

Action to improve equity and inclusivity in research funding



UNIVERSITY OF
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The challenge

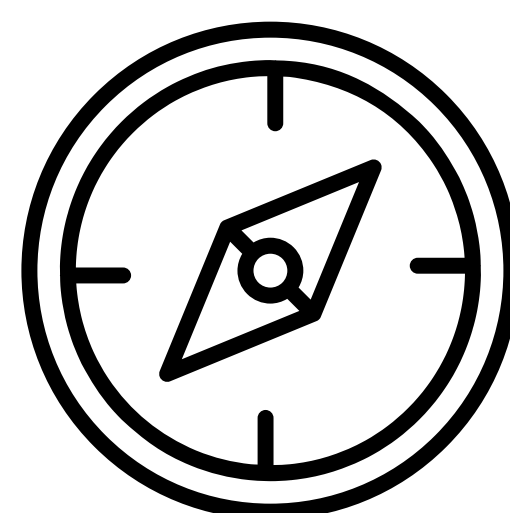
Equitable access to research funding is critical to ensuring that researchers have the opportunity to develop their ideas, contribute to research excellence and progress their careers.



Data show that women, racially minoritised, and/or disabled researchers, and researchers who are LGBTQIA+ apply for funding at lower rates than their non-marginalised counterparts and their applications are less likely to result in funding awards.

Our approach

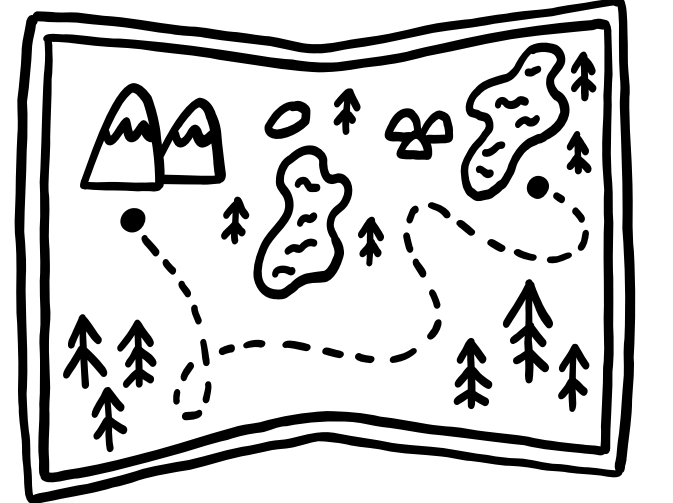
The Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding project was set out to identify the barriers to securing research funding experienced by researchers in marginalised groups and to propose solutions.



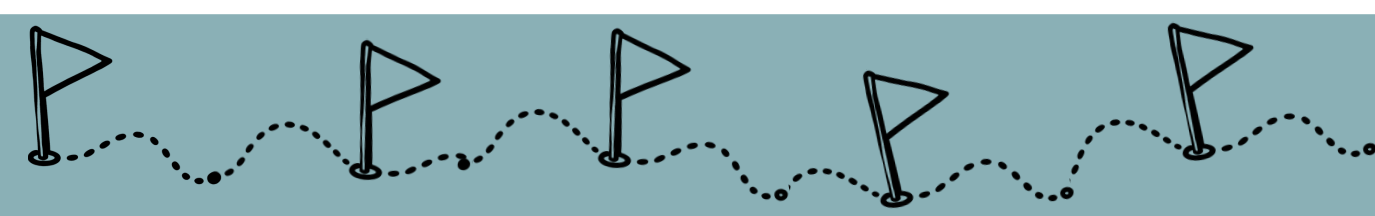
The approach is to accelerate change by delivering defined projects and longer-term programmes through institutional and coordinated sector-wide action.

Key steps

- Publication of the *Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding: Barriers and Delivering Change* report.
- Development of the *Oxford Action Plan for Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding* through extensive consultation with colleagues across the University.
- Formation of a cross-institutional *Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding Working Group* to deliver the Oxford Action Plan with staff offering varied functional expertise.
- Engagement of 30+ Universities and 11 funders, which led to 60+ delegates meeting in Feb 2024 as the *Equity and Inclusivity in Research Funding 'Forum'*.
- Publication of a public joint statement from the 'Forum' in 2024.
- Circulation of a progress report on the Oxford Action Plan in 2026.



Taking action



The Oxford Action Plan has been translated into a programme of five objectives to deliver practical results, including outputs, case studies, and resources to inspire further change across the sector.

Resources marked with *** can be downloaded for use by your organisation. Scan the QR code to learn more!



1 Ensure equitable access to research funding.

*****EDI Responsiveness Matrix and Toolkit:** guides self-assessment by fund managers, professional staff, and funding committees to improve equitable and inclusive funding practices.

Map of Internal Funds: a searchable map to improve visibility and access for internal funding schemes at Oxford.

Research Applications Library: shares a collection of successful external grant applications contributed by Oxford PIs.

2 Gather and analyse data on the disparities in the characteristics of those applying for and securing research funding.

John Fell Fund (JFF) Equalities Analysis: collaboration across the research office and HR linked JFF award funding data with EDI data to analyse application success rates and award values across key characteristics, including legal sex, ethnicity, and age band. The analysis enables comparison of JFF outcomes with the fund's strategic objectives and benchmarking against external funders that use similar classifications.

3 Inclusive administration of internal funding.

Medical Sciences Division Pump-Priming Scheme: the Medical Sciences Division Internal Fund Pump-Priming Scheme used the EDI Responsiveness Matrix and Toolkit to review the equity and inclusivity of the scheme. The review identified opportunities to improve accessibility and transparency for the scheme's communication, application, assessment and reporting.

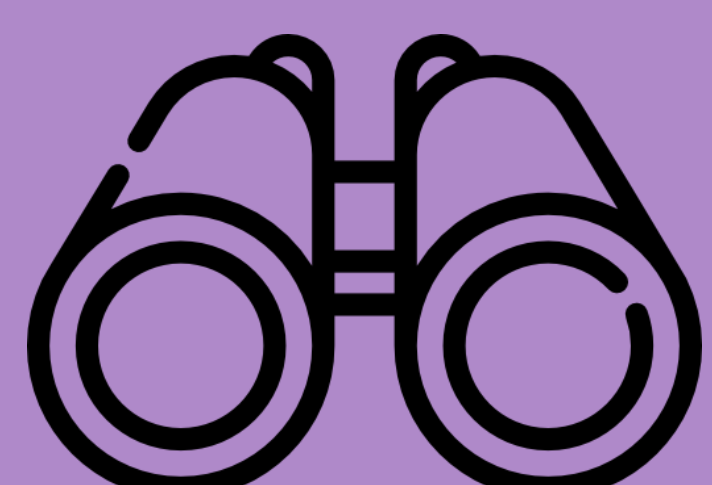
4 Identified training needs are met.

Inclusive Leadership Programme module on Breaking Barriers and Inclusive Cultures of Development: this multi-day leadership programme runs for approximately 70 academics and professional services leads per year. In 2026, the programme included a new module to explore inclusive approaches for academics to support the professional development and career progression of research team members.

5 Convene sector-wide discussions to identify collaborative approaches for addressing barriers to equitable funding access.

Universities and funders from the 'Forum' have collaborated in working groups to develop practical resources and guidance that addresses priority areas.

- Led by King's College London, and the Universities of Edinburgh and Nottingham, the *****Framework for Positive Action in Research Funding and Careers** was created to build confidence and capacity around developing and delivering positive action initiatives related to research funding at HEI and funder level.
- Led by the Universities of Birmingham, Nottingham and York, *****Sector Guidelines and Resources for EDI in Demand Management** were designed to help organisations address inequalities in funding selection processes.



What's next? Coordinated, sector-wide action is needed now more than ever.

The higher education sector faces significant financial pressures. We need to ensure that decisions about financial sustainability preserve diversity and inclusion. The sector-wide working groups and the 'Forum' will reconvene to strengthen our collaboration. Working together, we can better anticipate, prepare, and provide for all groups and individuals to contribute and be represented in the sector's successful future.

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