

WOMEN'S BUSINESS COUNCIL – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Objective

To advise Ministers on how to maximise women's contribution to our future economic growth. This has enormous potential given that the aggregate economic impact of helping all women who want a job which reflects their qualifications could be as great as fifteen to twenty one billion pounds¹.

In particular the Women's Business Council will advise Ministers by:

- Identifying the barriers and challenges that prevent women from achieving their economic potential;
- Identifying means of overcoming these obstacles;
- Generating proposals for government, business and others to maximise women's contribution to economic growth ; and
- Acting as a sounding board on the impact of proposed policy announcements on women in business.

Overview

The Council is an informal advisory group, comprising 10 women and men from business with an independent Chair. It will formulate recommendations which will help inform Government's growth strategy, assist in the development and delivery of specific policies and programmes relevant to women, and support business to maximise women's contribution. To assist them, Home Office (Government Equalities Office) will provide the Council with secretariat support and meeting facilities. Research/analysis support will be provided by Home Office, other Government Departments and external sources where appropriate.

The council is a working group and as such its purpose does not include engaging with the media to promote its activities or the agenda of women in business.

The Council will be established for one year initially, beginning April 2012. It will meet six times. The Council will agree its programme of work with the Home Secretary and provide brief reports on its activities to the Home Secretary after each meeting. Its conclusions will be presented to Government in April 2013. The Council will also advise the relevant Ministers across government on the impact of their policies and programmes on women in business as and when necessary.

Role of Chair

The Women's Business Council Chair must have relevant expertise. They will be appointed based on willingness and capacity, and will be responsible for signing off the Council's minutes and papers. They will be accountable for ensuring the delivery of the Council's work and outcomes, including reporting on progress to Ministers. The Chair will be expected to commit to the role for 12 months to ensure continuity and consistency.

¹ This figure has been generated by an internal analysis conducted by GEO.

Specific roles include:

- Advising Ministers on the membership of the Council and its remit;
- Agreeing the Council's work programme and any priorities;
- Convening meetings;
- Identifying and engaging relevant stakeholders; and
- Steering the secretariat on the work to be undertaken on behalf of the Council.

The role will explicitly not include media engagement.

Women's Business Council membership

Membership is to be in discussion and agreement between Ministers and the Chair of the Women's Business Council, but members should fulfil one or both of the following criteria:

- Successful female and male entrepreneurs with recent experience of setting up and/or managing a business;
- Senior women and men from the corporate world.

The Council may invite representatives from government, statutory agencies, business and academia to attend all or part of meetings as guests or observers.

Members of the Women's Business Council will be expected to commit to the group for 12 months.

The Women's Business Council Chair and Ministers reserve the right to refuse or discontinue membership of any individual or organisation where there is evidence that they do not support the aims and objectives of the Council.

Women's Business Council Group Operating Conditions

- Members are required to support and advance the Women's Business Council's aims and adhere to its Terms of Reference.
- While attending meetings and forums on behalf of the Women's Business Council, members must publicly convey only the agreed messages and work in liaison with Home Office Press Office.
- While attending meetings and forums in a personal capacity, members must not claim to be representing the Women's Business Council.
- Members are expected to respond and contribute to the work of the group, both at and between meetings.

Role of Secretariat

The GEO secretariat will co-ordinate and service regular Women's Business Council meetings, in consultation with the Chair, including:

- The production of meeting agenda and papers;
- Informing members of meeting details;
- The production of meeting minutes;
- Ensuring non-duplication of work with other councils/groups;
- Facilitation of work outcomes;
- Organising and attending a pre-meeting directly before the full meeting with the Chair, where necessary, to confirm meeting proceedings.

- Within given resources, facilitate and attend any interim working meetings convened to deliver the work programme;
- Maintaining an up to date Women's Business Council membership contact list;
- Circulating any relevant information related to the work of the Council as necessary in between meetings;
- Support the Chair to maintain a regular overview of GEO work on women's contribution to future economic growth;

Budget

The Chair and Members will be unpaid, but all reasonable expenses will be met.