

Commercial Interchange Programme – Frequently Asked Questions

What is the commercial interchange programme?

The scheme is designed to facilitate a two way commercial skills and knowledge exchange via a series of informal and formal options. The options include:

- **Mutual exchange:** the exchange of people for broadly the same length of time with no money changing hands. This could include formal links between respective graduate schemes. Participants will continue to be funded by their parent organisation;
- **Paid secondments:** bringing people into the Cabinet Office on a per project basis at civil service rates, or sending civil servants out;
- **Placements:** Career development opportunities for up to 3 months with the individual continuing to be funded by their parent organisation.

What skills will you focus on?

The Commercial Interchange Programme will give government staff opportunities to develop their skills around commercial/ business issues including:

- Business modelling/mergers and acquisitions
- Corporate finance and financial modelling
- Business transformation and business case development
- Complex, high level negotiations.

How will the commercial organisations benefit from the programme?

The programme has a number of benefits which include:

- participating organisations will benefit by their own staff having a better understanding of government as a customer.
- an increase in the commercial skills/understanding of government staff dealing with suppliers

How will the Civil Service Nationality rules be applied?

For secondments funded by Cabinet Office candidates must be a British Citizen, Citizen of the Commonwealth or an EC National. Swiss nationals and some Turkish nationals are also eligible. Nationals of specified Member States of the European Free Trade Area will also be eligible, together with certain members of their families. If there are any doubts about whether candidates satisfy the nationality please contact the Cabinet Office Recruitment Team on 020 7276 6220. For all secondments Cabinet Office must be satisfied that foreign nationals have a legal entitlement to work in the UK

How long will the scheme be open for?

Indefinitely. However should the programme attract high volumes of interest the Cabinet Office reserves the right to withdraw the opportunity to express an interest. The programme will be continually reviewed and re-opened if the Cabinet Office needs change or there is greater capacity to process additional interest.

What is the cost of running the programme?

Those organisations wishing to participate in mutual exchanges and placements will incur no extra costs in addition to employer costs. Commercial organisations will pay their staff salaries for the duration of the secondment. Likewise Government will continue to pay the salaries of the civil servants seconded to the commercial organisations. Assessing costs will be one of the areas the programme will continue to evaluate.

How will the participating organisations be selected?

Identifying corporate organisations to participate will be conducted in a transparent, fair, and consistent manner. It is important for the success of the scheme that the organisations selected meet some standard criteria which is set out in our “organisation selection criteria” document.

Is this scheme only open to large existing government suppliers?

No. The scheme welcomes expressions of interest from any commercial organisation that would like to benefit from the interchange and two way skills/knowledge exchange.

Will participating in the programme give them an advantage when they bid for future government work?

No. The government’s procurement rules are quite clear that no company should be given special treatment and none of the interchanges will be related to any specific procurement exercise where that company was/is involved.

How will any potential conflict of interests be managed and dealt with?

All parties will be required to complete their risk assessment protocols to identify any potential conflicts of interest. Individuals will not be permitted to work on any projects in which their organisations are directly involved and secondees will be asked to sign a declaration. This will be regularly assessed and where there is any doubt the secondment assignment will be revised and mitigating action taken to address the risk. Individuals will also be subject to the requirements of the Civil Service Code, HR code and the Official Secrets Act.

Will individuals be subject security checks?

Yes. All secondments and mutual exchanges will be subject to the satisfactory completion of our security enquiries.

What steps are in place to ensure organisations don’t have inappropriate access to government confidential information?

All staff coming into the Cabinet Office on secondment will sign a declaration that any information they are privy to in the course of their posting is confidential and is not to be divulged or misused. Cabinet Office will also ensure secondees do not have access to any sensitive information about competitors or future procurement plans.