ROYAL
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DATA | EVIDENCE | DECISIONS

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR UKRI EDI ACTION PLAN

26 April 2022

	Motivating issue	Intervention	Measurement strategy	Target	Timeframe
1	There is a trend across all disciplines for the proportions of women to fall with rank. This has been linked in part to the difficulty in obtaining and sustaining research funding across a career that has had disruptions. Mid-career is further identified as a particular place that many women's research careers stall.	Development of protected mid-career acceleration grants, similar to New Investigator awards, but for individuals who have already achieved mid-rank (Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor or analogous), but have not applied for or received funding for some period of years. This would permit a mid-career point of re-entry to funded research for individuals who have had any sort of disruption or shift in their research.	Number of grants awarded, diversity characteristics of applicants and awardees, career outcomes for awardees, including promotion, publications, future grant capture, etc.	Fix some numerical targets relevant to improvement in demographic diversity of supported researchers and impacts on their career outcomes.	To be piloted in the first year of the strategy in a selection of councils and/or domains, and rolled out following feedback within 3 years across all councils.

| 2 | There is considerable research on barriers to career progression and research reception for members of various underrepresented groups. There is also considerable activity within research professions to understand the barriers particular to their members. However, such work is generally under-resourced, needs to be undertaken on a voluntary basis by members of underrepresented groups themselves, and often ends up undermining the career progression of these very individuals. Although the EPSRC "Inclusion Matters" call was a step towards supporting such work, tying the work to actions that could be undertaken at the university level, and requiring it to involve top university leadership, limited the individuals who could be supported and the questions that could be investigated. | Create a scheme in each council to permit members of the research community to undertake individual or team research projects to investigate the mechanisms of disadvantage in their communities and propose interventions based on their findings, including research on UKRI data and interventions to be tried through collaboration with their funding council.

This would allow UKRI to access the research and domain expertise of a wide range of individuals in helping to achieve its EDI aims. It would also add to the prestige of the work itself, and thus support the careers of individuals undertaking this work. | Number and value of grants supported, diversity of applicants and funded investigators, number and diversity of interventions implemented based on research, and the success of those interventions, career outcomes of funded investigators. | Set targets for these numbers. | Call to be announced in first year, with projects to complete within four years, and a set of interventions to be implemented in councils within five years. |

| 3 | Although UKRI sets funding policies and procedures, the decisions are ultimately made based on the recommendations of peer-reviewers and panel members. Thus to achieve diversity goals, there needs to be a cultural shift in the ways that peer-reviewing and panels are undertaken. | Meetings should be arranged between a broad diversity (not only demographic) of members of the research community and the UKRI staff who oversee their funding budgets to align priorities between UKRI and the community, and to strategize about how best to bring about the changes required in peer reviewing and panels to achieve goals for both research and diversity outcomes. This could be facilitated by professional societies.

The community can help councils to understand the underpinning research culture, the community's values and goals, and the best ways to enact cultural change. It improves communication about expectations and processes on both sides, and helps to align goals and values.

An annual discussion could allow the community to reflect on how well the funded portfolio of grants, institutions and individuals reflects what it would like to prioritise in funding. Deviations from this could be fed back into the process until they are well-aligned. | Number of peer reviewers who have participated in a community discussion. Deviation of funding outcomes from agreed goals. | Targets in terms of number of reviewers engaged in discussion. Targets in terms of movement of funding outcomes towards agreed goals. | A first meeting should be arranged in the first year with all divisions within all councils, in collaboration with relevant professional societies. |

4	The data that is currently published does not permit the research community to examine the current funding system and interrogate hypotheses that have been proposed to explain the observed inequalities.	The data available should be improved by: Publishing diversity data on overall applications as well as on funded applications. Publishing data that permits evaluation of variations in diversity outcomes at the level of scientific subdiscipline and of funding types—eg, what is the diversity of applicants and funded PIs for responsive mode grants in the physical sciences? For equipment grants in engineering? For fellowships in Mathematical Sciences? For various targeted calls? Ensuring that the evidence collected is of high quality, and is not just the evidence that is easiest to collect.	Views of the research community on the usefulness and timeliness of data provided.	Target should start with collection of baseline views on usefulness and timeliness and look to achieve specific targets in terms of improvement in those.	Survey on views of available data and what additional data is required in first year. Publication of requested new data to SATs within 2 years. Provision of more complete data for public examination within 3 years.
5	"Diversity by design" The way grants are created can exclude certain groups. UKRI should consider how each of its programmes will affect research culture, and how it can be implemented to reach UKRI goals regarding inclusion and diversity.	Collect relevant evidence and evaluate the differential diversity outcomes in terms of applications and funding success for different schemes, types of grants, and processes, e.g. the New Horizons Scheme in EPSRC which tried a half double-blind reviewing procedure. For specific calls, it would be valuable for UKRI to publish data on who was involved in designing the funding call, who was invited to participate, and who won the funds.	The quality and relevance of data collected, analysed and published about different funding mechanisms.	Target in terms of collection, analysis of data and evaluations of a certain proportion of schemes in each year across the UKRI offerings.	First evaluations in each council to be designed and undertaken in year 1, with ramp up over the subsequent 5 years to generate good evidence basis for diversity impact of funding mechanisms.

| 6 | Funded research does not currently serve all members of the UK population equally. | Researchers should be asked to consider diversity dimensions in their research as part of grant applications, and this should become part of the evaluation of proposals, such as an explicit focus on the importance of anticipating the needs of diverse populations of potential users of research.

UKRI could make it necessary for people writing proposals to consider diversity dimensions as well as specifically commenting on gender diversity considerations. A model for this is given by the GenderNet Plus consortium, and UKRI could consider joining the consortium or a similar program. | The proportion of proposed research that identifies a relevant diversity dimension. | Set targets in terms of introducing this requirement in schemes across the councils, and in terms of production of relevant training for PIs and referees on the topic. | Convene a working group in first year with input from experts within the UK research community as well as from international funders with similar schemes. Look to pilot this across councils within 2 years, with a 5 year evaluation plan. |
| 7 | There is little evaluation of grant outcomes to determine if those who received funding in fact were any more productive than individuals who did not. This leads to the "Matthew Effect". | An appropriate evaluation and data collection method must be put in place and carefully analysed. For example, evaluation of grant outcomes to determine if those who received funding in fact were any more productive than individuals who did not. | | Clear understanding of where it has done well and where it has not, with specific targets for improvement | |

8	There is no consensus over what the notion of 'excellence' means or how it should be recognized in the UKRI research system. Funding decisions are often focused on the quality of researcher rather than the quality of research.	UKRI could consider PI blind initial screening to ensure that when reviewers are asked to comment on the quality of the proposal they are writing about this, and not the researcher's background or experience.	Critically examine the language of excellence, particularly in instructions to reviewers and peer-review panels, and consider how the language in these might be improved to avoid the issues that the word "excellence" can cause.		
9	The UKRI peer review college system provides an opportunity to advance and promote equality, diversity and inclusion in funding decisions	Peer review college members should receive EDI training on bias in the assessment of proposals and final reports due to gender, disability, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religious belief. EPSRC should aim for the constitution of its peer review college to at least reflect the gender, age, disability and ethnicity composition of the EPS academic population. Imbalances in the peer review college with respect to UK population at large should be no greater, and ideally less, than the corresponding imbalances in the EPS academic population.	Use of data collected on membership of peer review college by gender, age, disability and ethnicity data compared to EPS population data to measure progress.	Create annual targets for the roll out of training provided to new and existing members.	

| 10 | UKRI's 2020-21 corporate plan says that "Our success depends on harnessing the collective and collaborative power of diverse approaches, ideas, skills and experiences."

According to UKRI's 2020-21 annual report only 2.1% (174) staff members are disabled, compared with a baseline of 19% in the UK. | UKRI should work to progress through the Governments Disability Confident scheme to reach the Disability Confident top level status and become a Disability Confident Leader organisation.

UKRI should work with the Disability Matters Staff Network launched in 2021 to expand the support it provides to disabled staff. | UKRI is currently at level 1 of the Governments Disability Confident scheme.

There are three levels of the government scheme:

Level 1 Disability Confident Committed

Level 2 Disability Confident Employer

Level 3 Disability Confident Leader

Every organisation joins the scheme at level 1. | Complete disability confident employer self-assessment and subject that self-assessment to external challenge and validation.

Engage in disability confident leadership activities.

Record and report information on disability employment, mental health and wellbeing | |