

UK Futures Programme Competition brief

Workplace solutions to the gender pay and opportunity gap

*How can innovations to standard patterns of work
and job design benefit lower paid workers?*

May 2015

The UK Futures Programme – competition brief:

Workplace solutions to the gender pay and opportunity gap

Summary

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) is inviting proposals from employers and partners to trial innovations in good job design for lower paid women workers. These are women earning around £10 per hour (equivalent to £1,625 per month or £19,500 per annum full time) or less – in the cleaning, commercial catering and adult social care industries and occupations.

The evidence suggests that businesses have real gains to make through good job design that values and supports frontline workers better. It helps reduce staff turnover and cut costs. It improves staff morale and wellbeing with knock-on effects on reduced absenteeism and greater commitment. It enables a focus on productivity, a quality service offer and reputational gains in competitive markets. At UKCES we also believe that if we can start to make improvements for lower paid women this will be an important contribution to tackling gender inequality in the economy.

With this competition we are opening the space for employers to lead on and pilot innovative ideas. We are looking for projects with a commitment to the objectives of the UK Futures Programme (see [‘The UK Futures Programme: an introduction’](#) and accompanying guidance for applicants (see end)).

In return UKCES is offering co-investment of financial support, of up to £180,000 per project, and the contribution of expertise and access to networks. We are seeking to support projects for a period of up to 12 months. This is an opportunity for businesses to develop new ways of working with both business and personal benefits for leaders and workers.

This document outlines the nature of this competition. It should be read alongside accompanying guidance for applicants (see end of this brief).

The deadline for submission of proposals is midday on Monday 13 July 2015.

The Challenge

Women make up 50.3 per cent of the UK’s population of working age (16-64) and 47 per cent of those in work.ⁱ But even in 2015 women do not enjoy an equal share of opportunities in and outcomes from the labour market. Latest data shows that the gender pay gap among all employees, full and part time, remains at 19 per cent.ⁱⁱ Women dominate in lower paid jobs, making up 64 per cent of the low paid workforce.ⁱⁱⁱ Women’s experience in work contrasts with their superior achievements throughout education.

It has been estimated that failing to make the most of our female talent costs the UK economy between £15 billion and £23 billion annually.^{iv} Correcting this failure could add 1.3-

2.0 per cent to GDP every year. Employers recognise how gender inequality squanders talent and incurs costs for their businesses.^v Although legislation has made progress and policy developments will continue to be vital, we need a new emphasis that recognises the vital leadership role of employers.^{vi vii}

The challenges around gender inequality are complex. Women struggle to make in-roads into male dominated occupations in IT and construction for example. Too few women make it to managerial positions. Too many women get stuck in low paid, poorly valued, part time jobs because they need to combine work and family responsibilities. There are many initiatives seeking to address some of these important problems but, in keeping with the innovative nature of the UK Futures Programme, UKCES is focusing this competition on enhancing opportunities for women and their employers in parts of the economy where they make up a large share of a relatively low paid workforce. A description of the relevant challenges from a business perspective is as follows:

- *Low pay and status can create difficulties recruiting and retaining good staff.* Low pay can combine with insecurity of hours or tenure to reduce the attraction of important jobs to good workers and heighten turnover rates.
- *Working patterns can limit the talent pool.* Prevailing models of working hours and patterns can limit the options for women with family/caring responsibilities. Businesses are losing out on opportunities to develop talented women in frontline or more senior supervisory or management roles who could be a real long term business and economic asset.

The Invitation

The UK Futures Programme invites proposals to pilot innovations in designing good jobs for women in lower paid roles in cleaning, commercial catering and adult social care (residential/home-care/personal assistants).

The proposals we seek are about focusing on improving the content and conditions of the jobs frontline workers are doing right now, so enhancing wellbeing and productivity. This means we are not looking to progression routes as the answer, albeit recognising that visible opportunities for achieving variety or progression in future might be part of the mix of good job design.

We expect that innovations are likely to challenge fixed ideas about a job, its content and the way it should be done, as well as ideas about the person doing it. Attention to job design can help make tasks, roles and skills more visible and valued and our interest is in exploring how this can help at the lower end of the labour market. How innovations might improve the position for women returning to work after a period of absence, typically for maternity and childcare reasons, and

also for older female workers (those over the age of 40) is of particular interest to us.

We anticipate that proposals are likely to incorporate elements of the core features below, but we welcome other innovative ideas and characteristics.

Flexible job design can improve opportunities for workers who need to combine paid work with out-of-work responsibilities; better use and value the talents of all; raise staff wellbeing; and increase organisational productivity. Flexible job design encompasses:

(1) *Embracing and embedding diverse working patterns as standard* (eg hours of work, but also ways of working and team structures; extending to ideas about career continuity);

(2) *Designing job content for enrichment* so that, for example, a greater range of tasks and responsibilities, such as self-rostering, can be included within a role allowing for variety and staff development in different skill areas.

(3) *Building in workers' own knowledge, talents and decision making capabilities* on how best to get the job done, maximise productive work and achieve organisational goals. This implies a strong role for effective employee engagement that builds respect, trust and capacity to adapt the way things are done as understanding, experience, context, needs and preferences evolve.

High quality part time jobs: Not all flexible work is part time; nor is all part time work flexible. We are interested in how attention to the content, status and rewards of part time roles can address the financial and non-financial disadvantages often experienced by part timers. Our focus is on lower paid women but good part time roles throughout the organisational hierarchy are relevant to making future opportunities visible as part of the mix in good job design for frontline workers.

A focus on wellbeing at work: Evidence indicates that people who achieve good standards of wellbeing at work are likely to be more creative, more loyal, more productive, and provide better customer satisfaction through their work.^{viii} We are interested in how an organisational culture around fostering employee wellbeing can be embedded with associated initiatives that could be both formal and informal. Practical examples include employer support to staff needing to find childcare or elder care through local networking systems; provision of training and development opportunities; and financial and non-financial means for reinforcing to staff that they are valued.

The main outcomes and success measures from the innovations we seek are around:

1. *Progress towards lifting female workers, particularly those over the age of 40, out of low pay.* Providers of care, cleaning and catering services face particularly price competitive markets where scope for raising pay may be limited in the short term. The Potential for Impact section of the application form allows applicants to articulate how their intended activity might be expected to raise pay in the longer term and the validity of the steps towards it.
2. *Positive outcomes for business.* Examples include increased productivity, cost savings through more efficient work

organisation, reduced wastage, improved staff satisfaction and motivation, improved customer satisfaction and feedback.

Proposals must set out the timescale over which benefits to employers and employees can reasonably be expected to appear. A logic chain or theory of change can help map the journey between resources/actions, and outcomes/impact over time (logic chains are described in the Potential for Impact section of the [UK Futures Programme: Guidance documents](#)). Since impacts on, for example, earnings and profits may accrue in time after the project has completed, longer term evaluation and tracking with reference to a logic chain could provide vital evidence of success. We will work with projects to plan whether and how longer term evaluation could take place.

Eligibility

The UK Futures Programme invites proposals from:

- Employers or groups of employers in the cleaning, commercial catering and adult social care industries employing women cleaners, caterers and adult social carers who earn around £10 per hour or less.
- Intermediary organisations (such as universities, research centres, recruitment agencies or civil society organisations) with innovative proposals which can be tested with cleaning, catering and adult social care workers who earn no more than around £10 per hour.
- Partnerships between commissioners and providers of cleaning, catering and adult social care services recognising that the contracting relationship is an important element of the business landscape in these areas.

We will support applications for development, piloting and scaling of solutions as described in our guidance documents.

Applications must demonstrate employer ownership of the challenge and solutions. Eligibility includes employers of all sizes from any part of the UK. We would particularly welcome involvement of small and medium-size businesses where opportunities for innovative job design could be developed and learning applied to other organisations. Employer-led proposals may include partner organisations such as employer representative bodies or others who can support projects with dedicated expertise.

Assessment criteria

Proposals must align with the scope of this competition if they are to pass the Gateway question as part of the assessment process (The Gateway question is included in the [application form](#)). A clear majority of the project's objectives and activities should be aligned with this competition brief and show that the output(s) of the project will address the problems/issues identified.

If successful at the Gateway question, proposals must meet the core criteria of:

- **Strong employer leadership/engagement:** projects need to be led or co-led by a committed employer with a

genuine interest in piloting innovation and learning from it

- **Innovation:** applications should show how the proposal is innovative and how it moves beyond what has been tried before
- **A clear path from problem to solution** which demonstrates the potential for impact
- **Testing and shared learning:** proposals must illustrate how they will test their innovation, how the learning might be reflected back to adjust and amend the project and how it will be shared for wider benefit. During the life of the project we expect involvement in a series of periodic learning sessions - 'Innovation Labs' - where project representatives share learning and experiences. All projects will need to fully participate in the UK Futures Programme evaluation including research interviews with employers, employees and stakeholders
- **Public and private investment:** private investment can be cash, in kind or both. The balance of private cash and in kind contributions should be appropriate to the proposed project. The important thing is that the contributions from employers add value to best effect, show that employers are leading the projects and complement the public funding requested from UKCES. In kind contributions need to be high quality and could include employer staff providing time, expertise and resource for example

In the event of a high number of applications that meet the criteria, applications will be shortlisted to achieve a balance of projects which will add greatest insight into how to address the challenges outlined.

For more information please see, the 'Further Information and Guidance' section below.

UKCES contribution

The total investment pot for this competition is £1 million which is available for projects to take place from November 2015 to November 2016. We are looking to invest in a small number of projects which we anticipate being delivered for up to 12 months. UKCES expects to invest up to £180,000 per successful proposal. Further information is provided in the guidance documents, a link to which is provided in the 'Further Information and Guidance' section below.

Commissioner leadership

The UK Futures Programme is being led by Scott Waddington, Chief Executive SA Brain and Co Ltd and UKCES Commissioner. This competition will be led by Gail Cartmail, Assistant General Secretary at Unite the Union and UKCES Commissioner. It will be managed by Helen Kersley, Senior Manager at UKCES.

Activity	Timeline
Launch of competition	21 May
Webinars	9 and 10 June
Deadline for submission of applications	Midday on 13 July
Applicants notified of assessment	Week commencing 24 August
Interviews of shortlisted applicants	22 and 23 September
Interviewees informed of decisions	October
Projects start	November

Further information and guidance

Further information is available from the UK Futures Programme website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ukces-futures-programme-overview>).

It is important that applicants read the suite of accompanying guidance documents:

- [UK Futures Programme: an introduction](#)
- [Guidance for Applicants](#)
- [Application Form and Annexes](#)

We are holding webinars on 9 and 10 June which will feature a live Q&A for interested parties. Questions on the process and scope of the competition can be submitted via [enquiries.futuresprogramme@ukces.org.uk](mailto:futuresprogramme@ukces.org.uk)

References

ⁱ Office for National Statistics: *Summary of Labour Market Statistics*, 13 May 2015

ⁱⁱ Office for National Statistics: *Annual Survey of Hours and*

Earnings, 2014 Provisional Results. 14 November 2014.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Pay Progression: understanding the barriers for the lowest paid*. CIPD, October 2014.

ⁱⁱⁱ Prosser, M. (2006) *Shaping a Fairer Future*. Women and Work Commission

^{iv} Described in interviews for Competition 6 scoping.

^v The importance of the workplace is captured in the following quote, from Grimshaw and Rubery (2007) *Undervaluing Women's Work*: "it is at the level of the workplace that women's jobs are actually given a value... At the workplace level all of the issues associated with undervaluation – of visibility, valuation, vocation, value-added, and variance – need to be addressed."

^{vi} The role for employers alongside government and other public authorities was recognised in the recommendations of the Women and Work Commission in their final report: *Shaping a Fairer Future* (2006)

^{viii} Jeffrey, K., Mahoney, S., Michaelson, J. and Abdallah, S. (2014) *Well-being at work: a review of the literature*. London: New Economics Foundation (NEF)