

Equality Impact Assessment Guidance and Template

This document provides guidance when completing an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). The EIA template can be found at the end of this document.

The Research Councils are committed to promoting equality and participation in all their activities, whether this is related to the work we do with our external stakeholders or whether this is related to our responsibilities as an employer. As public authorities we are also required to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations when making decisions and developing policies. To do this, it is necessary to understand the potential impacts of the range of internal and external activities on different groups of people.

What is an Equality Impact assessment (EIA) and why do we need to complete one?

An equality impact assessment (EIA) is an evidence-based approach designed to help organisations ensure that their policies, practices, events and decision-making processes are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage any protected groups from participation. This covers both strategic and operational activities.

The term 'policy', as used throughout this document, covers the range of functions, activities and decisions for which your organisation is responsible, including for example, strategic decision-making, arranging strategy & funding panels, conferences, training courses and employment policies.

The EIA will help to ensure that:

- we understand the potential effects of the policy by assessing the impacts on different groups both external and internal
- any adverse impacts are identified and actions identified to remove or mitigate them
- decisions are transparent and based on evidence with clear reasoning.

When might I need to complete an EIA?

Whether an EIA is needed or not will depend on the likely impact that the policy may have and relevance of the activity to equality. The EIA should be done when the need for a new policy or practice is identified, or when an existing one is reviewed. Depending on the type of policy or activity advice can be sought from either your HR team, your Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team, your Peer Review Policy team or their equivalents.

Ideally, an EIA should form part of any new policy, event or funding activity and be factored in as early as one would for other considerations such as risk, budget or health and safety.

Who is responsible for completing and signing off the EIA?

Depending on the nature of the policy, event or funding activity, the responsibility of who should complete the assessment, who should be consulted, and who should sign off the EIA will vary. Ultimate responsibility on whether an EIA is required and the evaluation decision(s) made after completing the EIA lies with the Senior Responsible Officer, budget

holder, project board or the most relevant senior manager. Further advice is available from your Equality, Diversity & Inclusion contact.

What is discrimination?

Discrimination is where someone is treated less favourably or put at a disadvantage because of their protected characteristic. The different groups covered by the Equality Act are referred to as protected characteristics: disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, sex (gender), and age.

Discrimination is usually unintended and can often remain undetected until there is a complaint. Improving or promoting equality is when you identify ways to remove barriers and improve participation for people or groups with a protected characteristic.

Building the evidence, making a judgement

In cases of new policies or management decisions there may be little evidence of the potential effect on protected characteristic groups. In such cases you should make a judgement that is as reliable as possible. Consultation will strengthen these value judgements by building a consensus that can avoid obvious prejudices or assumptions.

Consultation

Consultation can add evidence to the assessment. Consultation is very important and key to demonstrating that organisations are meeting the equality duties, but it also needs to be proportionate and relevant. Considering the degree and range of consultation will safeguard against 'groupthink' by involving a diverse range of consultees. These are the key considerations, to avoid over-consultation on a small policy or practice and under-consultation on a significant policy or an activity that has the potential to create barriers to participation.

Provisional Assessment

At the initial stages, you may not have all the evidence you need so you can conduct a provisional assessment. Where a provisional assessment has been carried out, there must be plans to gather the required data so that a full assessment can be completed after a reasonable time. The scale of these plans should be proportionate to the activity at hand. When there is enough evidence a full impact assessment should be prepared. Only one EIA should be created for each policy, as more evidence becomes available the provisional assessment should be built upon.

Valuing Differences

EIAs are about making comparisons between groups of employees, service users or stakeholders to identify differences in their needs and/or requirements. If the difference is disproportionate, then the policy may have a detrimental impact on some and not others.

'You are looking for bias that can occur when there are significant differences (disproportionate difference) between groups of people in the way a policy or practice has impacted on them, asking the question "Why?" and investigating further'.¹

Evaluation Decision

There are four options open to you:

1. No barriers or impact identified, therefore activity will **proceed**.
2. You can decide to **stop** the policy or practice at some point because the evidence 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, or
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.

In most cases, where disproportionate disadvantage is found by carrying out EIAs, policies **and practices are usually changed or adapted. In these cases, or when a change has been justified** you should consider making a record on the project risk register.

¹ http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/s/n/Acas_managers_guide_to_equality_assessments.pdf

Equality Impact Assessment

Question	Response
1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed	The funding activity is a call for interdisciplinary research and innovation consortia, as part of the Strategic Priorities Fund – Clean Air (SPF CA) Programme.
2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event	<p>The SPF CA Programme is inviting proposals for interdisciplinary research and innovation consortia under the second wave of the Programme. Up to £10m is available to fund approximately 3 - 4 consortia which will deliver new knowledge that provides critical foresight on emerging air pollution challenges and associated health risks and impacts; and enable an increased understanding and quantification of human behavioural change and practices in order to develop and assess interventions that limit harmful exposure to mitigate negative health impacts individuals most at risk.</p> <p>There will be a two-stage process: Outline and Full proposals. The assessment process involves an interdisciplinary assessment panel at the outline stage. Following the Outline assessment phase, successful applicants will be invited to submit full proposals which will be assessed at by an expert interdisciplinary panel meeting in June 2021.</p> <p>The delivery of this funding call is supported by a number of comms activities, including publishing a recorded presentation outlining the call, associated slides and an FAQs document.</p>
3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The funding opportunity fits within a suite of investments as part of the SPF Clean Air programme. • The scope of the call was developed through open consultation with two scoping workshops. The workshops were attended by representatives from academia, policy, local government, Health, industry... Attendance at these workshops was decided by the funders and individuals were invited to register their expression of interest to attend through an online form. • The Clean Air Steering Committee provided the Clean Air programme board with a strategic steer for the funding opportunity from the information gathered through open consultation. • The final funding opportunity scope and announcement of opportunity was designed by the Clean Air programme board consisting of representatives from across the funding partners. • NERC are leading this funding opportunity on behalf of the funders and as such, NERC processes were followed for approval of the final announcement of opportunity text.

4. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?	Short-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Panel members, peer reviewers and UKRI employees taking part in the assessment process. Applicants to the call, including supporting HEI or PSRE organisations, and eventual successful awardees. Long-term: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The UK research and innovation clean air community (through development of new interdisciplinary communities; shared knowledge, evidence; appropriate tools) The public (through innovation in policy, regulation and products and services resulting in improved public health) The business community (through growth in clean air industry sector in UK and export opportunities).
5. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?	<p>The impact monitoring and review plan is currently under development and will be considered by Programme Board.</p> <p>Research outcomes will be collected through Researchfish and additional data through an annual data return.</p>

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	Potentially negative / positive	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> (Panel) potential limited access to funding meetings for those with mobility issues. (Panel/comms) potential difficulties understanding discussion for those with hearing/visual impairment. (Panel/comms) potential difficulties with concentration for attendees with neuro-disabilities may experience. (Award focus) the announcement of opportunity highlights the need to prioritise air quality interventions for those deemed “at risk” (e.g. including individuals and groups at vulnerable stages of the life course and/or with established diseases and/or those disadvantaged 	<p>All applicants and panel members will be asked to highlight any personal circumstances that will need additional support.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting will be held online via Zoom (limiting venue-based accessibility issues.) Closed captioning (cc) can be arranged for hearing impaired panel members. Additional support can be provided to visually impaired panel members – including appropriate use of colour/text size in all guidance documents/ presentations. NERC will ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda. <p>Supporting communications will be recorded and/or shared online, with capacity to</p>

		by inequalities.)	share modified versions for specific needs at request (cc/changed colour/text size).
Gender reassignment*	No known negative impact	-	-
Marriage or civil partnership	No known negative impact	-	-
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially negative	1. (Panel) potential difficulties attending funding meeting. 2. (Panel) potential difficulties in managing early childcare responsibilities during meeting.	1. Meeting will be held online via Zoom (limiting venue-based accessibility issues.) 2. NERC will ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda, and can ensure that panel member participation is scheduled according to childcare responsibilities.
Race	No known negative impact*	-	-
Religion or belief	No known negative impact*	-	Care has been taken to ensure that key call dates do not fall on cultural and religious holidays where possible.
Sexual orientation	No known negative impact*	-	-
Sex (gender)	No known negative impact*	-	-
Age	No known negative impact*	-	-
Other (caring responsibilities)	Potentially negative		1. NERC will ensure that plenty of breaks are built into the agenda, and can ensure that panel member participation is scheduled according to caring responsibilities.

*In addition to the above, steps will be taken throughout the funding process to minimise discriminatory practices. This includes diversity in review:

- NERC will endeavour to make sure that peer review assessment and interview panels are diverse (across a number of protected characteristics).
- Care has been taken to ensure that the language used within the call document is inclusive.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification	
Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?	There is limited evidence to show that this call could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people, given mitigating actions taken above.	
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		
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.	X	This activity will include mitigating actions to attempt to eliminate bias.

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:	February 2020
Review date (if applicable):	

Change log

Name	Date	Version	Change
	When published	1	