

SCHEDULE 1 – RESEARCH SPECIFICATION

Equality and Human Rights Commission

The Future of Work

Document 2: tender specification number EHRC

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1. Introduction

This specification outlines The Commission for Equality and Human Rights (t/a the Equality and Human Rights Commission) (the Commission) requirements for a research project into the future of work across GB.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is a statutory body established under the Equality Act 2006. It operates independently to encourage equality and diversity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and protect and promote human rights. Further information can be found on the Commission's website: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/about-us>

2. Project background

The EHRC wants to better understand the risks and opportunities in the future world of work, and how this may vary across different groups of people. The GB economy is facing major upheaval in coming years. The nature and design of work, and people's experience of it, are undergoing long-term, permanent change. Whilst some of this may be positive and open up new opportunities for some workers, there are risks ahead too.

There are concerns about a downgrade in employment rights and growth in precarious work in the 'gig economy' of the future. The increased flexibility of these arrangements may offer advantages to some workers, however there are millions of people facing uncertainty in their working lives. The expansion of the use of automation, algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI) in relation to recruitment and many other fields of employment heighten anxieties about the impact on at-risk groups.

There are also major current pressures on the economy that will shape the long-term future. The coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on almost all fields of employment. In some sectors, there has been a rapid increase in home and flexible working, whilst in others there have been huge changes to, and restrictions on, normal working practices. Both the economic impact, and the opportunities for greater employment flexibility, are spread very unevenly across the nations and regions of GB.

The impact of the pandemic on workers with particular protected characteristics has been notable. Groups that have been the most badly affected include young people, ethnic minorities and disabled people. Many women have also experienced specific negative impacts, often related to caring responsibilities.

At the same time, the UK is also adapting to life outside the European Union. The long-term impact on businesses remains to be seen.

3. Project Aims

The purpose of this project is to explore the major drivers of changes in the workplace and analyse the equality and human rights implications for protected characteristic groups. The EHRC wants to develop a sophisticated, granular and informed view on future challenges across the GB economy. This will enable us to respond to upcoming policy-influencing

opportunities and speak with credibility and authority on the challenges ahead. This research will also inform the activities we take forward in our next Strategic Plan (2022-2025).

We aim to identify and understand emerging trends in unemployment, employment and labour market practice, for example the expansion of the gig economy and use of new technologies, and explore the potential future impact these will have on workers with particular protected characteristics (PCs). This includes disabled people, some ethnic minorities, younger and older people, and women. We also want to understand the implications of socio-economic status and geography on the experiences of those with particular PCs – including issues around accessing and staying in the labour market. We intend to examine both employer and government-led initiatives aimed at upskilling and preparing workers for the changes ahead.

We intend to use the research findings to influence governments across GB, as well as key stakeholders such as employers and business groups, sector-specific umbrella bodies, trade unions and relevant NGOs. The conclusions from this work will feed into the recommendations developed for the next iteration of '[Is Britain Fairer](#)'? As we develop this project we will need to take account of external developments such as new information from BEIS on their plans for a new industrial strategy, the proposed 'levelling up' white paper, internal programmes such as the England Regional Strategy and relevant economic strategies in [Scotland](#) and [Wales](#).

3.1 Research questions

There are four main research questions underpinning the proposed research:

1. What long-term changes are we seeing in the GB economy that are of most relevance to equality and human rights? Examples may include, but are not limited to:
 - Post-pandemic changes in working patterns and practices, for example the increase in remote, home and flexible working – including variation by sector and geography
 - Shifts in the balance of rights at work, between employees to work flexibly and employers to meet business needs (and demand staff work certain hours, in a physical location and so on)
 - At the same time, the potential for home/remote working to spread out the distribution of professional jobs out of metropolitan centres, especially London
 - Regional and national economic strategies for recovery (relevant national strategies and the levelling up agenda in English regions)

- The growth of AI and new technologies in the workplace; the effects of automation and algorithmic decision-making. Also, the shift from physical spaces (e.g. shops and offices) to online employment practice and modes of service delivery.
 - The expansion of the gig economy and growth in self-employment
 - The evolving labour market legislative and regulatory environment, including any potential departure from EU rules
2. What are the equality and human rights implications of these long-term, structural changes, in terms of access to work and experience of it? What are the likely impacts on women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and older and young people – including access to work and experience of it - and how are they likely to compare to those who don't share those protected characteristics.
 3. What variations in impact will we see in the emerging economic landscape, at GB, nations and English regional level, on the workers of the future, especially those with particular PCs? Comparing and contrasting the different policy aspirations (however nascent) across England, Wales and Scotland what is the vision for the 'good work' of the future - and what potential interventions maybe necessary to support at-risk groups and ensure opportunity for all?
 4. How can governments across GB mitigate the negative impacts of future challenges and harness the opportunities, for all groups across GB society?

3.2 Methodology

We anticipate a methodology comprising two distinct phases. The first will be a combination of desk research, literature review and statistical analysis. The second will be primary, qualitative research with 'expert witnesses'.

In the first phase of the research, we will ask the successful supplier to synthesise national level data and analysis on current and anticipated employment, unemployment and under-employment trends (where available) across GB and in England, Scotland and Wales. This will also include sectoral and PC analysis, including intersectional data where possible / relevant. It will also identify external relevant research projects that are currently in development across GB.

Analysis of future trends will need to take account of national and regional variations (therefore this may be a 'lens' applied across themes rather than be a stand-alone area of exploration) where the data allows. Both equality and human rights issues are within scope, with analysis of the latter guided by relevant human rights legislation.

In the second phase of the research, this literature review and desk analysis will inform a more focussed exploration of future trends in two to three of the most salient themes

identified (examples above). The precise scope of these key themes will be driven by the gaps and issues uncovered by the literature review. We will work in partnership with the supplier to make decisions about which issues to prioritise and 'drill down' to ensure a focussed and manageable approach.

We envisage the second phase of the project, the qualitative research, to comprise qualitative fieldwork with experts in the identified themes. Depending on the exact focus, this may include sector-specific expertise, expertise on protected characteristics and knowledge of economic development in the nations and regions of GB. Suppliers are asked to consider the best methods for engaging this audience and getting the most out of participants. Given the pandemic, we envisage the research largely taking place online. We would like to ask participants to look ahead to the coming decade or so, whilst keeping the research grounded in trends and issues that are identifiable in the present day. A clear equality and human rights lens throughout the research will ensure the focus remains on our statutory remit.

We would like the research to be guided by a small group (approx. 6-8) of external stakeholder organisations with expertise in this area. The successful supplier will be asked to set up and coordinate this advisory group, arrange and facilitate occasional online meetings (3-4 in total) and invite input on the research tools and outputs. Bidders are asked to suggest potential members of the advisory group in their proposals, and explain their rationale for inclusion. The final membership of the group will be agreed with the Commission. Its input will be strictly advisory and informal; the Commission will not be bound by its recommendations.

4. Project management, outputs and milestones

Project management:

EHRC envisages the project will run from September 2021 until end of March 2022. The Commission expects the successful Contractor to work closely with us to deliver the project. The Commission requires the Contractor to provide progress updates on a regular basis (at least fortnightly, possibly weekly during busy periods).

Required Outputs and milestones

The EHRC expects the Contractor to deliver Required Outputs to an agreed timetable. Responsibility for developing the sample, recruiting participants and organising the fieldwork will lie with the successful supplier. The Commission will approve the final list of participants.

The tables below provide a provisional timetable, and provide an overview of how we envisage the tasks will be phased. This will be finalized upon appointment.

Output / milestone / activity	Deadline
Successful supplier appointed and start-up meeting held	September 10 2021
Submission (draft) of proposed research participants and recruitment plan for second phase of research	October 15 2021
Draft literature review submitted and themes agreed for phase two qualitative research	October 29 2021
Commence primary fieldwork	November 1 2021
Primary fieldwork complete (phase two)	January 31 2022
Submission of draft report (final literature review + findings from qualitative research)	February 18 2022
Submission of final report	March 11 2022
Presentation of findings to EHRC & project closure	March 31 2022

Future of work research: gantt chart									
Task	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan 22	Feb	Mar
Procurement and project set up									
Literature review									
Qualitative research fieldwork									
Analysis, report writing, editing & responding to Commission feedback									

Quality

The report and other deliverables must be of a high quality and written in plain English. The Contractor is required to follow our research and style guides, as set out in the appendices to this specification. EHRC will return draft deliverables with comments until the required standard is met: this contingency ought to be reflected in the Contractor's project plan. For the avoidance of doubt, the Commission will not pay for any such extra work by the Contractor.

5. Tenders and tender evaluation criteria; budget

Selection Criteria

Please complete the selection questionnaire online.

Award criteria

The tender process will be conducted in a manner that ensures tenders are evaluated to identify the 'Most Economically Advantageous Tender' using the criteria and weightings outlined in the table (see also Doc 3- Pricing Schedule).

EHRC will not assess any material in your proposal that exceeds the word limit. The word limits allow you sufficient opportunity to provide the required information and you will not be marked down if your word count is less. With respect to price, the Commission will award scores for the highest prices by inverse proportion to the lowest price. EHRC will assess proposals against the award criteria and will hold clarification meetings with the highest scoring bidders (see procurement schedule).

Future of work research project (budget: £50,000 inc VAT)

Award criteria	Sub-Criteria	Weighting (%)
Price	1) Please complete the Pricing Schedule (inc. VAT) for this work.	20
Service delivery	2) Please outline your planned methodology for this project in detail, covering both 1) how you will conduct the literature review and identify the key themes and issues and 2) deliver the qualitative research in the second phase, including building the sample, recruiting participants, co-ordinating the advisory group and arranging the fieldwork. Please justify your methodological choices and explain how you will mitigate any weaknesses or limitations.	40

	[Up to 1,200 words]	
	3) Please describe in full how you will apply your knowledge, skills and expertise to ensure high-quality analysis and project delivery, as well as flexibility and customer focus. [Up to 600 words]	20
	4) Please provide a project plan demonstrating how you will deliver the project's Required Outputs successfully to specification, budget and deadline (see section 4). [Up to 600 words] Please include the CVs of those who will deliver the project and their role in the delivery. (Word count does not include the CVs, which are not be longer than two pages).	20
Overall total		100

Scoring Rationale	
Fully comprehensive evidence provided and added value that the organisation can demonstrate the ability to meet the requirement.	9 - 10
Detailed evidence provided that the organisation can demonstrate the ability to meet the requirement.	7 - 8
Reasonable evidence provided that the organisation can demonstrate the ability to meet the requirement.	5 - 6
Minimal evidence provided that the organisation can demonstrate the ability to meet the requirement.	3 - 4
Inadequate evidence provided that the organisation can demonstrate the ability to meet the requirement.	1 - 2
No evidence provided to demonstrate the organisation's ability to meet the requirement	0

6. Submitting your proposal

Tenderers must submit their proposal using the Commission's online portal. Full instructions on how to submit are available on the portal. <https://supplierhelp.due-north.com/>

Please note that our tender portal has a strict deadline for submissions and does not accept any proposals after the stated deadline. For reference, all Commission reports are available from: www.equalityhumanrights.com/publications/our-research/research-reports.

7. Procurement timetable

The timeframe for the tendering process is set out below:

Milestone	Deadline
Advertise Opportunity	15 July 2021
Closing date for submission of any queries, questions or points of clarification.	03 August 2021
Latest date to issue summary of Q&As to all	05 August 2021
Deadline for submission of proposals	12 August 2021, 1pm
Evaluation period	13-20 August 2021
Clarification meeting (to take place online)	19 August 2021
Notify all bidders	w/c 23 August 2021
Contract Award	w/c 30 August 2021
Inception/start-up meeting	w/c 06 September 2021

¹N.B. The Commission will not pay expenses to attend any tender clarification meetings that may be required

If you have any questions about the content of this brief you are invited to submit queries or points of clarification to the Procurement Team using the Commission's portal.

8. Pricing and contract management

Pricing

In total, funding of up to £50,000 is available for this project, inclusive of VAT. Please make it clear whether your proposed fee does or does not include VAT.

EHRC will pay the fee for this work upon completion of project outputs to a standard which is acceptable to the Commission. The exact payment schedule will be discussed and agreed prior to appointment. Bidders are asked to include an estimated breakdown of resources, as well as any unit costs (e.g. per interview or workshop).

Contract Management

The Contractor is expected to liaise closely with the Commission during the project and to provide updates as required, preferably on a weekly basis.

Beyond the requirements laid out in the project timetable there may be a need for additional meetings, particularly if any unforeseen challenges arise. The successful Contractor is asked to be flexible under such circumstances. With respect to feedback on the Contractor's work, the Commission expects this to be addressed in a professional manner.

During contract delivery EHRC may audit the Contractor's compliance with data protection clauses and check their security controls. At the end of the contract, the Contractor must return data and confirm any copies in their possession have been destroyed.

Data Protection, Confidentiality and Information Security

Any relevant datasets will need to be accompanied by appropriate documentation and metadata and set up in a format and to a standard that is suitable for depositing at the UK Data Archive (any data deposited in the Data Archive needs to be anonymised). It is the Contractor's responsibility to ensure data meet these requirements.

For more information on how EHRC handles personal data gathered through research, and protect privacy, please visit our website: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/privacy-notice>

Prior to appointment, the Contractor will need to complete a data security questionnaire.

Intellectual Property

All project outputs will be the intellectual property of the Commission and the successful Contractor will be expected to transfer intellectual property of all project outputs to the Commission. The findings cannot be used by the successful Contractor for any other purposes (such as further research, publication or presentations at conferences), unless written permission is granted.