

SAN recruitment exercise: equality impact assessment (EIA)

Question	Response
<p>1. Name of policy/funding activity/event being assessed</p>	<p>ESRC 2020/21 Strategic Advisory Network (SAN) recruitment process (biennial activity)</p>
<p>2. Summary of aims and objectives of the policy/funding activity/event</p>	<p>The recruitment objective is twofold:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to attract a diverse group of high-calibre researchers and users of research, from academia, public, private and third sectors, to apply to become members of our Strategic Advisory Network (SAN) 2. to appoint 19 candidates with diverse backgrounds and skills from this applicant pool. <p>SAN provides ad hoc expert strategic advice to ESRC and would convene as required by the office, primarily in the form of plenary meetings, focused advisory and task and finish groups, and individual support for ESRC activities (eg, charring commissioning panels). We are looking to add value by building on the existing SAN membership with new knowledge, expertise and insights from diverse sources, particularly from under-represented groups and communities within and outwith academia. In addition to ensuring gender balance and representation from the full span of career stages, geographical/regional breadth, and spread of disciplinary coverage and areas of expertise, we are also keen to increase the number of members with disabilities, from minority ethnic backgrounds, and to ensure diversity of sex, gender identity and sexual orientation among the membership. We also want to ensure those with caring responsibilities feel able to apply and that successful candidates feel supported to contribute effectively to the network's various activities. Activities SAN members participate in include strategic reviews, workshops, evaluation processes and corporate ambassadorship.</p>
<p>3. What involvement and consultation has been done in relation to this policy? (e.g. with relevant groups and stakeholders)</p>	<p>Christina Rowley, Head of Strategy, has consulted ESRC's Senior Leadership Team and EDI experts across ESRC. ESRC colleagues who have run previous recruitment exercises, for SAN and similar bodies (eg, Grants Assessment Panels) were also consulted, and lessons learned documents were reviewed. Relevant UKRI teams have also been contacted (recruitment, HR, web team). We have based the recruitment on EPSRC's approach, as this was considered by ESRC colleagues to be an example of good practice in UKRI. The assessment criteria, online form and application pack have been reviewed with reference to SAN Terms of Reference, the role of the SAN, and criteria and documentation used by EPSRC for their SAN recruitment, as well as best practice regarding online forms and capturing information for equality monitoring purposes. Improvements have been made to the documents and process as a result of this review stage.</p>

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<p>i. Who is affected by the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>Potential applicants (social scientists at all stages of their careers, including researchers and users of research in academia, public, private and third sector organisations).</p> <p>ESRC (SAN Secretariat, Management and Senior Leadership Teams).</p>
<p>ii. What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actual impact of the policy/funding activity/event?</p>	<p>1 – Application Process</p> <p>Applicants are required to complete an online application form evidencing their skills, experience and expertise, and how they meet the assessment criteria, and submit their CV, via SurveyMonkey. The recruitment will be live for approximately 5 weeks on the ESRC website and advertised widely.</p> <p>Applicants will be asked to provide information for the purposes of monitoring equality and diversity (providing the information is optional and every question has a “do not disclose” option). The information provided in the Equal Opportunities section of the application form will help us monitor the effectiveness of our policy. The equal opportunities information will not be used to determine an applicant’s fit to the essential criteria but may be used when considering the diversity of expertise and experience needed across the SAN at the final decision-making stage.</p> <p>Applicants will submit their application online and are not required to travel to Swindon.</p> <p>The recruitment pack contains the statement: If you experience any difficulties with the online nomination form, please contact ESRC at strategicadvisorynetwork@esrc.ukri.org This allows us to address individual circumstances as issues arise.</p> <p>2 – Lessons Learnt</p> <p>We will be conducting an internal exercise to review the successes and failures of this recruitment exercise and to assess how effective we have been in attracting a diverse pool of strong candidates with the breadth of skills that fill the gaps we have identified across the network.</p> <p>We will look at diversity information of applicants (aggregated) and compare these to both shortlisted candidates and the final selected membership from the recruitment exercise. We will also consider the make-up of the SAN as a whole (including 21 existing members).</p> <p>This information will be compared with future recruitment exercises to assess progress over time towards the objective of making SAN a more diverse membership.</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 (visual impairment)	Visual impairment when submitting application online: ability to access written and visual materials associated with the recruitment.	The online form contains the statement “If you experience any difficulties with the online nomination form, please contact ESRC at strategicadvisorynetwork@esrc.ukri.org ”. This contact email is also provided in the application pack. We will ensure that documents are formatted so that they can easily be read by text-to-voice software. Additionally, the platform we are using – Survey Monkey is AA rated in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2 standard. Therefore it can conduct surveys using assistive technology.
Disability (continued)	Potentially negative (reading comprehension difficulties)	Those with reading comprehension difficulties may find the written materials difficult to comprehend.	We have tried to keep the application pack as concise as possible. The online form contains the statement “If you experience any difficulties with the online nomination form, please contact ESRC at strategicadvisorynetwork@esrc.ukri.org ”. This contact email is also provided in the application pack, as well as a telephone number so that applicants can speak to an ESRC staff member directly. We will ensure that documents are formatted so that they can easily be read by text-to-voice software. Additionally, the platform we are using – Survey Monkey is AA rated in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2 standard. Therefore it can conduct surveys using assistive technology.
Disability (continued)	Potentially negative (physical/mobility impairment)	Inability to attend meetings, or concerns about ability to attend SAN meetings, may put people off applying.	No interviews will be conducted as part of the recruitment process. The following statement will be included in the webtext and application pack: “Every effort will be made to support remote participation in SAN activities, if this is appropriate, and to consider flexible and part-time working.” We will also ensure that venues are accessible and members are supported to attend meetings in person.

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)
Gender reassignment	No known negative impact		
Marriage or civil partnership	No known negative impact		
Pregnancy and maternity	Potentially negative	Imminent maternity leave and unavailability to attend future meetings, or concerns about how career breaks will be viewed, could put potential applicants off applying.	The recruitment process should not disadvantage pregnant women or women recently returned from maternity leave. Interviews and travel are not required and, if invited to join the SAN, meetings can be attended virtually. Membership of SAN can be extended to account for maternity leave. Doodle polls will be used to scout for meeting dates and other activities.
Race	Probably positive	Current SAN does not represent a broad spectrum of diverse ethnic identities. Recruitment seeking to remedy this.	We will seek out ways to publicise the call specifically to academics and non-academic researchers and users of research who identify as members of non-dominant ethnic groups, through extensive use of mailing lists and networks (including, eg, the Equality and Diversity Forum, <i>Equally Ours</i>) The application form is being designed in such a way as to offer applicants the maximum opportunity to demonstrate how their skills and experience meet the assessment criteria, moving away from narrow definitions of research excellence, “track record” or academic seniority.
Religion or belief	No	Potential dietary requirements or other requirements (access to prayer facilities) for meetings, and/or risk of key dates clashing with religious holidays, may put applicants off applying.	No in-person meetings or interviews are being held as part of the recruitment process. If invited to join SAN, dietary and other requirements, including observance of religious holidays, will be requested of members before meetings and other events.

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Sexual orientation	No known negative impact		
Sex (gender)	Positive	Of the remaining membership on SAN, the ratio is approximately 2:1, women to men. This means that a fairly even gender balance is likely to remain in place after the recruitment has concluded.	The application form is being designed in such a way as to offer applicants the maximum opportunity to demonstrate how their skills and experience meet the assessment criteria, moving away from narrow definitions of research excellence, "track record" or academic seniority.
Sex (gender)	Potentially negative	See pregnancy and maternity, above.	
Age	Probably positive	Current SAN is under-represented in early and mid-career researchers. Recruitment is seeking to remedy this.	<p>We will be alerting our early careers researchers to the recruitment opportunity once it goes live.</p> <p>The application form is being designed in such a way as to offer applicants the maximum opportunity to demonstrate how their skills and experience meet the assessment criteria, moving away from narrow definitions of research excellence, "track record" or academic seniority.</p> <p>The recruitment pack states: "We particularly encourage applications from women, those with disabilities, members of minority ethnic groups, and other groups who are currently or historically under-represented on ESRC's groups, networks and panels."</p>
Additional aspects (not covered by a protected characteristic)	Caring responsibilities (potentially negative impact)	Recruitment is open over the COVID-19 lockdown period where many have additional caring responsibilities.	Efforts to advertise the vacancies through as many channels as possible will be made and the window for application left open for a sufficient length of time. Possibility to hold meetings virtually. Timetables for virtual

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			meetings will consider individual circumstances.
Additional aspects (continued)	Caring responsibilities	More broadly, caring responsibilities may have an impact on people's abilities to complete the application form, and on their willingness to apply	We have made the application form and process as light-touch as possible. Interviews and travel are not required and, if invited to join the SAN, meetings can be attended virtually.

Evaluation:

Question	Explanation / justification
<p>Is it possible the proposed policy or activity or change in policy or activity could discriminate or unfairly disadvantage people?</p>	<p>Yes. However, we have deliberately broadened both the way in which we describe the assessment criteria and the types of skills and expertise we are capturing in the application form, so that we can better assess eligible candidates' relevant transferable skills rather than rely on traditionally rather narrow success indicators.</p> <p>The change in activity for this recruitment round is the use of Survey Monkey as a platform to which applicants will upload their CV and complete the application form (including equality and diversity monitoring questions). This should not have any significant negative effects.</p> <p>Survey Monkey is AA rated in accordance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2 standard. Therefore it can conduct surveys using assistive technology.</p> <p>The online form contains the statement "If you experience any difficulties with the online nomination form, please contact ESRC at strategicadvisorynetwork@esrc.ukri.org". This contact email is also provided in the application pack.</p> <p>The form will include the following statement on diversity: <i>UKRI's mission is to convene, catalyse and invest in close collaboration with others to build a thriving, inclusive research and innovation system that connects discovery to prosperity and public good. As an organisation, ESRC promotes and value equality, diversity and inclusion. We recognise the need to recruit employees, advisors, grant holders and students from the widest possible applicant pool and acknowledge the benefits that a diverse population bring. With that in mind, we operate a policy of equality and fair treatment. All applications will be treated fairly, regardless of gender, age, ethnic origin or disability. Through this recruitment exercise, we have a particular aspiration to improve the diversity of the Network in accordance with ESRC's equality and diversity policy (https://esrc.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/).</i></p> <p><i>The information provided in the Equal Opportunities section of the application form will help us monitor the effectiveness of our policy. The equal opportunities information will not be used to determine an applicant's fit to the essential criteria but may be used when considering the diversity of expertise and experience needed across the SAN at the final decision-making stage.</i></p> <p>Senior staff overseeing the recruitment process have undergone unconscious bias training and have taken advice from across ESRC and UKRI as to best practice in these areas.</p>

Question	Explanation / justification	
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.	✓	Concerns and risks have been identified, discussed and, as far as possible, mitigated against. As this is the second broadly similar recruitment round for SAN, upon completion of the EDI review after recruitment is complete, we will accrue more evidence as to the success of our process and be able to refine further for future rounds.

Will this EIA be published* *EIAs should be published alongside relevant funding activities e.g. calls and events.	Will be published on the ESRC website alongside the application pack.
Date completed:	27 November 2020
Review date (if applicable):	