



Government
Equalities Office



ersa
Employment Related
Services Association

SQW

Returners Fund: Briefing for Shortlisted Applicants

Returners Fund

Expressions of Interest - Learnings



**Fund
Managers on
behalf of:**



Helen Fagan

Grants Manager

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The numbers

- 93 Expressions of Interest received for Round 1
- Over 250 are still in progress
- 16 projects have been invited to proceed to a full application
- Selected applications reflect a broad geographic spread, target a range of different demographic groups of returners and provide representation from the private sector, social enterprises, registered charities, as well as partnerships
- Offer a potential reach to over 2,000 beneficiaries and 1,000 employers

What We Found

- Despite our desire to see projects outside of London there was still an overwhelming presence of projects from London and the South East
- Returners as a cohort were often misunderstood by applicants and were commonly confused with the more general 'unemployed' category
- Most of the applications received were for projects 12 months in length and often didn't provide justification as to why the proposed project should run beyond the recommended length of a returners programme (3-6months)

What We Found

- Further common areas for EOIs to score low on were:
 - weak plans for sustainability,
 - weak proposal for scalability,
 - lack of engagement with employers
 - unrealistic numbers engaged/weak plans of how to engage
 - very few (or in some cases, no) employment opportunities created

Round 1 – Next Stage	Date
Deadline for return of full applications	18 th May
Assessment Phase	21 st May – 5 th June
Panel, Decision and Sign-Off	w/c 4 th June– w/c 25 th June
Applicants notified of outcome	w/c 25th Jun
Grant Contract/Negotiation of Conditions etc.	End of June - mid July
Project delivery period begins (max 12 months)	1 st Aug 18

Returners Fund

Full Application Form



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Portal Homepage

www.returnersfund.flexigrant.co.uk

WELCOME TO THE RETURNERS FUND

A grant programme of £1.5million is available for organisations to run projects aimed at returners that:

- create new job opportunities within the private sector and targeted employment sectors, including retail; law; tech and telecoms; science, technology, engineering and maths industries; creative industries;
- could not otherwise be established by the market;
- address specific barriers for returners and can be replicated at scale;
- can demonstrate self-sustainability beyond the initial funding period of the grant;
- increase understanding of how best to support a) returners to gain paid employment and b) employers to recruit and support returners.

The Government Equalities Office defines a 'returner' as a person who left paid employment for at least a year to take on a caring responsibility and would like to return to paid work at a level commensurate with their skills and experience.

Expressions of interest for the first round of bidding must be submitted by March 30th and for the second round, by the 16th August

If you are not already registered, you will need to create a new user account by selecting **Register** below. If you have an account and wish to manage your application, grant, or user account, select **Login**.

This online application portal is managed by [Rocket Science](#) on behalf of the Government Equalities Office.

Select a scheme to start an application

🔍 Select a Grant

UPDATE MY INFORMATION

Update your account and contact information using the link below.

My account >

My applications >

CONTACT US

Email us >

020 3291 3021 >

RETURNERS FUND PROSPECTUS

For further guidance, please see the [Returners Fund Prospectus](#)

[My bookmarks](#) [My account](#) [Log off](#) [Help](#)

Government Equalities Office

- Available grants
- My account**
- My contact details**
- My applications

Application overview for Returners Fund

Welcome to the Returners Fund application portal. On this page you will be able to see all the applications that are currently in progress, as well as any previously submitted applications. If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact us at returnersfund@rocketsciencelab.co.uk.

Applications in progress

RFEo\100005	Under Assessment	View
Grant:	Returners Fund - Expression of Interest	
Applicant:	Helen Fagan	
Organisation:	Fagan Ltd	

Start a new application

Returners Fund - Expression of Interest	
Closing Date 30/03/2018 17:00	Start

Status of your application form

Government Equalities Office

- Available grants
- My account
- My contact details
- My applications**

Summary

Returners Fund - Expression of Interest 0% complete
RFEo\100004
Helen Fagan 0 of 8 Pages

[Print form](#) [Download as PDF](#)
[View instructions](#)

Summary

Here you can see all of the pages of your application form. You can see how far you have progressed with the completion of your form and also navigate to each page from here.

Questions marked with a * are mandatory, which is typically the majority of the questions. Please ensure you have completed all of these questions. You will not be able to submit your form until these questions have been answered.

For more information please read the [Returners Fund Prospectus](#) and the [Guidance and FAQs](#).

Number	Page	Est. time to complete	Status	Required documents
1	Your organisation	5 mins	Not Started	Start
2	Financial information	10 mins	In Progress	0 / 1 Edit
3	Your project	15 mins	In Progress	Edit
4	Need and demand	5 mins	Not Started	Start
5	Partnership and project management	10 mins	Not Started	Start
6	Impact and sustainability	10 mins	Not Started	Start
7	Experience and references	15 mins	Not Started	Start
8	Declaration	1 minute	Not Started	Start

Fund Prospectus/ Criteria Document

'Rolling' Frequently Asked Questions

5.1 What is the target returner group(s) for your project? Explain why you will be targeting this group, your understanding of their needs and how you propose to reach and engage these individuals?

Target returner groups:

- Women returners who have taken an extended career break
- Single parents
- Individuals following a period of caring responsibilities
- Older Workers
- People with a Disability

If you wish to provide any additional information about the returner group you are targeting, please do so below.

E.g. any particular skills needs, or specific cultural barriers for certain target groups; whether targeting a harder to reach/help returner cohort will incur additional expense and why you feel this is justified.



Please explain why your project cannot operate without an element of public subsidy in the form of a grant?

- Why has your project not been funded by clients? i.e. returners, employers, other partners, local government etc.
- Why is central Government the appropriate funder, have you considered others?

What do you anticipate will be the overall outcomes from your project? Please specify these for both returners and for employers.

- What is Government buying for returners and employers through this grant?



What is the target returner group(s) for your project? Explain why you will be targeting this group, your understanding of their needs and how you propose to reach and engage these individuals?

- Where are they located?
- What are their characteristics?
- What skill level are they?
- Who are their employers?
- Why do they need support from Government?

How will you ensure your project reaches parents, carers or both?

- The GEO defines a returner as somebody who has been out of paid employment for a caring responsibility for at least a year
- Want to support parents and carers at programme level
- What considerations have you made to ensure your project supports this group?



About your returners

Please define the project's different levels of engagement i.e. from the above figure how many returners do you plan to have contact with (and in what form) at different points in your project?

- Number reached in communications
- Number who receives support
- Number who will be placed in paid employment as part of the project
- Number you anticipate will go on to permanent paid employment beyond the project?

Please explain why the area you are delivering in is in need of a returners' programme?

- Evidence and understanding of local employment landscape and need for Government to support a project in this area
- Understanding of localised barriers that returners may have to accessing suitable paid employment



What extra support will your target group(s) require and how will you provide this?

- Women
 - BAME
 - Disabled
 - Older people (50+)
 - Non-graduate returners
 - Out of paid employment for 10+ years
-
- What considerations have you made for this specific group of returners?
 - How will you ensure your project meets their needs?



What extra support will your target employer(s) require in recruiting and supporting returners and how will you provide this?

- SME
- Outside of London
- Weak track record in supporting returners (including retail; law; tech and telecoms; STEM employers and creative industries)
- What considerations have you made for this specific group of employers?
- How will you ensure your project meets their needs?

Securing involvement

- If you haven't secured employers yet, you need to clearly set out a logical, realistic plan for doing so
- You need to give us confidence that this plan is realistic and achievable



How will you ensure quality assurance/control of your partners/employers?

- You will be solely responsible for the delivery of this project and Rocket Science UK as the administrator and Government will hold you to account for partners' delivery
 - We need to be certain that you can manage delivery through partners
-



How will you ensure SQW have access to employers and returners for the evaluation, whilst also conforming to the General Data Protection Regulation?

- Evaluation is fundamentally critical to this programme and grant agreement letters will be drafted to reflect this
- You need to instil confidence in assessors that you have considered evaluation throughout the design of your project and are contributing to the development of the returners evidence base

How would your organisation use the outcomes of the Returners Fund evaluation, including your individual project report, to enhance your future work?

- This is impetus funding to stoke the market and have a long term impact on the availability of support and opportunities for returners and employers of returners



For your project to be scaled up to support an increased number of returners and employers, what pre-conditions or critical success factors do you think need to be in place?

- At an operational level, what do you need to get in place to scale this project up?
- What considerations have you made for this?
- Excluding central Government funding

For your project to be replicable in other areas, with other target groups of returners, and/or by other project leads, what pre-conditions or critical success factors do you think need to be in place?

- What do you need to do to make this project suitable for other groups?
- What considerations have you made for this?
- How will you put this in place?

	Section Name	Weighting
1	Declaration	
2	Your Organisation	
3	Financial Information	
4	Your Project	20%
5	About Your Returners	15%
6	About Your Employers	15%
7	Budget	15%
8	Partnership Working	5%
9	Sustainability and Replication	15%
10	Impact and Evaluation	15%

Evaluation of the Returner Fund

The importance of evaluation

Agenda

- Introduction to SQW
- Monitoring data
- Developing a logic model
- Evaluation data
- What nexts

Prologue - Introducing SQW

- Consultancy with expertise in professional development and employability support/training
- Work extensively across UK on evaluation research associated with skills, transitions and economic development

4 main policy-related areas

- Transitions, employability and social mobility
- Personalisation
- Innovation
- Spatial development

40 consultants

4 offices

- Manchester
- London
- Cambridge
- Edinburgh

3 broad service offers across the delivery cycle:

- Socio-economic analysis and research
- Strategy development, partnership building and action planning
- Appraisal, evaluation and impact assessment

3 main client groups

- UK public sector – national and local
- Higher education and private sector
- International – European Commission and more broadly

Evaluation of the Returners Fund

- The Government Equalities Office requires an evaluation that:
 - includes all projects supported by the Fund
 - expands their evidence base about potential need for intervention
 - identifies best practice in working with employers, training providers and returners
- SQW will undertake an external evaluation of all funded projects
- SQW will support applicants to ensure that all funded projects will provide sound evaluation findings

Specifically... Impact and evaluation section

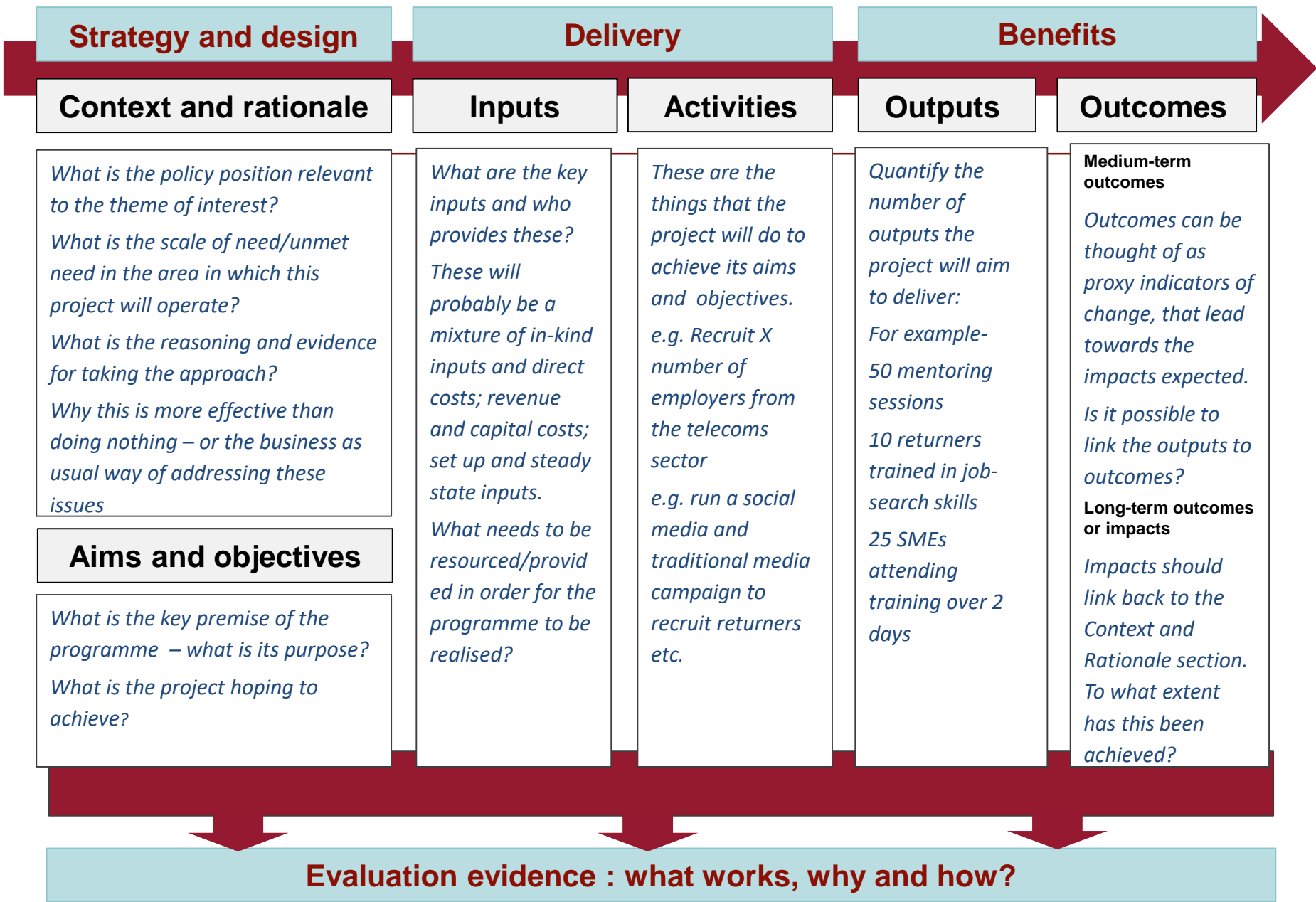
- How will you ensure SQW have access to employers and returners for the evaluation, whilst also conforming to the General Data Protection Regulation?
- Are there any barriers to participating in SQW's external evaluation research?
- As part of the application process, we would like you to create a logic model for your project
- What additional evaluation processes have you considered to measure track the impact of the project?
 - Inc.. what monitoring data do you intend to gather at the various stages of the project
- How would your organisation use the outcomes of the Returners Fund evaluation

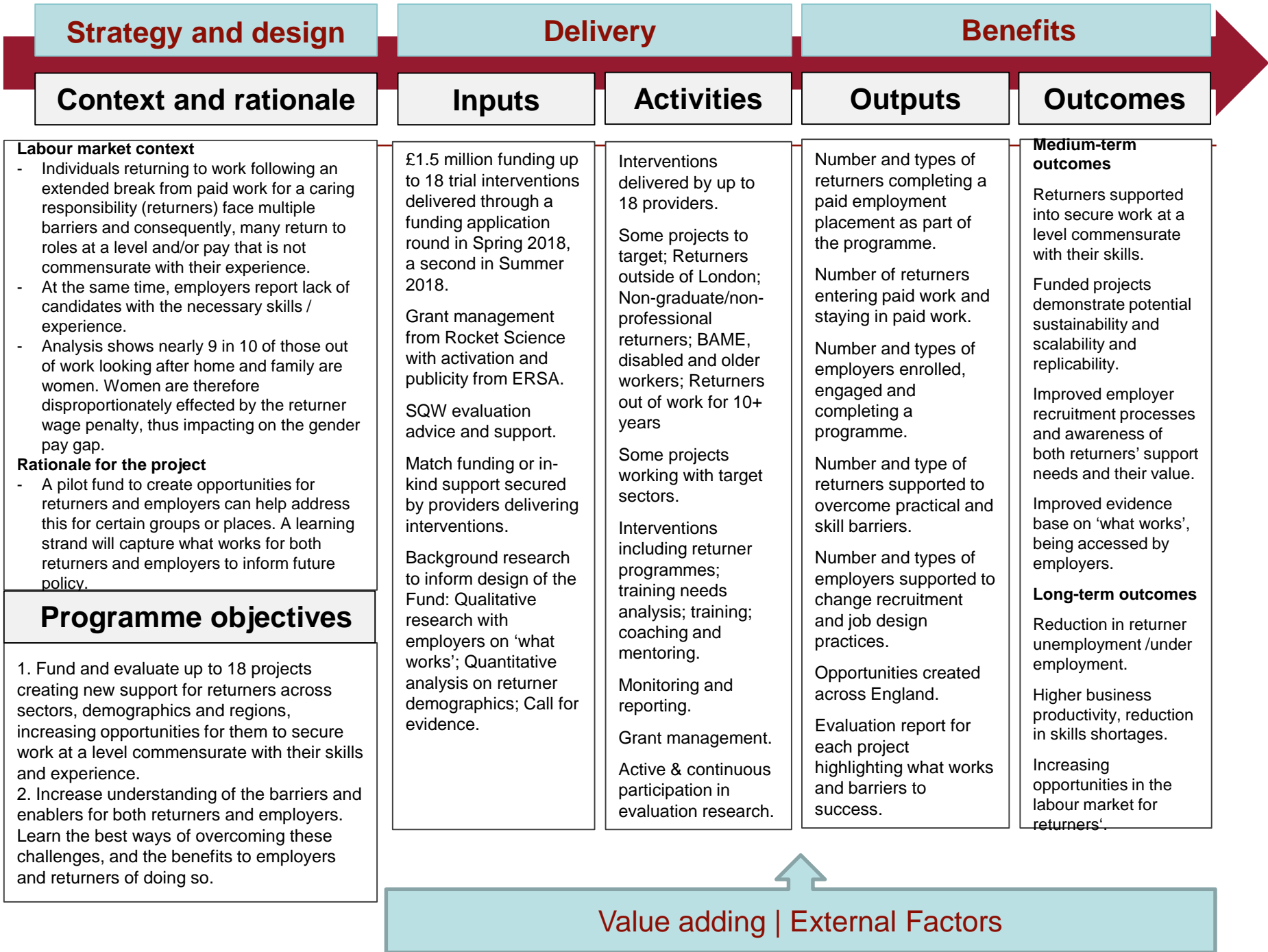
MONITORING DATA

Monitoring data

- Monitoring data is needed for grant management
 - Has the project worked with the number of returners they said they would?
 - Has the project worked with the number of employers they said they would?
- Monitoring data is needed as the foundation for evaluation research
 - How many returners with particular characteristics have participated? What type of intervention has each completed?
 - How many employers with particular characteristics have participated? What type of intervention has each completed?
 - (then we can look for associations between activities and outputs or outcomes)

DEVELOPING A LOGIC MODEL





Strategy and design

Labour market context

- Individuals returning to work following an extended break from paid work for a caring responsibility (returners) face **multiple barriers** and consequently, many return to roles at a level and/or pay that is not commensurate with their experience.
- At the same time, employers report **lack of candidates** with the necessary skills / experience.
- Analysis shows nearly 9 in 10 of those out of work looking after home and family are women. Women are therefore disproportionately effected by the returner wage penalty, thus impacting on the **gender pay gap**.

Rationale for the project

- A **pilot fund to create opportunities** for returners and employers can help address this for certain groups or places. A **learning strand** will capture what works for both returners and employers to inform future policy.

Programme objectives

- Fund and evaluate up to 18 projects **creating new support for returners** across sectors, demographics and regions, increasing opportunities for them to secure work at a level commensurate with their skills and experience.
- **Increase understanding** of the barriers and enablers for both returners and employers. Learn the best ways of overcoming these challenges, and the benefits to employers and returners of doing so.

Delivery

Inputs

£1.5 million funding up to 18 trial interventions delivered through a funding application round in Spring 2018, a second in Summer 2018.

Grant **management** from Rocket Science with activation and publicity from ERSA.

SQW **evaluation** advice and support.

Match funding or in-kind support secured by providers delivering interventions.

Background **research** to inform design of the Fund: Qualitative research with employers on ‘what works’;
Quantitative analysis on returner demographics; Call for evidence.

Activities

Interventions delivered by up to 18 **providers**.

Some projects to **target**; Returners outside of London; Non-graduate/non-professional returners; BAME, disabled and older workers; Returners out of work for 10+ years

Some projects working with target sectors.

Interventions including returner programmes; training needs analysis; training; coaching and mentoring.

Monitoring and reporting.

Grant management.

Active & continuous participation in **evaluation** research

Benefits

Outputs

- Number and types of returners participating in an activity
- Number and type of returners supported to overcome practical and skill barriers.
- Number and types of returners completing a paid employment placement as part of the programme.
- Number of returners entering paid work and staying in paid work.
- Number and types of employers enrolled, engaged and completing a programme.
- Number and types of employers supported to change recruitment and job design practices.
- Opportunities created across England.
- Evaluation report for each project highlighting what works and barriers to success.

Outcomes

Medium-term outcomes

- Returners supported into secure work at a level commensurate with their skills.
- Funded projects demonstrate potential sustainability and scalability and replicability.
- Improved employer recruitment processes and awareness of both returners' support needs and their value.
- Improved evidence base on 'what works', being accessed by employers.

Long-term outcomes

- Reduction in returner unemployment /under employment.
- Higher business productivity, reduction in skills shortages.
- Increasing opportunities in the labour market for returners'

Issues affecting project delivery and benefits

Value added	External factors		
<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationships between providers.• Research base.• Marketing and social media presence.• Buildings and other facilities.• IT structures and admin systems.	<p>Affecting returners e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuing care responsibilities.• Support issues.• Financial issues.• Family health.• Personal health.• Transport issues.	<p>Affecting employers e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes to markets.• Different management priorities.• Business restructure.• Lack of resources.• Gender pay gap reporting requirements	<p>Affecting context e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changing economic context.• Labour market change.• Local physical developments.• Technological change.• Policy changes.

EVALUATION DATA

Each project will support data collection...

Management Information

- Standard requirements
- Reported to RSUK
- Shared with SQW

Feedback from businesses

- E-survey at the start and at the end of the project
- Facilitate some phone interviews

Feedback from returners

- E-survey at the start and at the end of the project
- Facilitate some phone interviews

Host a case study

- Mid-way through the project
- Researchers to speak with management team and participants

SQW will prepare an evaluation report for GEO on each project, and each project will see their own report

WHAT NEXT?

How will funded projects work with SQW?

- Support in the application phase to:
 - Construct an evaluation approach around your planned project
 - Discuss how to integrate the evaluation methods with your management systems
 - Share any logic models you have developed for the project for critical friend review
 - Outline approaches to achieve informed consent from participants to participate in the evaluation

Next steps

- Today's appointments or initial conversation
- Agree level of support
 - Tutoring
 - Coaching
 - Critical friend
- Allocate to a consultant
 - Initial contact and conversation by 3rd May
 - Completion by 17th May (latest!)

Contact

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Theory to be tested

- For returners
 - Returners require a short, focussed and supported intervention that is personalised to their circumstances. The intervention will be tailored to their needs and will give them the opportunity, skills and motivation to re-enter the labour market and secure meaningful paid employment that uses their skills.
- For employers
 - Employers need the tools and time to rethink their recruitment policies and practices and find creative and cost-effective ways to address their skills needs. Adapting practices to additionally suit returners is an effective way to do this.
- For providers
 - A relationship broker or intermediary is necessary to address the current shortcomings in the working of the labour market and bring returners and employers into the same productive space.