

Impact Assessment for: UK Research Partnership Investment Fund (UKRPIF)

Main Contact: Stephanie Lynch

Key impacts identified

1. This review considers how the HEFCE UKRPIF has the potential to impact the sector. The most significant impact is:
 - a. **Regulatory impact.** HEFCE has taken steps to ensure the burden of the competitive bidding exercise remains proportionate to outcomes and potential benefits to the sector. The review will provide assurance that the UKRPIF fund allocation is transparent and based on evidence. The measures taken in the development of the criteria and proposed approach for submission determine that this this project has low regulatory impact.

Links to other policies or impact assessments

2. Sector impact assessment was initially undertaken in 2012 when the fund was first launched.

At what stage of the development process was this assessment undertaken?

3. An initial impact assessment was completed when UKRPIF was launched in 2012 and has been operational over four rounds of UKRPIF. It has been reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the document remains current. However, the initial assessment was undertaken when UKRPIF was a less stable funding stream, (allocations were made by BEIS on a year by year basis). With allocations confirmed for both a fifth and sixth round of funding, a more fundamental review of the previous impact assessment was considered necessary. In December 2015, HEFCE launched the fifth round relating to funding of up to £200 million available to 2020, with a further £200m available to 2021.

Further Information

For further information please contact Stephanie Lynch, Higher Education Policy Adviser, s.lynch@hefce.ac.uk or 0117 931 7048.

Further information is also available from our website
<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/rsrch/ukrpif/>

Approval

Signed by:

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David Sweeney

Director - Research, Education & Knowledge Exchange

Date: 8 March 2017

Background

4. The UKRPIF is a competitive funding initiative open to UK HEIs with a significant track record of research excellence in the relevant disciplines. It was developed to support large-scale research capital projects that could attract substantial co-investment from private sources.
5. Successful institutions use the UKRPIF and the connected co-investment monies for capital projects which build on the research excellence in the higher education sector.
6. The objectives of the fund are to:
 - enhance the research facilities of HEIs undertaking world-leading research
 - encourage strategic partnerships between HEIs and other organisations active in research
 - stimulate additional investment in higher education research
 - strengthen the contribution of the research base to economic growth.
7. An independent assessment panel chaired by Peter Saraga, the former Vice-President of the Royal Academy of Engineering and a former HEFCE Board member, assesses the bids. HEFCE provides information to the panel to help inform its decisions. The assessment panel makes recommendations to the HEFCE Board to support the projects that will make best use of public funding.

Equality impact assessment

8. There is no evidence to show that UKRPIF process will affect particular groups of people in relation to equality and diversity. HEFCE arrived at this judgement by taking into account the following:
 - a. Submissions to the process will be made by each institution seeking funding, and cannot be applied for by individual researchers or HEI staff. Therefore this process protects against direct discrimination and adheres to the protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act.
 - b. Whilst developing the funding criteria HEFCE considered any indirect discrimination impacts and concluded that it did not discriminate against any particular groups.
 - c. Institutions who receive UKRPIF funding are individually subject to implementing their own equality legislation.

Privacy impact assessment

9. No data or information about individuals will be requested as part of the UKRPIF process. Where UKRPIF submissions include personal data¹ this would be redacted before public release of submissions and any public release would be subject to consideration of the principles of freedom of information disclosure.
10. In order to administer panel meetings HEFCE may request panel members' contact details and dietary information. This information will only be used as necessary for administering the UKRPIF fund and will be deleted once no longer required.

Impact assessment on other areas

Regulatory impact assessment

11. We have considered the burden associated with the submission in relation to the level of the funding available. UKRPIF is a two stage bidding process. A lighter touch, 'expression of interest' operates before institutions are invited to submit a more comprehensive full bid proposal.
12. **Transparency and consistency.** The following steps were taken to ensure transparent and consistent communication:
 - a. The review process is clearly presented in the bidding documentation published on the HEFCE website, ensuring that the sector have a clear understanding of the process and deadlines.
 - b. The review criteria are outlined in the UKRPIF guidance so that institutions' have a clear understanding of what is required in order to make a submission.
 - c. A list of successful projects appear on the HEFCE website, detailing the amount of money awarded to projects and along with a brief description of the projects' scope.
13. **Financial impact.** UKRPIF funding has been confirmed until 2021. The fund represents an opportunity for individual institutions to access considerable amounts of capital funding in each round, currently between £10 million and £50 million per project.
14. **Managerial impact.** UKRPIF submissions will require institutional staff time. In order to reduce burden we have implemented a two stage bidding process. Institutions are initially asked to submit an expression of interest. All proposals that are invited to submit a full bid proposal must have at least a 50 per cent chance of success before they are invited to proceed further in the competition.

¹ For example the name, job title and email address of the individual making the UKRPIF submission

15. Institutions are encouraged to speak to our institutional teams and the UKRPIF team for advice before making a submission. This further reduces the risk of institutions carrying out unnecessary work.

Student interest and student choice impact assessment

16. The UKRPIF has the potential to have an indirect impact on students. Funding is primarily intended to allow institutions to enhance the research facilities where HEIs are undertaking world-leading research. This funding will play a positive role enhancing the undergraduate and postgraduate student experience by providing opportunities for students to study in world class facilities and to work in collaboration with industry and other universities.