibility requirements ahead of the meeting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neurodiverse participants – Potential positive impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for mitigation of sensory/cognitive overload by holding workshop online rather than in person (dependent on individual circumstances) 	
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No known negative impact 		
Marriage or civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No known negative impact 		
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential positive impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual workshop reduces travel and level of physical activity required for workshop 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential negative impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnancy/maternity could impact participation in workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure regular breaks between sessions (please also see “Parental status or other caring responsibilities” below)
Race	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No known negative impact 		
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential negative impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation could be affected if event is held during religious holiday or celebration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event will not be held during a major religious holiday or celebration
Sexual orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No known negative impact 		

Sex (gender)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No known negative impact 		
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No known negative impact 		
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet access limitations/ technological issues – Potential negative impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues due to technical problems encountered due to virtual nature of workshop, which may limit participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitators will be present to help address technical issues during the virtual workshop • Attendees invited to submit contributions in advance of the virtual workshop using Well Sorted tool • Opportunities will be provided for attendees to share additional contributions offline after the virtual workshop • A workshop report will be published after the workshop, capturing key outputs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental status or other caring responsibilities – Potential negative impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring responsibilities at home may impact on attendee ability to fully participate in virtual workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure regular breaks between sessions to accommodate participants' needs to engage with caring responsibilities • In the event that caring responsibilities preclude attendance/full attendance at workshop, attendees will have the opportunity to influence workshop agenda through Well Sorted exercise beforehand • Opportunities will be provided for attendees to share additional contributions offline after the virtual workshop
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All attendees – wellbeing at a long virtual workshop – potential for negative impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for information overload, physical discomfort or screen fatigue during extended virtual meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure regular breaks between sessions • Workshop to be run during sociable hours (e.g. not to begin before 09:00 or extend after 17:00) • Actively encourage attendees to take screen breaks

Additional comment: EPSRC recognises that we are in an unprecedented situation as a result of COVID-19. There is awareness that this situation is rapidly evolving, and we will do our best to accommodate any changes as they occur.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed change in policy, funding activity or event could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	Several factors have been identified that could potentially have a negative impact on the participation of prospective applicants, predominantly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensory impairment - Neurodiversity - Parental or other caring responsibilities Potential issues have been identified and addressed.	
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	✓	A number of barriers to those with sensory impairments, or neurodiverse individuals, have been identified and addressed. Due to the current lockdown as a result of COVID-19, holding the workshop online is the only viable option.
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:	07/04/2020
Review date (if applicable):	N/A

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
Sonia Raikova	07/04/2020	1	