

**Tenders sought for research project**

**Recruitment of high performing staff in banking and sciences**

**Overview**

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission ([www.gov.uk/smcpc](http://www.gov.uk/smcpc)) is inviting proposals for qualitative research into the drivers of recruitment selection decisions in major banking and life sciences organisations. This research forms part of the Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission’s role as an advocate for social mobility in the UK.

In early 2015 the Commission published ‘Non educational barriers to the elite professions’ which focused on hiring practices in the Law and Professional Services. This led to significant media and public interest and subsequent action by firms to broaden the pool of potential candidates. As with the previous project, the aim is to understand better the ‘black box’ behind candidate selection and decisions around progression within the firm and how this helps –or hinders – social mobility. It should identify how firms think their recruitment processes ensure they get the highest performing staff, and the extent to which firms ensure this is what their recruitment process delivers. It should identify how practices have changed over time and the potential barriers to changes in business practices to promote fair access.

Evidence should be gathered via qualitative methods, primarily interviews with key human resources and management personnel. Interviews would be expected to cover areas such as: the organisation’s recruitment approach and attitude towards social mobility within broader diversity considerations, organisational dynamics, client needs and perceptions of client needs, HR processes and the process of training recruiters. Quantitative analysis to support this would be welcome, for example data in relation to recruitment that firms can make available. We would be keen to explore whether organisations have developed a business case to support social mobility activity or understand what drives businesses to promote social mobility friendly activities. The Commission seeks original, ambitious and robust proposals. Bids will be judged primarily on the proposed approach, expertise of team and value for money.

**Detailed requirement**

This research will support the work of the Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission in developing policy proposals to help the professions tackle the ‘demand side’ barriers to widening the pool of individuals from which they recruit and ensuring those with the right ability from less advantaged backgrounds are able to progress to senior levels once recruited. In interviewing senior managers and HR staff from professional firms we require the successful bidder to establish a detailed picture of the firms’ approaches. The sorts of questions we would expect bidders to include are:

* What initiatives, if any, an organisation has in place in relation to fair access/social mobility; how are these positioned between the organisation’s recruitment, diversity and community agendas/functions?
* Does an organisation have a clear notion of what ‘social mobility’ is or is it confused with other diversity initiatives; what does success look like in achieving mobility?
* What drives the organisational approach to candidate selection?
* How if at all do firms assess whether those identified as successful in assessment processes go on to be successful at work?
* Does an organisation ring-fence opportunities (internships etc) for those from under-represented backgrounds who meet its criteria?
* What ‘gateways’ do applicants need to pass through (e.g. does organisation only recruit from certain universities/schools)?
* Has the organisation created/considered non-graduate routes such as higher apprenticeships? If so, why; if not, why not?
* What does organisational ‘fit’/unsuitability look like in terms of candidate characteristics?
* Whether social background influences job suitability and why (for example, perception of client expectations of staff biographies, accents etc)
* Whether there are non-public activities in the area of recruitment/diversity that may mitigate against access for those who are able but from disadvantaged backgrounds?
* How are recruiters trained to ensure fairness?
* Where recruitment methods act as a barrier to mobility what is the right balance between altering methods and educating applicants?
* What approach is taken to recording diversity in applications and appointment in terms of a range of categories (socio-economic background, region, gender etc)
* What approaches are taken to pro-actively diversify the candidate pool and what is most successful in achieving this?
* How do the perceived barriers differ between the graduate recruitment and schools/apprenticeship recruitment markets?
* What pressure, if any, is applied by clients to have a more representative workforce?
* How have practices changed over time; how is the current intake of young staff perceived by established employees?

**Acceptable bidders**

The successful bidder will have a track record of working in this subject area and will be an individual or group experienced in producing well-evidenced, newsworthy, conclusions. They will need to show evidence of how they can manipulate data effectively.

**Bidding process**

This research will be commissioned via a single procurement phase, for which succinct proposals are invited. Assessment of tenders will be on the basis of the criteria at the end of this document. The contract between the Commission and the successful bidder will run from the date of issue until no later than 31 March 2016. Research will be published on the Commission’s website and should be drafted with Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission branding and format.

Tenders should be submitted to [contact@smcpcommission.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:contact@smcpcommission.gsi.gov.uk) no later than 17:00 Friday 27 November. Communication of complex information in a straightforward way is necessary to this project. Therefore **bids that exceed 5 sides of A4 will be rejected**.

Bids should be in Microsoft Word format (not PDF) and include:

* Your proposed approach (2-3 sides max). You may wish to set out in this section:
  + Overview of method, including any proposed quantitative aspects;
  + Approach to presenting findings;
  + Timeline for research.
* Examples of key relevant experience and individual/staff expertise and qualifications. Full biographies of team members are NOT required. However, you may wish to choose examples that underline how you can add value and why you should be selected; (1 sides max);
* Summary of costs; risks and mitigations (1 side max).

Bids should be written in plain English and avoid jargon.

**Acceptable standards of bidders**

The following sets out the acceptable standards of bidders for this research and how these should be evidenced:

* Experience of working flexibly with clients in developing complex research and analysis;
* Clarity in communicating progress of work to clients and explaining issues that arise in a timely manner;
* Risk management expertise including track record in escalating risks to clients for discussion;
* If necessary, experience in working with other organisations as part of larger research programmes.
* A track record of research drawing on qualitative data resulting in news-worthy conclusions.

*In specific for this qualitative research*

* ability to draw on network of contacts to access senior members of staff in professional firms.

**Evaluation criteria**

Tenders will be evaluated against the criteria below. A primary weighting means the criteria will be given greater consideration in assessment of bids.

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| **Criteria** | **Potential examples** | **Weighting** |
| An original, robust and ambitious method | * Clear articulation of a method that will answer the core research question: what are the current barriers able young people from less advantaged background face in accessing banking and life sciences * Evidence of ability to rapidly access a wide range of firms for interview. * Evidence of potential to access (anonymised) data from firms to support analysis. | Primary |
| Team and organisational experience in conducting and presenting qualitative research | * Experience of staff in relevant research qualitative techniques * Experience of presenting findings in catching and clear ways Experience of specific research in this area and familiarity with subject area | Primary |
| Cost and value for money | * Estimation of cost for whole life of project * Additional value-add to the bid – for example innovative channels of publication, launch events etc. | Primary |
| Experience and expertise in field of professional employment and/or social mobility | * Examples of publications or other research demonstrating expertise * Examples of work adding substantially new contributions social mobility particularly labour market trajectories | Secondary |

**Delivery Requirements**

Based on selection of a provider for this research in December 2015 the deadline for final products will be End March 2016. Final products should be in electronic format, using a style guide as supplied by the Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission.

We estimate the research should cost at a maximum £20,000.