

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

EPSRC aims to support a diverse and inclusive research environment where there is equal access to opportunities and all individuals are able to thrive. Our objective is to embed equality, diversity and inclusion [EDI] in all that we do, ensuring that the activities we support and the research that we fund drives change in our community, and supports a system that is inclusive for everyone. We are working towards this by adapting and monitoring our current processes and trialling new and innovative approaches and would like to work in partnership with our Impact Acceleration Account holders, to build on existing activities and help us achieve our aspirations.

Many of our partner organisations are already very active in this space and EPSRC does not wish to be prescriptive about the approach taken, recognising that each approach will need to be bespoke, linking to the broader processes, diversity challenges and activities within each research organisation and local environments. However, to support our aspiration that IAAs champion equality, diversity and inclusion principles, we wish to work in partnership with grant holders to maximise the impact of these investments.

We have collated some reflections and examples based on the most recent business case updates, so that they may stimulate thinking and be drawn on by others. The list of examples is not comprehensive and there is no formal requirement to undertake these suggestions at this time. We aim to work with IAA holders to enhance our collective understanding of good practice of EDI within IAAs and evolve the list of examples and guidance.

More broadly, EPSRC is working with its EDI Strategic Advisory Group to develop principles and a framework to support grant holders with EDI considerations. This will be published later in the year.

General comments

One common approach was to reference institutional strategies and/or policies related to equality, diversity and inclusion and indicate that the IAA would be delivered in alignment with these activities. While these activities are important context, we are looking to understand the specific approach of the IAA in relation to management and decision-making processes, activities and funding strands. In future refresh activities we will be looking for a greater focus on the bespoke approach that will be taken in the IAA and less information on institutional activities already in train.

Putting processes and structures in place to ensure fair and inclusive decision making

Examples of possible work areas related to IAAs include:

- Ensuring **clear accountability** across staff, governance or advisory structures. This might include clear assignment of responsibility, or updating terms of reference of groups and boards to include ED&I.
- Using **Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)** to help grant holders ensure that their policies, practices, events and decision-making processes are fair, do not present barriers to participation and do not disadvantage any protected groups from participation.

- **Implementing changes to ensure that fairness is fully reflected in peer review processes**, examples from the current portfolio include:
 - Considering the use of anonymous application stages.
 - Reviewing how applicants are identified or calls/opportunities are advertised, including the use of language.
 - Investigating the advice, support or mentorship, given to applicants in preparing bids.
 - Developing training programmes for funding panels to ensure fairness and manage bias. Bespoke courses may also be valuable for other decision makers, for example reviewers, IAA staff, panels, advisory boards or applicants.
 - Reviewing application/funding data across protected characteristics and monitoring trends.

Activities to enhance understanding of the equality, diversity and inclusion challenges

Examples of possible work areas related to IAAs include:

- **Working across a range of diversity challenges**, in particular looking beyond gender. For example, ethnicity and race, disability, neurodiversity and accessibility are all areas that may require a distinct and bespoke set of actions within the IAA to achieve ED&I.

Consideration of the inclusivity of any associated activities

Examples of possible work areas related to IAAs include:

- Taking action to remove potential barriers and improve the **accessibility of IAA activities**, for example networking events, or training opportunities. This could include reviewing:
 - The language used in promotional or guidance materials.
 - Considering avoiding dates e.g. of school holidays and religious events, as well as taking into account inclusivity and accessibility considerations around timing and venues of events.

Activities which address areas of underrepresentation

Examples of possible work areas related to IAAs include:

- **Collecting and sharing case studies**. For example, highlighting where IAA funding/activities have had a beneficial outcome, or stories of people who have been able to make use of opportunities presented by the IAA. These can then be utilised to promote the opportunities available from an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective.

We also highlight out EPSRC Inclusion Matters portfolio of activities to accelerate culture change in the engineering and physical sciences: <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/edi-at-epsrc/inclusion-matters/>

Responsible Innovation

Responsible Innovation (RI) is a process that seeks to promote creativity and opportunities for science and innovation that are socially desirable and undertaken in the public interest. RI acknowledges that innovation can raise questions and dilemmas, is often ambiguous in terms of purposes and motivations and unpredictable in terms of impacts, beneficial or otherwise. RI creates spaces and processes to explore these aspects of innovation in an open, inclusive and timely way. This is a collective responsibility, where funders, researchers, stakeholders and the public all have an important role to play.

Working in partnership with researchers and research organisations, EPSRC is committed to raising the profile of RI, enhancing RI understanding and culture, promoting the use of the [AREA framework](#), and delivering our long-term ambition of ensuring that RI is business-as-usual for researchers.

The IAAs represent an excellent opportunity to explore and develop ways in which RI can be embedded within the research and innovation process. We recognise that some institutions are particularly active in this space with many of the Business Case Updates including RI considerations via a focus on ethics, transparency or research integrity. Going forward, we wish to encourage and support organisations to build upon this work and reflect upon how broader RI considerations may be more explicitly incorporated into the work of their IAA.

As such we have collated some relevant RI topics and examples, based on the most recent business case updates, to help understanding; to stimulate thinking and to share good practice. Please note this list of examples is not fully comprehensive and there is no formal requirement to undertake these suggestions at this time. We aim to work with IAA holders to enhance our collective understanding of good RI practice within IAAs and evolve this list of examples and guidance.

Organisational RI policy and advocates

Examples of possible work areas related to IAAs include:

- Bearing in mind related organisational strategies when thinking about how best to integrate RI into the IAA approach. Are there existing approaches that could be built on or can the IAA act as an exemplar for developing RI good practice and policy across your organisation?
- Do RI advocates and champions already exist within your organisation that you can engage with to provide effective RI support within the IAA?

Effectively embedding an RI culture within IAA activities

Examples of possible work areas related to IAAs include:

- Encouraging a culture where thinking about RI and the AREA framework is commonplace, not just the planning stage of new IAA activities or funding opportunities, but as a continual thought process throughout the life cycle of activities, for example by:
 - The inclusion of RI aspects in project monitoring and reporting, as well as investigating how RI is reflected in outcomes and impacts.

- Encouraging dialogue and two-way discussion in knowledge exchange activities, for example in stakeholder partnerships and via public engagement within activities.
- Ensuring all partners engaged in IAA funding are aware of the RI agenda and are supported appropriately.
- Exploring the potential for building RI into IAA assessment processes to raise awareness upfront and support embedding from the outset. Applicants could be asked to apply the flexible and proportionate AREA framework to their proposed IAA project. Points to consider include:
 - An RI approach is not prescriptive, nor should it be seen as a tick box exercise.
 - An approach that recognises and supports continuous consideration and reflection on RI throughout the lifetime of projects.
 - The resources that may be required from IAA holders to support applicants and help them address this topic effectively.
 - How the assessment process might be used to challenge and stimulate thinking around RI thus enabling applicants to build upon and enhance their RI approach.

Sharing good RI practice and celebrating success

Examples of possible work areas related to IAAs include:

- Collecting and sharing RI case studies and exemplars. For example, highlighting where RI has been beneficial to IAA project outcomes, where it has led to new research avenues, collaborations or dialogues, or perhaps where a novel approach to RI has been applied.
- Sharing good practice and learning across different IAA activities (internally and across organisations and wider networks).
- Recognition and celebration of effective RI, for example through prizes or awards.

RI training opportunities for all (staff, researchers, partners etc.)

Examples of possible work areas related to IAAs include:

- Exploring the potential to build upon existing approaches within your organisation (e.g. learn from CDT RI training approaches?)
- Consider how you may use peer-to-peer learning (e.g. engage existing RI advocates in your organisation) and sharing of good practice as a training tool.
- Consider how you might access shared resources and/or existing material to enhance your training (e.g. working with other institutions to deliver a shared programme?)