EDI Responsiveness Matrix and Toolkit

Contents

1. Introduction

The EDI Responsiveness Matrix and Toolkit was developed as result of the recommendations in the Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding report and Action Plan. Professional staff from across the University of Oxford contributed insight on fund management, equality, diversity and inclusion, and research culture to develop a comprehensive assessment tool that can advance more equitable and inclusive practices.

Management of internal funding schemes often requires balancing applicant enquiries and requests while complying with the rules, requirements and processes from the University and/or an external funder. More and more, the advancement of equity and inclusion is an important part of fund management as well.

Purpose

The purpose of the matrix and toolkit is to support fund managers, professional staff, and governance committees with the self-assessment of equity and inclusivity in internal funding schemes that they manage, oversee, and distribute.

Why?

The matrix and toolkit support the identification of opportunities for positive change within a complex internal funding environment. It's important to acknowledge that some aspects of funding processes may be easier to improve than others, and the pace of change may be slow and inconsistent at times. The goal of self-assessment is to draw on the extensive knowledge and skills of fund managers, professional staff, and governance committees to better understand what is working right now, where to pursue ongoing improvement, and the future goals for equity and inclusivity in your scheme. Incremental actions and long-term change can all add up to a more inclusive and equitable internal funding landscape at the University of Oxford.

Improving equity and inclusivity in internal research funding is an emerging area of work for the University and the higher education sector more broadly. As we implement the matrix and toolkit, it will be important to try new things and share lessons learned with University peers and others in similar roles at other institutions. **Your support, participation, and leadership are contributing to an exciting new phase for internal research funding at the University of Oxford – thank you!**

2. EDI Responsiveness Matrix

Use the matrix below to complete a self-assessment of equity and inclusivity for your internal funding scheme. You can assess your scheme across the following six areas: design, communication, application, assessment, applicant reporting, and governance. Each area will be assessed for a general level of responsiveness: unaware, sensitive, responsive, and/or transformative (see definitions below). This document is best used in the Microsoft Word app rather than the browser.

Instructions

1. For each area, tick the boxes that most closely match the current practices in your scheme.

   Tip: *You can tick the boxes in multiple columns. This can help indicate the different levels of responsiveness across and within the areas of your scheme.*

   Tip: *The matrix may not capture all the different ways in which to address equity and inclusivity in your scheme. There is a blank row at the end of each section so that you can add other actions you are taking to address equity and inclusivity in that area.*

2. Count the ticked boxes and other actions in each column for the funding scheme area. The column(s) with the most ticked boxes and actions indicate the general level of responsiveness for the area.

   Tip: *The logic of the table is additive as you move from left to right. For example, if your scheme is responsive it is also sensitive so you will probably have many or most of the boxes ticked in the sensitive column when you start ticking boxes in the responsive column. If you have a similar number of boxes ticked in two different columns, this may indicate that you are shifting between levels of responsiveness.*

3. Review the results for each area of your funding scheme. You will obtain an initial indicator of which areas of your scheme are more or less responsive to equity and inclusivity.

   Results example: *Under communication, there are two ticked boxes for unaware, five ticked boxes under sensitive, two ticked boxes under responsive and one ticked box under transformative. In this instance, the current, general level of responsiveness for communication is sensitive. However, the scheme application is transformative, and governance has the same number of boxes checked for sensitive and responsive, suggesting a transition between levels of responsiveness.*

   Tip: *Treat the results as inspiration for action on the areas of your scheme that you can control. Results in some areas may be tied to rules, regulations, and processes from the University or external funders that require further discussion.*

4. After completing the assessment, please review the suggested next steps.

Levels of responsiveness on equity and inclusivity

- **Unaware**: Little or no consideration is made of equity and inclusivity in the design or management of the funding scheme.
- **Sensitive**: Equity and inclusivity are recognised in the design and management of the scheme and limited, or initial action has been taken.
- **Responsive**: Equity and inclusivity are clearly considered and proactively addressed in the design and management of the scheme.
  Transformative: The purpose, management **and/or** design of the scheme prioritise equity and inclusivity in access to funding or participation, which may include a focus on improved outcomes for specific groups. **Note**: It is the role of fund managers, professional staff, and governance committees to identify the specific groups who could benefit from improved outcomes with your scheme.

1 EDI Responsiveness Assessment Matrix

Name of the fund to assess:

Name and position of assessor:

Date of completion:

Date of next assessment:

	Level of responsiveness			
Funding scheme area	**Unaware**	**Sensitive**	**Responsive**	**Transformative**
Design	☐ Rationale or aim for the scheme is not stated and/or shared openly. ☐ The scheme has been designed with little or no consideration made of equity and inclusivity. ☐ The outcomes of the scheme do not match the timelines and funding available for eligible projects. *For example, the scheme expects significant impact from short projects with small budgets.*	☐ Rationale or aim for the scheme is clearly stated and/or shared openly. ☐ The scheme has been designed with limited or initial consideration of equity and inclusivity. ☐ The outcomes of the scheme match the timelines and funding available for eligible projects. *For example, the scheme's desired outcomes match the size and timeframe for eligible projects.*	☐ Rationale or aim for the scheme includes addressing equity and inclusivity. ☐The scheme has been designed with equity and inclusivity clearly considered and proactively addressed.	☐ The scheme has been designed in consultation with specific groups. ☐ Rationale or aim for the scheme is to improve outcomes for specific groups. ☐ Rationale or aim for the scheme includes improving outcomes for specific groups within an open call.

Funding scheme area	Level of responsiveness			
	Unaware	**Sensitive**	**Responsive**	**Transformative**
Other actions for design *List any other actions you are taking to improve equity and inclusivity in communications for your funding scheme that are not captured above.*	•	•	•	•
Design level of responsiveness *Count the ticked boxes and other actions in each column above. The column(s) with the most ticked boxes and actions indicate the general level of responsiveness for this area.*	The current level of responsiveness for scheme design is: ☐ Unaware ☐ Sensitive ☐ Responsive ☐ Transformative			
Communication: ***Call dissemination***	☐ Call shared through closed and/or limited channels. ☐ No dates published for future rounds of funding. ☐ Language used in the call has not been checked for potential bias or discrimination.	☐ Call shared openly and/or through a range of channels. ☐ Dates published for future rounds of funding. *For example, dates are available on the scheme website and/or a pre-announcement is made ahead of call dissemination.*	☐ Call messaging encourages specific groups to apply. ☐ Call dissemination designed to appeal to and reach specific groups within an open call. ☐ Language used in the call has been checked for potential bias or discrimination.	☐ Call is only disseminated to groups for whom the funding scheme has been specifically designed. ☐ Call dissemination strategy designed in consultation with specific groups.

	Level of responsiveness			
Funding scheme area	**Unaware**	**Sensitive**	**Responsive**	**Transformative**
Communication: ***Guidance documents***	☐ Guidance documents provided upon request from the potential applicant. ☐ Scheme eligibility, terms and conditions, rules, and processes are published in technical or specialist language that may not be accessible or easily understood for all applicants. ☐ Guidance documents do not meet web accessibility standards.	☐ Scheme eligibility, terms and conditions, rules, and processes are published in plain language. ☐ Guidance documents are provided openly for all potential applicants. ☐ Guidance documents meet web accessibility standards.	☐ Guidance documents are openly available in multiple formats to support accessibility. *For example, online, Word and/or PDF documents, and/or with large print or Braille.*	☐ Guidance documents are designed in consultation with research facilitators, EDI staff and/or specific groups.

Funding scheme area	Level of responsiveness: Unaware	Sensitive	Responsive	Transformative
Communication: ***Additional information and support***	☐ No opportunities to ask questions or for additional information about the scheme. ☐ No FAQ available.	☐ Additional information and support provided is provided on an ad hoc basis. *For example, the potential applicant needs to search for the appropriate scheme staff to contact for support.* ☐ FAQ shared in call dissemination. *For example, by email or on the scheme or department website.*	☐ Clear routes to information and support offered to all applicants. *For example, applicants are encouraged to email the scheme manager for more information about the scheme aims, rules, processes, and T&Cs.* ☐ Minimal personal details required to access additional information and support. *For example, applicants are not required to disclose a disability to access documents in alternate formats or with large print.* ☐ FAQ is updated and disseminated as new questions are raised to ensure all applicants have the same information.	☐ Information session or other events for the scheme are accessible. *For example, at an accessible venue or online with closed captions available.* ☐ Additional support like mentoring and networking are built into the scheme to improve outcomes for all applicants and/or specific groups who may not have access to mentors. ☐ Information and FAQ session hosted online, in-person, and/or in a recorded video.
Other actions for communication *List any other actions you are taking to improve equity and inclusivity in communications for your funding scheme that are not captured above.*	•	•	•	•

	Level of responsiveness			
Funding scheme area	Unaware	Sensitive	Responsive	Transformative
Communication level of responsiveness *Count the ticked boxes and other actions in each column above. The column(s) with the most ticked boxes and actions indicate the general level of responsiveness for this area.*	The current level of responsiveness for the scheme communication is: ☐ Unaware ☐ Sensitive ☐ Responsive ☐ Transformative			

	Level of responsiveness			
Funding scheme area	**Unaware**	**Sensitive**	**Responsive**	**Transformative**
Application: ***Applicant eligibility***	☐ Eligibility criteria does not provide flexibility for different career progression pathways. *For example, career breaks, part-time work, research-related service activities, responsibilities within research groups, non-academic professional experience etc.* ☐ Eligibility criteria include age and/or years since doctorate or other qualification. ☐ Eligibility criteria are reliant on past successes such as funding track record, prizes, memberships, current salary, and/or recognition in the field. ☐ Criteria related to publishing are not flexible to different types of research publications.	☐ Applicant eligibility is similar to a person specification for a job post, and focuses on skills and experience required to carry out the role or project. ☐ Reliance on past successes has been minimised for applicant eligibility. ☐ Criteria related to publishing are flexible to different types of traditional and non-traditional research publications.	☐ Eligibility criteria provide flexibility for different career progression pathways. *For example, career breaks, part-time work, research-related service activities, responsibilities within research groups, non-academic professional experience etc.* ☐ Both narrative and academic CVs are eligible.	☐ Applicant eligibility criteria have been designed with specific groups. ☐ Applicant eligibility criteria have been tailored for specific groups. ☐ Eligibility does not require a statement or letter from the Head of Department or mentor since some researchers may not have the existing relationships in place to confidently make these requests.

	Level of responsiveness			
Funding scheme area	**Unaware**	**Sensitive**	**Responsive**	**Transformative**
Application: ***Process and deadlines***	☐ Complexity and time requirement for the application process have not been considered. ☐ Application is hosted on an unfamiliar and/or complicated platform that is not user-friendly for most applicants. ☐ Deadlines are firm and/or are not planned with consideration about school holidays, religious observances, etc. ☐ Applicants cannot request a deadline extension.	☐ Complexity and time requirement for the application process have been considered. *For example, assessing the time required to apply in proportion to the amount of funding available.* ☐ Application is hosted on a platform that is commonly used across the University and may be familiar to most applicants. *For example, IRAMS.* ☐ Applicants can request a deadline extension.	☐ Actions have been taken to minimise the complexity and time requirement for the application process. *For example, gathering feedback on time spent applying so that process changes can be made*. ☐ Application platform has an accessibility statement and/or accessibility feature. ☐ Availability of accommodations and reasonable adjustments in the application process is clear to all applicants. *For example, an applicant can request to submit by email if an online platform does not have the accessibility features required.* ☐ Deadlines are planned around school holidays, religious observances, etc.	☐ Application process and /or deadlines have been designed in consultation with specific groups.

	Level of responsiveness			
Funding scheme area	Unaware	Sensitive	Responsive	Transformative
Application: ***Budgets and eligible costs*** *This section mentions accessibility project costs, which may include costs for reasonable adjustments for disabled researchers, parental leave costs, sick leave costs, differential visa costs associated with international travel, additional childcare costs for travel, additional carer costs for travel (for disabled staff with carers), and costs associated with security when travelling).*	☐ Budget template is complex and/or requires technical knowledge to complete. *For example, a large, detailed Excel spreadsheet without instructions.* ☐ Eligible costs are stated without information about if/how accessibility project costs may be supported by the scheme, applicant's department or other University services.	☐ Budget template is available with clear instructions. *For example, in Excel or IRAMS.* ☐ Eligible costs are stated with clear information about how to determine the eligibility of other costs. *For example, a recommendation to contact scheme staff with questions.*	☐ Budget guidance is available. *For example, guidance on budget development, costing, and/or examples are available by consulting guidance documents, signposting to resources, or contacting the research scheme staff, or employing department or division.* ☐ Information is provided on the process to secure additional funding for accessibility project costs and adjustments that are supported by the employing department or other services at the University.	☐ Budget template and/or guidance is developed in consultation with specific groups. ☐ Accessibility project costs and adjustments that are not supported by employing departments or other services at the University are stated as eligible costs for the scheme.
Other actions for application *List any other actions you are taking to improve equity and inclusivity in the application process for your funding scheme that are not captured above.*	•	•	•	•

Funding scheme area	Level of responsiveness			
	Unaware	**Sensitive**	**Responsive**	**Transformative**
Application level of responsiveness *Count the ticked boxes and other actions in each column above. The column(s) with the most ticked boxes and actions indicates the general level of responsiveness.*	The current level of responsiveness for the scheme application is: ☐ Unaware ☐ Sensitive ☐ Responsive ☐ Transformative			
Assessment: ***Criteria and scoring***	☐ Assessment criteria and/or scoring system not shared with applicants. ☐ Scoring system does not include comprehensive, clearly delineated definitions. *For example, score definitions differ by one or two words.* ☐ Assessment criteria and scoring system are not designed with consideration of different career paths and/or structural inequality. ☐ Assessment criteria value a limited set of contributions to research.	☐ Assessment criteria and/or scoring system are shared with applicants. ☐ Scoring system is designed to be clear and unambiguous for the decision-makers. *For example, system includes clearly delineated and comprehensive definitions for the scores*. ☐ Assessment criteria value a broad set of contributions to research.	☐ Assessment criteria balance past achievement and career trajectory with potential to deliver, including the skills and experience required to carry out the role or project. ☐ Assessment criteria encourage consideration of different career progression pathways. ☐ Decision makers are provided with guidance to review academic and narrative CVs.	☐ A non-identifiable description of the expertise and composition of the decision makers is shared with applicants. *For example, the panel typically includes academics and senior leaders from departments x, y, z.* ☐ Guidance on accounting for structural inequality is developed with experts on research funding, peer review, marginalised researchers, etc. ☐ Assessment criteria accounts for structural inequality, which may include applying mechanisms of positive action.

Funding scheme area	Level of responsiveness: Unaware	Sensitive	Responsive	Transformative
Assessment: ***Decision-making and feedback***	☐ Potential for bias is not addressed with decision makers. ☐ No feedback or unconstructive feedback provided to any applicants.	☐ Decision-makers are made aware of the potential for bias in funding decisions. ☐ Feedback is given to applicants upon request.	☐ All those involved in decision making complete training related to preventing bias in decision making. ☐ Chairs of selection panels receive training or guidance to prevent bias, reflect on the composition of the panel, and/or support the group with addressing bias as it arises in the process. ☐ The composition of the panel offers a diversity of perspectives and experiences. ☐ Summary feedback provided to short-listed applicants. ☐ Feedback is checked for personal/discriminatory remarks prior to dissemination.	☐ Accountability mechanisms are in place to hold chairs and/or decision makers accountable for preventing bias. ☐ Stakeholders with lived experience related to the applicant's project are included in the decision-making process. ☐ Success rates for the funding scheme are published.

	Level of responsiveness			
Funding scheme area	**Unaware**	**Sensitive**	**Responsive**	**Transformative**
Other actions for assessment *List any other actions you are taking to improve equity and inclusivity in the assessment process for your funding scheme that are not captured above.*	•	•	• We discuss how the Chair will address bias before the panel discussion begins.	•
Assessment level of responsiveness *Count the ticked boxes and other actions in each column above. The column(s) with the most ticked boxes and actions indicates the general level of responsiveness.*	The current level of responsiveness for the scheme assessment is: ☐ Unaware ☐ Sensitive ☐ Responsive ☐ Transformative			
Applicant reporting: ***Process and deadlines***	☐ The purpose of reporting is not explained. ☐ No flexibility for reporting deadlines. ☐ Reporting focuses exclusively on scheme priorities and outcomes.	☐ The purpose of reporting is explained. ☐ Reporting deadlines are shared at the outset with information about how to request an extension. ☐ Reporting focuses on the scheme priorities and outcomes as well as impact for the applicant. *For example, career progression, publications, follow-on funding, and more.*	☐ Reporting documents are shared at the outset with additional guidance and examples. ☐ Reporting includes evaluating outcomes and impact for wider communities and stakeholders.	☐ Frequency and/or deadlines for reporting are flexible based on the length and complexity of the project. ☐ Reporting includes evaluating different experiences of equity and inclusivity for team members and stakeholders. ☐ Reporting priorities, outcomes, and documents are designed in consultation with specific groups.

<table>
<tr><th></th><th colspan="4">Level of responsiveness</th></tr>
<tr><th>Funding scheme area</th><th>Unaware</th><th>Sensitive</th><th>Responsive</th><th>Transformative</th></tr>
<tr><td>Applicant reporting:
Document accessibility</td><td>☐ One report template available with no accessibility requirements met.</td><td>☐ Reporting documents meet web accessibility standards.</td><td>☐ Reporting documents are available in multiple formats to improve accessibility.
For example, online and in Word or PDF formats and/or with large print or Braille.</td><td>☐ Additional documentation can be included to report on the outcomes and impact of the project. For example, videos, art or creative materials, 1-pagers, etc.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Other actions for applicant reporting
List any other actions you are taking to improve equity and inclusivity in the applicant reporting process for your funding scheme that are not captured above.</td><td>•</td><td>•</td><td>•</td><td>•</td></tr>
<tr><td>Applicant reporting level of responsiveness
Count the number of ticked boxes in each column above. The column(s) with the most ticked boxes indicates the general level of responsiveness.</td><td colspan="4">The current level of responsiveness for the scheme applicant reporting is:
☐ Unaware
☐ Sensitive
☐ Responsive
☐ Transformative</td></tr>
<tr><td>Governance:
Policies</td><td>☐ No consideration of EDI in the design of the scheme's policies.

☐ No EDI statement created for the scheme.</td><td>☐ Scheme policies acknowledge EDI.

☐ The scheme has an internal EDI statement.</td><td>☐ Scheme policies are designed to advance EDI through the scheme.

☐ The scheme EDI statement is published.</td><td>☐ Policies include targets and goals for improving outcomes for specific groups.

☐ The scheme EDI statement is developed with specific groups</td></tr>
</table>

	Level of responsiveness			
Funding scheme area	**Unaware**	**Sensitive**	**Responsive**	**Transformative**
Governance: ***Evaluation and learning***	☐ No regular review of scheme policies or planned evaluation. ☐ No consideration of Public Sector Equality Duty when substantive changes are made to the scheme.	☐ Regular review of scheme policies and plans for evaluation. ☐ Consideration of Public Sector Equality Duty when substantive changes are made to the scheme.	☐ Review and evaluation include analysis of appropriate EDI data where available. ☐ EDI outcomes are one of the primary performance indicators in the review and evaluation of the scheme.	☐ Outcomes for specific groups are one of the primary performance indicators in the review and evaluation of the scheme. ☐ Scheme is reviewed in consultation with specific groups.
Other actions for governance *List any other actions you are taking to improve equity and inclusivity in the governance of your funding scheme that are not captured above.*	•	•	•	•
Governance level of responsiveness *Count the ticked boxes and other actions in each column above. The column(s) with the most ticked boxes indicates the general level of responsiveness.*	The current level of responsiveness for the scheme governance is: ☐ Unaware ☐ Sensitive ☐ Responsive ☐ Transformative			

Next steps

The purpose of completing the matrix is to give you a starting point for understanding what you are already doing to respond to equity and inclusivity with your funding scheme and where there is room for improvement. Here's what to do next:

1. **Identify priorities and actions for your scheme**. Review the good practice and goal setting section to learn about the actions you can take to strengthen your current efforts or advance to the next level of responsiveness on equity and inclusion. Identify priority areas, goals and actions that you want to propose. ***Note*****:** *Changes to the funding scheme should be made in alignment with existing review and approval processes and with participation from any relevant governance or academic committees.*
2. **Share the assessment results** and your proposed goals with the governance and/or academic committees who oversee your funding scheme. Review the decision making guidance for more information. Decide which goals and actions will be pursued.

- **Monitor your progress** and plan for the next assessment. Plan how you will monitor and evaluate any approved actions and be clear about roles and responsibilities. Aim to review your scheme annually to ensure there is time to propose, implement, monitor, and evaluate any changes made to your scheme. Use the annual review template to review your progress and see what is working and what can still be improved.

3. EDI Responsiveness Toolkit

Good practice and goal setting

Who is this for: Fund managers who are determining how to act on the results of the EDI Responsiveness Matrix for their internal funding scheme.

Instructions:

1. Review the results of your assessment for each funding scheme area. Compare the results to the good practice tables for each funding scheme area below. The good practices can be used to consider how to deepen your current level of responsiveness or move to the next level of responsiveness for equity and inclusivity.
2. Identify goals and the actions for your scheme in as many or as few funding scheme areas as you see fit. Use the suggested good practice as a guide.

   Tip: *If you want to try something that is not listed as good practice, note it in your actions as an idea for further exploration. These are not exhaustive lists and can be used to spark thinking about new practices.*

   Tip: *Think of this like a performance review for your scheme and keep your equity and inclusivity goals SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound).*
3. Use the goals and actions to form a proposal for the relevant governance and academic committees with your scheme.

   Tip: *If your scheme is connected to teams and decision makers in other divisions or sections of the University, you can bring your proposals together for an initial discussion. Try to identify shared priorities as well as department- or division-specific changes where possible. Share a unified proposal with the relevant decision makers.*

Design

What are the key actions and good practices to consider for design?

The lists below offer a starting point for improving responsiveness to equity and inclusivity in your funding scheme and are not exhaustive. The links provide related case studies, resources, guidance on specific topics.

2 Improving your scheme's design

Unaware to Sensitive	Sensitive to Responsive	Responsive to Transformative
• Clearly state and/or publish the rationale or aim for the scheme. • Meet with the scheme staff and/or committees to initiate a discussion about how to better consider equity and inclusivity in the design of the scheme. *Learn about different applicant experiences by reviewing the examples on p. 14 and the case study on p. 51 of the report on Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding.* • Align the outcomes of the scheme with the timelines and funding available for eligible projects.	• Integrate equity and inclusivity in the design of the scheme. *For example, (re)design using Universal Design principles to make your scheme user-friendly for the greatest number of people. Or consult with EDI staff during the (re)design of a scheme.* • Update the rationale or aim of the scheme to include specific statements about how equity and inclusivity are being actively addressed.	• Identify specific groups that could benefit from improved outcomes. *For example, this Wellcome case study highlights the importance of connecting with applicants who may feel disconnected from or unheard by funders.* • Update the rationale or aim of the scheme to include improving outcomes for those specific groups within an open call or designing the scheme specifically for those groups. • Design the scheme in consultation with specific groups. *Here's a case study from the charity sector.*
Identify design goals and actions for your scheme below: •		

Communication

What are the key actions and good practices to consider for communication?

The lists below offer a starting point for improving responsiveness to equity and inclusivity in your funding scheme and are not exhaustive. The links provide related resources and guidance on specific topics

3 Improving your scheme's communication

Unaware to Sensitive	Sensitive to Responsive	Responsive to Transformative
• Publish guidance, FAQ, and application documents in plain language from the outset of the call. *For example, review these 5 Steps for Plain Language or try out the Hemmingway app to improve clarity in your writing.* • Publish future funding dates to support advance planning. • Share the call openly and/or across a range of communications channels like email, social media, and Microsoft Teams channels. • Ensure your documents and websites meet web accessibility standards. *Learn more about Oxford's accessibility statement for OxWeb, SharePoint online accessibility guidance or consult with relevant communications staff.*	• Encourage specific groups to apply by creating appealing messaging. R*eview this guide from the charity sector on engagement with diverse communities or guidance on segmenting audiences.* • Create more accessible and inclusive documents. *For example, use the Microsoft Accessibility checker, create accessible PDFs, Word docs and/or PowerPoints.* • Write in plain language that is inclusive and unbiased. *For example, use the Gender Decoder or Oxfam's Inclusive Language Guide.* • Explain what reasonable adjustments or disability-related support can be offered to the applicant throughout the process and provide the contact information for the Staff Disability Advisor. *For example, look at the guidance offered by UKRI.* • Update and distribute the FAQ with new inquiries and the responses so that all applicants have the same information. • Provide examples and case studies that demonstrate the diversity of funded projects. • Offer clear routes to additional support for all applicants. *For example, provide a staff email address where applicants can direct questions.*	• Ask specific, target groups for feedback on communications or co-design the dissemination strategy. • Consult with research facilitators, EDI staff, and specific, target groups on the design of the guidance and application documents • Offer an information and FAQ session for all potential applicants. *For example, host an event online or at an accessible venue for an in-person event, or pre-record a presentation with key information about the scheme that can be accessed by all potential applicants.* • Offer mentoring and networking as part of the application development process to improve inclusion of researchers who may not have these supports. *Check out this case study on coaching and support or an example of access mentoring from the Royal Academy of Engineering.*

Identify communication goals and actions for your scheme below:
•

Application

What are the key actions and good practices to consider for improving the application process?
The tables below offer a starting point for improving responsiveness to equity and inclusivity in your funding scheme and are not exhaustive. The links provide related resources, case studies, and guidance on specific topics.

**The table below mentions accessibility costs, which are personal costs required by a researcher to complete a project such as child care or caregiving services, BSL interpreters, or assistive technologies, for example.*

4 Improving your scheme's application

Unaware to Sensitive	Sensitive to Responsive	Responsive to Transformative
• Make the full application available to applicants from the outset so that they can see what is expected before they apply. • Write applicant eligibility in terms similar to a job post by focusing on skills and experience required. *For example, describe the technical and management skills, and research experience required rather than requiring age and/or years since doctorate or another qualification.* • Include clear instructions on what needs to be included in the content of any reference letters or letters of support. • Consider hosting the application on an online platform like IRAMs that is already in use at the University so that applicants experience fewer learning curves and barriers. • Consider the complexity and accessibility of the application process. *Check out this Wellcome on reducing time and overall burden.* • Add clear, step-by-step instructions to your budget template.	• Take action to reduce the application complexity and time required. C*onsider this DORA checklist to simplify your application process.* • Provide opportunities for applicants to explain different career pathways. *For example, review this tool for researchers to explain research contributions beyond outputs and impact.* • Create eligibility criteria that is not based on years since doctorate or employment status. • Plan application deadlines around University dates of term and fixed closures as well as Oxfordshire school term and holiday dates • Clearly state the availability of accommodations in the application process. *For example, if an online platform does not have the required accessibility features, allow submission of a Word or PDF form by email.* • Provide budget or costing guidance. *For example, sharing that scheme staff can provide examples of typical costing on travel, per diems, etc.*	• Don't require applicants to provide a letter from the Head of Department or a mentor. Marginalised researchers may not have the relationships to make these requests. • Involve specific groups in the design of the application. • Be transparent with all applicants about where there is flexibility in the application process, if any. *For example, Cancer Research UK provides a variety of flexible research career supports to diversify their research community.* • View your application process as a way to help strengthen researcher capacity for future funding opportunities. *Offer constructive feedback and/or suggestions for other funds.* • Make accessibility costs eligible if they are not supported by the researcher's department or other services at the University. *For example, as of 2023, Science Foundation Ireland included personal support, childcare, companion travel, and assistive technology as eligible costs.*

Identify application goals and actions for your scheme below:
•

Assessment

What are the key actions and good practices to consider for improving assessment?

The lists below offer a starting point for improving responsiveness to equity and inclusivity in your funding scheme and are not exhaustive. The links provide related resources and guidance on specific topics.

5 Improving your scheme's assessment

Unaware to Sensitive	Sensitive to Responsive	Responsive to Transformative
• Publish the assessment criteria and scoring system so that applicants can see how they will be evaluated. • Ensure the assessment criteria values a broad set of contributions to research. *For example, use this DORA 1-pager on impact to include a variety of research outcomes and achievements.* • Design a clear, unambiguous scoring system to avoid bias and subjective interpretation from decision makers. *For example, avoid decimal scores and include comprehensive score definitions that differ by more than a few words.* • Remind decision makers about the importance of completing an effective review and reducing bias in the assessment process. *Before the review, watch these Royal Society videos on reducing bias and promoting equitable, inclusive group decisions.* • Provide feedback to applicants upon request.	• Create assessment criteria that balances past achievement and career trajectory with the potential to deliver. *Explore this guidance on assessing productivity.* • Assessment criteria encourage consideration of different career progression pathways. *Review Canadian guidance on assessing career breaks.* • Provide guidance on assessing academic and narrative CVs. *Read five recommendations for implementing narrative CVs in funding.* • Develop a panel that offers a diversity of perspectives and experiences. *Here's a case study on engaging early career reviewers.* • Provide decision makers with training or guidance to prevent bias in decision making. *For example, use Oxford's internal training available on CoSY or InRehearsal.* • Provide panel chairs with specific training or guidance. *Explain how they can prevent bias, reflect on the composition of the panel, and/or address bias as it arises in the process.*	• Be transparent about who will review the applications. *For example, include a non-identifiable description of the expertise represented on the panel.* • Create a code of conduct, controls and/or mitigations to ensure that the reviewers are making judgements solely against the criteria and required application materials. • Develop guidance on accounting for structural inequality in the assessment process. *For example, consult with experts on research funding, peer review, marginalised researchers, etc.* • Design the assessment criteria and process in consultation with specific groups. • Assessment criteria accounts for structural inequality. *For example, by applying mechanisms of positive action.* • Provide high quality feedback to short-listed applicants that encourages improvement and learning, which may include recommendations of other funds to apply to.

	• Give constructive feedback to short-listed applicants and remove personal or discriminatory remarks.	

Identify application goals and actions for your scheme below: •

Applicant reporting

What are the key actions and good practices to consider for improving applicant reporting?

The lists below offer a starting point for improving responsiveness to equity and inclusivity in your funding scheme and are not exhaustive. The links provide related resources and guidance on specific topics.

6 Improving applicant reporting

Unaware to Sensitive	Sensitive to Responsive	Responsive to Transformative
• Explain the purpose of reporting so that applicants are clear on why it's important and valuable to the scheme. • Share reporting deadlines from the outset with information about how to request an extension. • Balance the focus of reporting on the scheme priorities and outcomes as well as the impact for the researcher. *For example, include questions about career progression, follow-on funding, etc.* • Ensure reporting documents meet web accessibility standards. *Learn more about Oxford's accessibility statement for OxWeb, and SharePoint online accessibility guidance.*	• Share reporting documents from the outset with additional guidance and/or examples so that applicants can align their project content and monitoring and evaluation accordingly. • Include an evaluation of outcomes and impact for wider stakeholders in reporting. *For example, include stakeholders on review or governance committees.* • Provide reporting documents in multiple formats to improve accessibility. *For example, if an online portal does not have the required accessibility features, provide reporting documents in Word or PDF format to submit by email.*	• Design reporting priorities, outcomes, and documents in consultation with specific groups. • Offer flexibility on reporting deadlines and/or frequency based on the length and complexity of the project. • Include an evaluation of different experiences of equity and inclusivity for team members and stakeholders. • Allow applicants to submit additional documentation to further demonstrate the outcomes and impact of the project. *For example, videos, news links, art or creative materials, etc.*

Identify applicant reporting goals and actions for the scheme below: •

Governance

What are the key actions and good practices to consider for improving governance?
The lists below offer a starting point for improving responsiveness to equity and inclusivity in your funding scheme and are not exhaustive. The links provide related resources and guidance on specific topics.

7 Improving your scheme's governance

Unaware to Sensitive	Sensitive to Responsive	Responsive to Transformative
• Acknowledge EDI in scheme policies. • Create an internal EDI statement. • Regularly review the scheme policies and plan for evaluation. • Consider Public Sector Equality duty when substantive changes are made to the scheme.	• Design scheme policies to advance EDI. • Publish the scheme's EDI statement. • Analyse EDI data where available when the scheme is reviewed and evaluated. • Include EDI-related outcomes as primary indicators of the scheme's performance.	• Include targets and goals for improving outcomes for specific groups in scheme policies. • Develop the scheme EDI statement with specific groups. • Include outcomes for specific groups as primary indicators of the scheme's performance. • Review and evaluate the scheme in consultation with specific groups.
Identify governance goals and actions for the scheme below: •		

Key resources and case studies

Wellcome Equitable Funding Practice Library: Use this resource to improve a specific phase or practice for your scheme. Useful case studies are listed below:

- Reducing application time and overall burden
- Coaching and support
- Applicant feedback
- Early career reviewers

Reformscape and Project TARA: Use these resources from DORA (the Declaration on Research Assessment) if you want to improve your assessment processes.

Applications of Universal Design by DO-IT: Includes an overview of universal design principles and resources, tutorials for application in Higher Education.

Decision making guidance

Who is this for: fund managers and governance and/or academic committees who are making decisions about what goals and actions to pursue for improving equity and inclusivity in their funding scheme.

Fund managers are encouraged to share the results of the scheme assessment with their committees and decide on goals and actions for the scheme. Changes to your funding scheme should be made in alignment with existing review and approval processes. The table below outlines options to support effective decision making with your committee about each funding scheme area (design, communications, application, assessment, governance) as needed.

Decision about the funding scheme area	Potential next steps based on the decision
Advance to higher level of equity and inclusivity	• Proposed goals and actions that advance the level of equity and inclusion for the funding scheme area are approved. • Practices that may be preventing equity and inclusion will be actively improved or stopped. • The funding scheme will advance the area's current level of equity and inclusivity.
Deepen current level of equity and inclusivity	• Proposed goals and actions that strengthen the current level of equity and inclusion for the funding scheme area are approved. • Proposed goals and actions that increase the level of equity and inclusion for the area are not approved. • The funding scheme will deepen commitments and strengthen actions for the area's current level of equity and inclusivity.
Further exploration required	• Further information and/or evidence is required to decide on the proposed goals and actions identified for the funding scheme area • Any existing practices to support equity and inclusion in that area will continue for now. • Practices that may be preventing equity and inclusion in that area will not be addressed for now. • The funding scheme area will remain at its current level of equity and inclusivity until further information and evidence is provided.
Do not progress	• Proposed goals and actions in the funding scheme area are not approved. • Any existing practices to support equity and inclusion in that area will continue. • Practices that may be preventing equity and inclusion in that area will not be addressed. • The funding scheme area will remain at its current level of equity and inclusivity and may risk falling behind.

Annual review template

Who is this for: fund managers who are evaluating progress on the goals and actions identified in the last assessment of equity and inclusivity for their internal funding scheme.

Introduction

Name of the fund assessed:
Name and position of assessor:
Date of last assessment:
Date of the new assessment:

Annual review

Please refer to the last assessment of your scheme to answer the questions below.

1. **Provide a progress update on the goals and actions identified for each relevant funding scheme area (design, communications, application, assessment, and governance) in your last assessment.** ***You may include successes, lessons and challenges. You may also describe any new goals or actions that were not captured in the last assessment***.

2. **Share any evidence that demonstrates how your funding scheme has improved responsiveness to equity and inclusivity since your last assessment.** ***For example: researcher feedback, applicant demographic data, success rates, etc***.

3. **Share the most significant barriers you are facing in your efforts to address equity and inclusivity in your funding scheme.**

4. **Briefly describe any changes for your funding scheme that require support or action from the University or an external funder.**

Please use the matrix to re-assess your scheme before answering the question below.

5. **Based on the results of your re-assessment, please provide a brief update on the levels of responsiveness for your funding scheme.**
   You may describe why the responsiveness of your funding scheme has or has not changed, what has changed, and why.

Tip*: You can now use your re-assessment to update existing goals or identify new ones.*