



# Science and Technology Committee

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From Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Chair

Sir Mark Walport  
Chief Executive  
UKRI  
Polaris House  
Swindon. SN2 1FL

9 September 2019

Dear Sir Mark,

## **Impact of science funding policy on equality, diversity, inclusion and accessibility**

You may be aware that my Committee has undertaken to hold an inquiry into the impact of science funding policy on equality, diversity, inclusion and accessibility following our public call for inquiry suggestions last year.

This issue was proposed by Professor Rachel Oliver, Professor of Materials Science, University of Cambridge, with the support of over 200 others. In her pitch she proposed that we gather data on how funding was allocated to identify any biases in funding processes. An inquiry could then explore the extent to which funding, policies, procedures and cultures were affecting diversity in science, and establish why certain funding streams tended to improve or limit diversity.

To help the Committee frame this inquiry we are therefore seeking data and information from UKRI. Specifically:

1. Which UK bodies annually disburse more than £40 million public funding to either academia or industry for the purpose of research in science, technology, engineering, maths and medicine (STEMM), either as grants, fellowships or research contracts?
2. What data pertaining to protected characteristics<sup>1</sup> of applicants for funding do funding agencies collect and hold?
3. For funding agencies that gather data relating to protected characteristics, for each of the last five years (or a shorter period if 5-year data is unavailable):
  - i. How does the number and proportion of applications received by the funding agency vary with each protected characteristic?
  - ii. How does the success rate for all funding types (broken down by principal investigator and co-investigator, where appropriate) vary with each protected characteristic?

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by the Equality Act 2010: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation

- iii. How does the total amount of funding awarded vary with each protected characteristic?

In answering question 3, the following points should be addressed:

- a. Breakdown by value of funding awarded, e.g. small: <£200k, medium: £200k to £1m, large: £1m to £5m, and very large >£5m.
  - b. Breakdown by the type of funding, e.g. responsive mode/investigator initiated, managed/targeted calls, continuation funding, and fellowships.
  - c. For funding awards where applications involve multiple stages, the breakdown at each stage in the application process should be considered.
  - d. Where a funder has a portfolio which is grouped into themes (e.g. Artificial Intelligence, UKRI Priority Outcomes), what is the breakdown by theme?
4. For all funding agencies, in terms of the collection of detailed data regarding protected characteristics:
    - a. What data are published regularly, and with what frequency?
    - b. What are the barriers to collecting detailed data?
    - c. What are the barriers to releasing detailed data?
    - d. What are the barriers to analysing this data year-on-year?
  5. For cases where diversity data is regularly analysed, if disparities in the award of funding between people with different protected characteristics are found, how do funding agencies address them:
    - a. What formal policies are in place to act on such disparities?
    - b. Where are these policies published?
    - c. What evidence is there that these policies are effective in increasing diversity?
    - d. How are action plans arising from these formal policies put in place, implemented and subsequently monitored?
  6. If funding processes include stages that occur before a formal application is submitted for consideration, how are these processes managed/supported and evaluated by the funding agency, in terms of equality, diversity, inclusion and accessibility?
  7. For members of any underrepresented groups applying for funding:
    - a. What support is offered pre-award, in particular for those who qualify as under-represented?
    - b. How are grants advertised? Is any marketing targeted at specific groups?

8. In the evaluation of funding applications:
  - a. How are the scores awarded by reviewers in the evaluation of grant applications influenced by particular protected characteristics?
  - b. What steps are taken to minimise both conscious and unconscious bias in those evaluating applications?
  - c. What steps are taken to encourage best practice?
  - d. Is there evidence that current evaluation processes create systems-based bias and disadvantage in the evaluation of funding applications?
  - e. What approaches are used to ensure that evaluation of funding is transparent?
  - f. How are evaluation processes assessed and improved, in the light of international best practice and evidence based policy development?
  
9. What policies do funding agencies have in place to address complaints about discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics in the evaluation process?
  - a. If such policies exist, where are they published and are they accessible to applicants?

I would be grateful if you could use the same numbering in responding to each question. If there is anything in addition to the above that you would like to provide you would be welcome to do so.

I would be grateful for your response to this letter by Monday 14 October. Should this not be possible then please do get in touch with the Clerk of the Committee, Danielle Nash ([nashd@parliament.uk](mailto:nashd@parliament.uk)), to discuss when UKRI will be able to provide such information. I will be publishing this letter on my Committee's website today.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norman Lamb', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP**  
*Chair*