



# Returners Fund

## An overview of the GEO's work on returners and objectives for the Fund

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018

Lauren Bradley – Private Sector Policy Lead and Grant Fund Manager, Government Equalities Office



# Congratulations!

Firstly, thank you for your interest in the Returners Fund and congratulations on reaching this stage of the application process.

We received **122** expressions of interest for this round and have shortlisted only **25** which most closely met our criteria and overarching objectives for the fund.

Milestone	Date
EOI period ends	14/09/2018
Full application period ends	09/11/2018
Assessment complete	07/12/2018
Applicants notified	18/01/2019
Projects start	11/02/2019
Projects close down	11/02/2020

# A quick introduction to the Government Equalities Office

**The Government Equalities Office leads work on policy relating to women, sexual orientation and transgender equality.**

## **Our responsibilities**

- improving equality and reducing discrimination and disadvantage for all in the UK
- taking the lead on the Equality Act 2010 and being the lead department on gender, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) issues in government
- supporting and implementing international equality measures in the UK

## **Our priorities**

- helping women to fulfil their potential in the workplace and helping businesses get the full economic benefit of women's skills
- eliminating the Gender Pay Gap (GPG) improving female career progression
- addressing the discrimination and inequalities that LGB&T people face
- promoting the rights of British citizens abroad and using our influence to promote international equality

# Why are returners important to GEO?

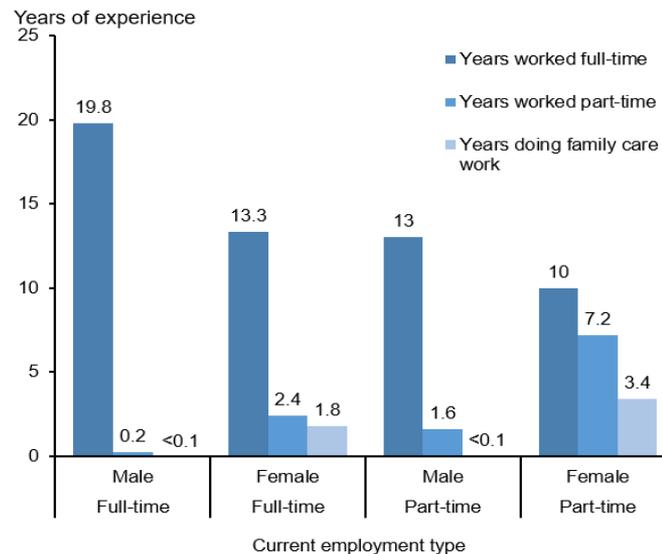
As part of our work to:

- help women to fulfil their potential in the workplace,
- equalise opportunity between men and women, and
- challenge social norms which prevent gender equality in work and public life

we want to recognise the important contribution of carers at the same time as making it easier for them to get back into paid employment should they wish to.

To do this we are already working across government and in the private sector to increase uptake of **Shared Parental Leave** and **flexible working**. Addressing the barriers to returning to work and creating more opportunities for returners is key to this objective.

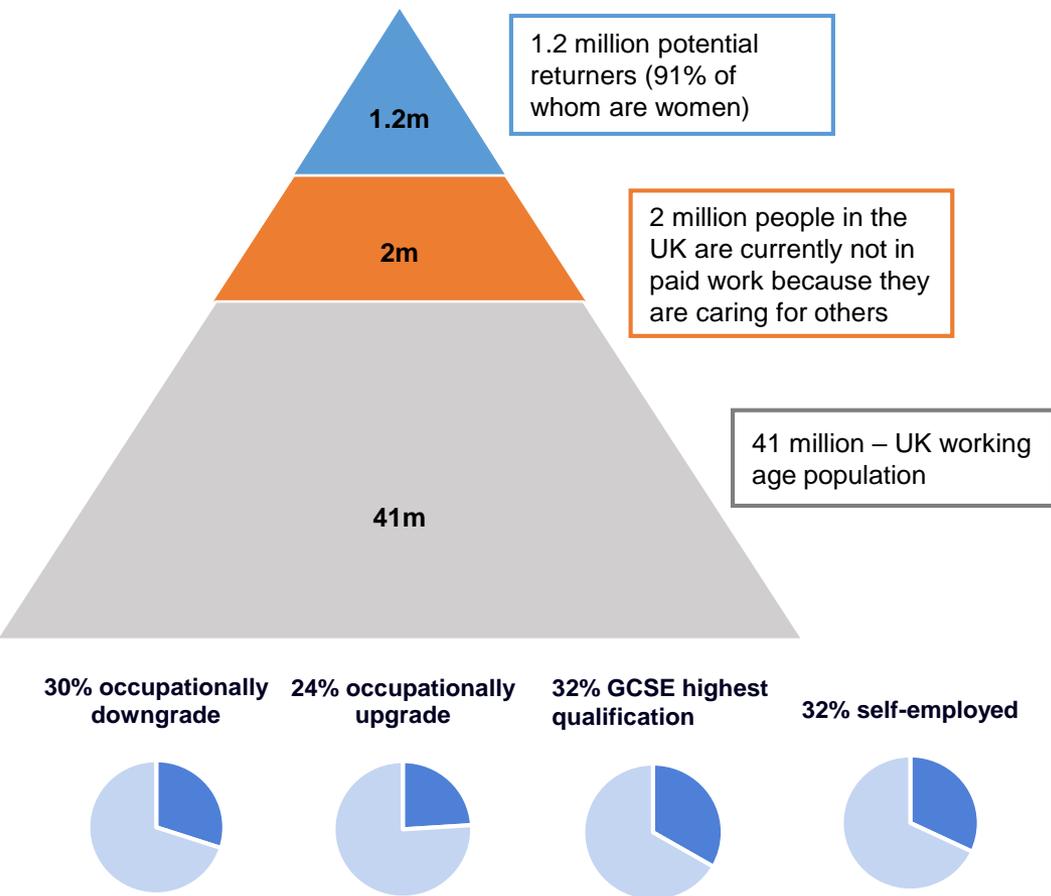
## Time out of the labour market



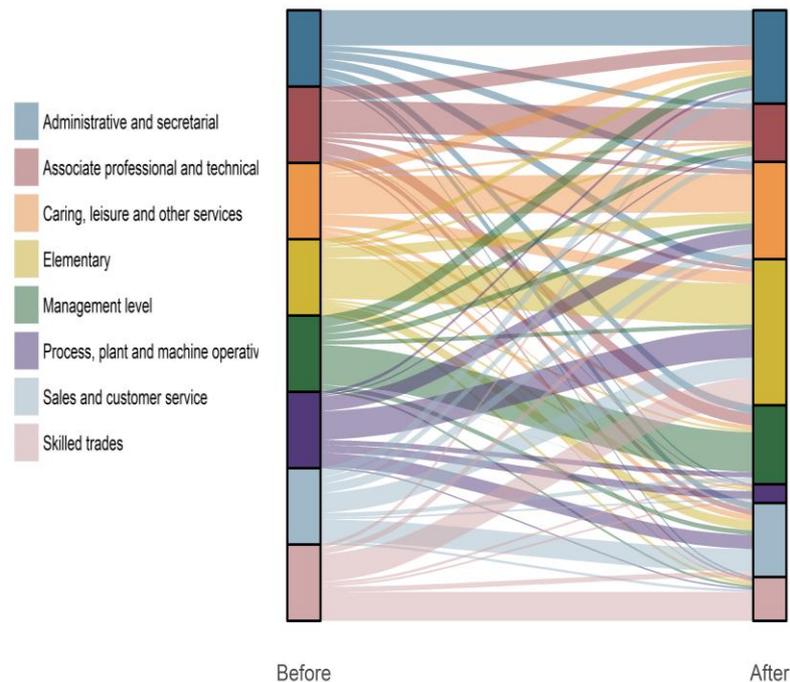
There is an expectation that women are the main care givers and work fewer hours or take time out accordingly. The OECD has estimated that equalising participation of men and women in the labour market could increase GDP by almost 10% by 2030.

# What do we know about returners?

We define a potential returner as someone who has taken an extended career break, often to care for others, but would like to return to work



The break for caring is a point at which around half of returners switch occupation



# What do we know about employers and returners?

## Lack of relevant/up-to-date skills

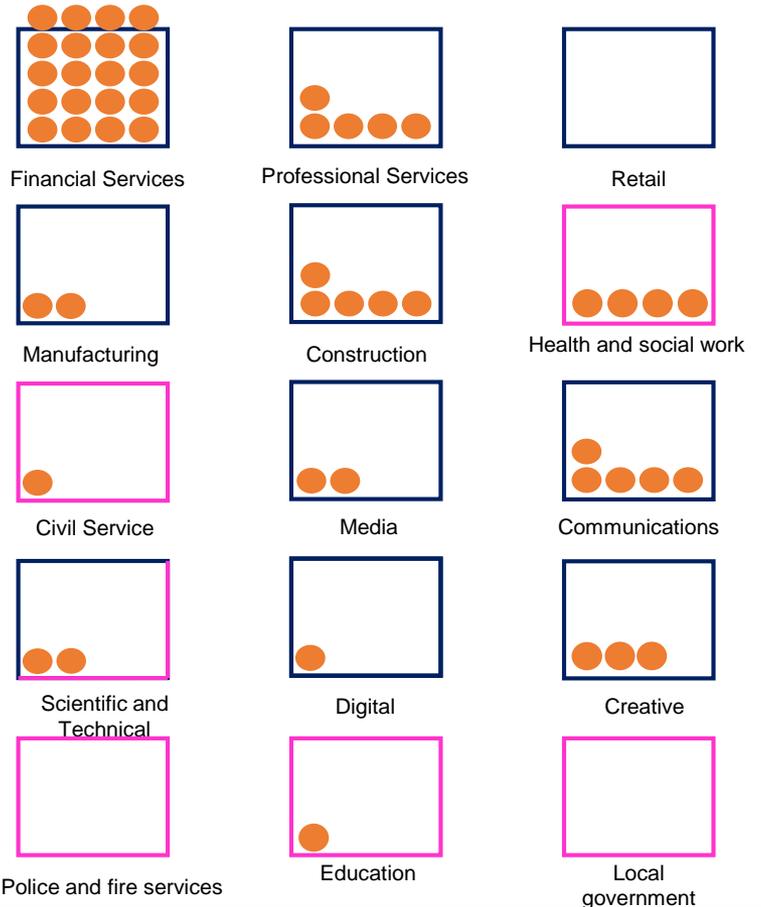
*“Returners often need greater support to bring themselves up to date in terms of practical skills like IT, professional development and building confidence.”*

## Lack of flexibility

*“Mothers of young children can be unreliable because they need to take time off not only when they are ill, but also when their children are ill.”*

*“Many people think it's their right to automatically get flexible working... because they have children. That is not how small/ medium or any businesses can operate.”*

We know that existing provision is low. We want to **understand why, tackle the causes** and **increase opportunities** across the board.





## Public Commitments

- **Spring Budget 2017:** Prime Minister committed £5 million over two years to promoting returners and returner opportunities in the public and private sector.
- **Conservative Manifesto:** Committed to "support companies to take on parents and carers returning to work after long periods of absence and back similar schemes in the public sector."
- **Public Sector:** In August 2017, we announced public sector returner programmes for returning social workers, health professionals, teachers, and for people interested in joining the Civil Service after time out of paid work.
- **Grant Fund:** On 4 March, we launched a £1.5 million fund to create new opportunities for returners in the private sector.

## Workstreams

- As well as supporting the existing **public sector programmes** we are working in other areas to launch and scale up additional public sector programmes, aiming to provide an additional 500 returner opportunities.
- With our partners, we produced **best practice guidance** for employers in partnership with the Women's Business Council and a toolkit aimed at employers to help them run effective returner programmes
- We have also created a **Business Reference Group** to engage with employers



## Overview of the grant fund

### What is the grant fund?

- GEO has announced £1.5m in grants is available for organisations to run projects aimed at returners.
- We have awarded 5 projects with funding and are anticipating awarding between 8 -12 more, with each award not exceeding £300,000.
- The fund is designed to focus on returner programmes in the private sector and industries which are currently underrepresented in terms of returner opportunities.

### Why use a grant funding model?

- Using a grant funding model allows us to fund a large number of potentially smaller and innovative projects over a short timescale.
- As we are looking for new and innovative projects across geographical locations and targeting different barriers this is the most efficient way for us to expand our knowledge and increase opportunities for returners.



# What are grants available for?

## We are looking to fund projects that:

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- create new job opportunities within the private sector and targeted employment sectors that have a weaker track record in catering for returners, including, retail; hospitality; 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; and
- increase understanding of how best to support
  - returners to gain paid employment, and
  - employers to recruit and support returners.

## We are particularly interested in projects that target:

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- sectors with low levels of female representation or low numbers of women in senior management, including STEM;
- returners who have been out of paid employment for 10 years or more;
- lower-paid, lower-skilled returners;
- employment opportunities outside London;
- small and medium enterprises;
- people with the following protected characteristics:
  - Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic,
  - Disabled,
  - Older workers.



Government  
Equalities Office



**ersa**  
Employment Related  
Services Association

**SQW**

# Returners Fund: Progressing to the Full Application

# Returners Fund

## Expressions of Interest - Learnings



Fund Managers  
on behalf of:



Helen Fagan

Grants Manager

020 32913021

[returnersfund@rocketsciencelab.co.uk](mailto:returnersfund@rocketsciencelab.co.uk)

## The numbers

- 122 Expressions of Interest received for Round 2
- 25 projects have been invited to proceed to a full application
- Selected applications reflect a broad geographic spread (primarily outside London), 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 almost 3,000 beneficiaries and almost 2,500 employers

## What We Found

- Despite our desire to see projects outside of London there were still a high proportion of projects from London and the South East
- Returners as a cohort were still sometimes misunderstood by applicants who failed to recognise any differences between Returners and the more general 'unemployed'
- 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 employment opportunities created,
  - A lack of recognition of the contribution the project can have to a policy context and in tackling the gender pay gap.

<b>Round 2 – Next Stage</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Deadline for return of full applications</b>	9 <sup>th</sup> November
<b>Assessment Phase</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> November - 7 <sup>th</sup> December
<b>Applicants notified of outcome</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2019
<b>Grant Contract/Negotiation of Conditions etc.</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> January – 31 <sup>st</sup> January
<b>Project delivery period begins (max 12 months)</b>	February 2019

# Returners Fund Full Application Form



Fund Managers  
on behalf of:



Helen Fagan

Grants Manager

020 32913021

[returnersfund@rocketsciencelab.co.uk](mailto:returnersfund@rocketsciencelab.co.uk)

# Portal Homepage

[www.returnersfund.  
flexigrant.co.uk](http://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 30<sup>th</sup> and for the second round, by the 16<sup>th</sup> 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

### UPDATE MY INFORMATION

Update your account and contact information using the link below.

[My account](#)

[My applications](#)

### CONTACT US

[Email us](#)

[020 3291 3021](tel:02032913021)

### 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](mailto:returnersfund@rocketsciencelab.co.uk).

### Applications in progress

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

### Start a new application

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

# 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	<a href="#">Start</a>
2	Financial information	10 mins	In Progress	0 / 1 <a href="#">Edit</a>
3	Your project	15 mins	In Progress	<a href="#">Edit</a>
4	Need and demand	5 mins	Not Started	<a href="#">Start</a>
5	Partnership and project management	10 mins	Not Started	<a href="#">Start</a>
6	Impact and sustainability	10 mins	Not Started	<a href="#">Start</a>
7	Experience and references	15 mins	Not Started	<a href="#">Start</a>
8	Declaration	1 minute	Not Started	<a href="#">Start</a>

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.**

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

## Evaluation of the Returner Fund

Jo Hutchinson

# Agenda

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

# 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

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- 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, intermediaries 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

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- 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

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# MONITORING DATA

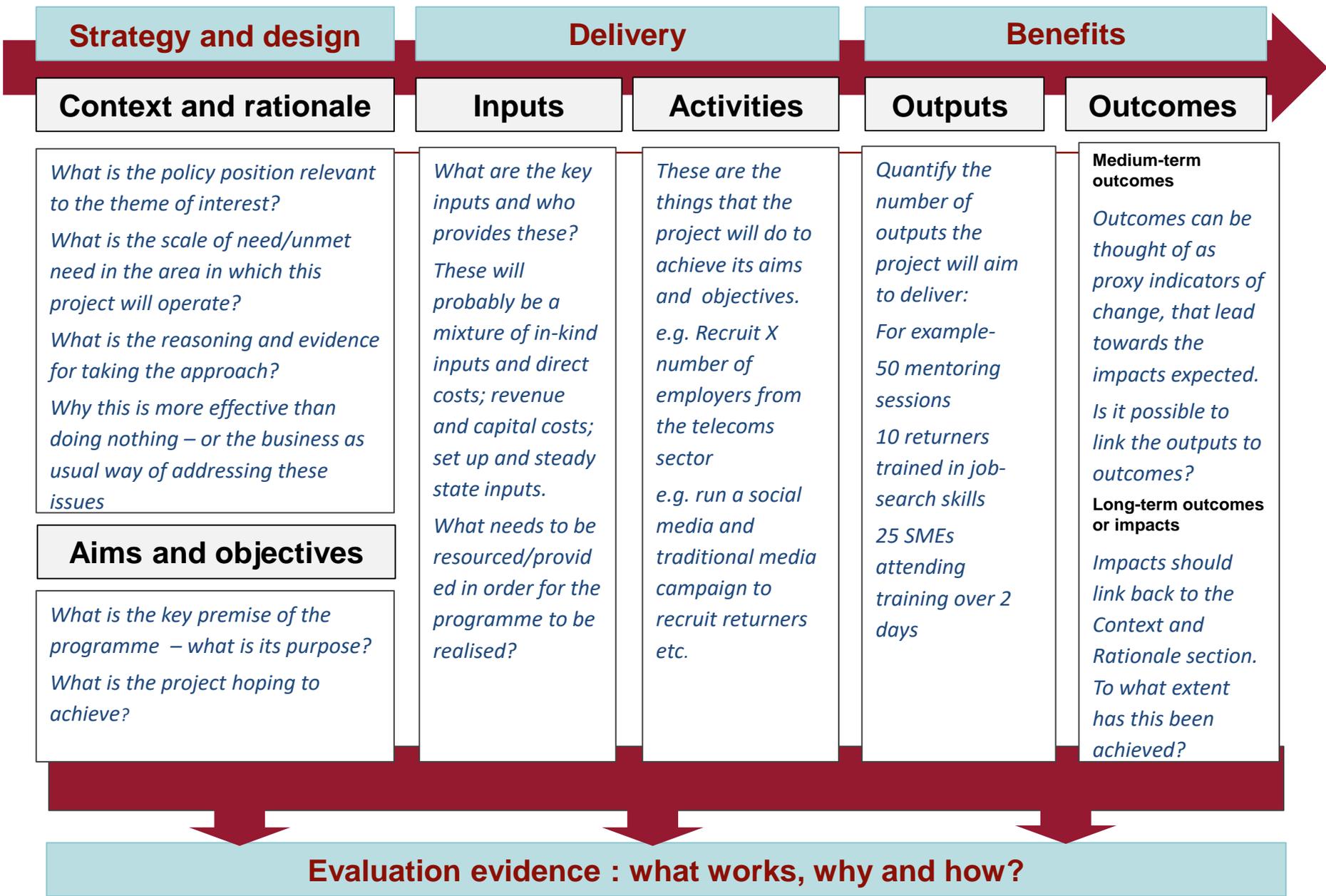
# Monitoring data

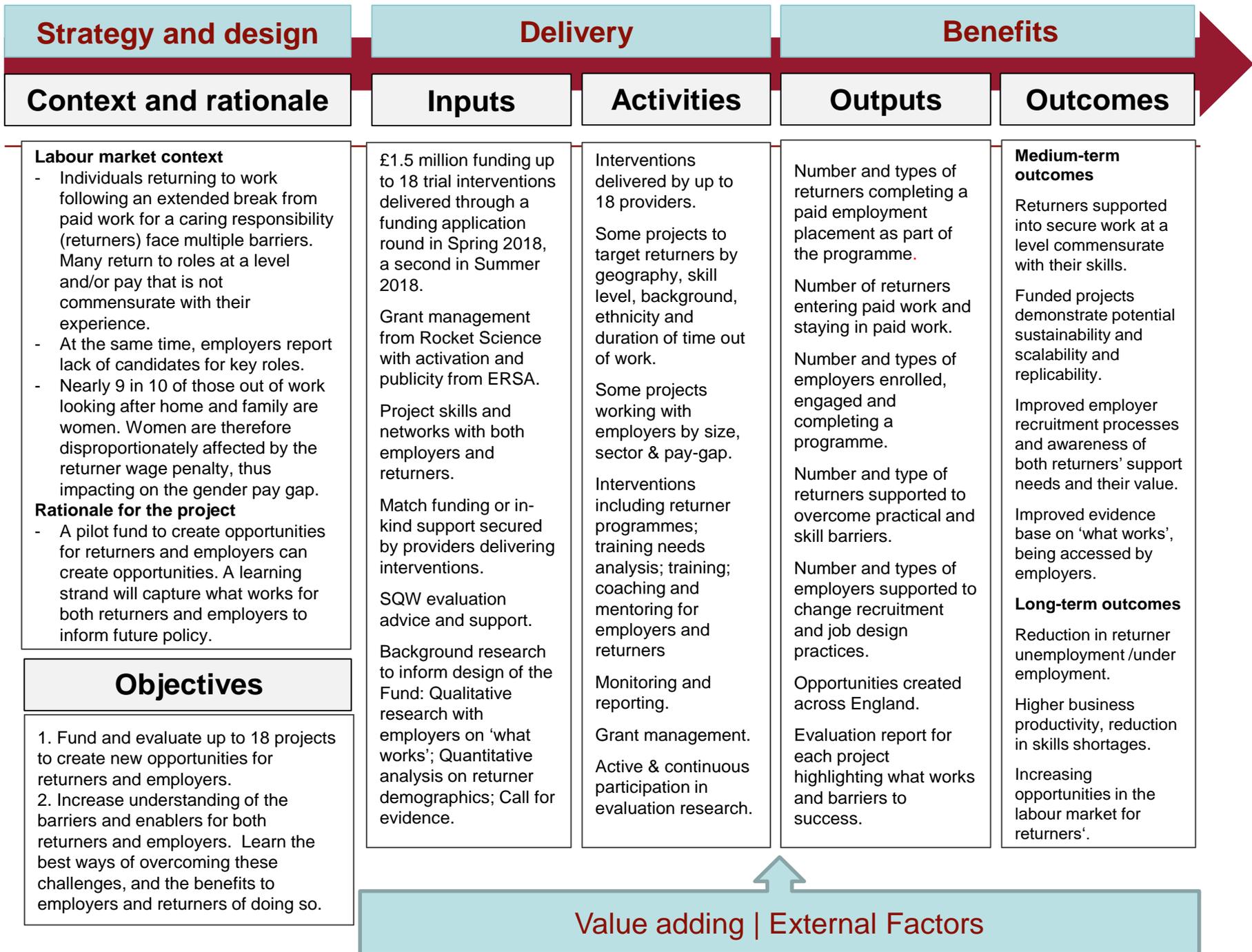
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- Monitoring data is needed for grant management
  - Has the project worked with the number of returners they said they would?
  - Has the project worked with the number of employers they said they would?
- Monitoring data is needed as the foundation 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?

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# DEVELOPING A LOGIC MODEL





## Context and rationale

### Labour market context

- Individuals returning to work face multiple barriers...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 for key roles.
- Nearly 9 in 10 of those out of work looking after home and family are women.

### Rationale for the project

- A pilot fund to create opportunities for returners and employers can create opportunities. A learning strand will capture what works for both returners and employers to inform future policy.

## Objectives

- Fund and evaluate up to 18 projects to create new opportunities for returners and employers.
- 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.

## 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.
- Project skills and networks with both employers and returners.
- Match funding or in-kind support secured by providers delivering interventions.
- SQW evaluation advice and support.
- 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 by geography, skill level, background, ethnicity and duration of time out of work.
- Some projects working with employers by size, sector & pay-gap.
- Interventions including returner programmes; training needs analysis; training; coaching and mentoring for employers and returners
- Monitoring and reporting.
- Grant management.
- Active & continuous participation in evaluation research

## Outputs

## Outcomes

- 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 type of returners supported to overcome practical and skill barriers.
- 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.

### 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'.

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# EVALUATION DATA

# Each project will support data collection...

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## Management Information

- Standard requirements
- Excel format for registration & monitoring
- Reported to RSUK
- Shared with SQW

## Feedback from businesses

- E-survey 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

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**WHAT NEXT?**

# How will funded projects work with SQW?

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- 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

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- Today's appointments or initial conversation
- Let us know what support you need and when
  - Contact us by Monday 29th October latest please
  - [RF.Evaluation@sqw.co.uk](mailto:RF.Evaluation@sqw.co.uk)
- Allocated to a named consultant
  - Completion by Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November (latest!)



# Objectives of the grant fund

**GEO has three key objectives underpinning the choice to run this grant fund:**

**1** We want to create opportunities for returners in specific sectors in the private sector – we hope that these projects drive cultural and structural change

The important business engagement you will be doing as part of the projects will help us to achieve the first objective. We will select projects based on their scalability, replicability and potential impact on other businesses if continued.

**2** We want to increase our knowledge of what works to bring returners back to work at a level commensurate with their skills and experience

The evaluation of your projects will help us to achieve the second and third objectives.

**3** We want to increase our understanding of the economic and socio-cultural benefits to businesses of running returner programmes and hiring returners.

We are keen to focus on geographic areas and industries where there are a lack of opportunities for returners and evidence. We want to understand the barriers to businesses as well as what support is required to break down barriers for returners themselves.

Organisation	Project	Amount Awarded
<b>Changing Lives</b>	Changing Lives is a national charity that provides specialist support to vulnerable people and families. With our grant they will help 80 returners in the North East who have complex needs such as: homelessness, sexual exploitation, addictions, mental and physical health problems, long-term unemployment and poverty.	<b>£95,000</b>
<b>Women Returners</b>	Women Returners is a social consultancy supporting returners. They are the established experts in this area, have supported over 50 employers to develop their own returner programmes and developed our Best Practice guidance. Our grant will allow them to support 100 returners through workshops and training in the legal sector in the North West and Leeds. They will also reform the recruitment and support practices of 12 law firms to enable them to target returners in the future.	<b>£110,000</b>
<b>Back2businessship</b>	Back2businessship has a track record of getting returners back to work in the marketing, PR and communications sectors. This includes career changers, parents, carers, returners and flexible workers. With our grant and match-funding from our Employer Company Ambassadors, back2businessship will work with 25 employers in the Thames Valley, including SMEs, to target job opportunities for 40 returners in the technology, FinTech and financial services sector.	<b>£32,000</b>

Organisation	Project	Amount Awarded
St Helens Chamber	<p>St Helen's Chamber is a chamber of commerce that places emphasis in the role the private sector can play in supporting the broader community, particularly in an area of high unemployment.</p> <p>Our grant will support them to engage 120 returners through career coaching using a pop-up classroom. They will equally engage employers in the local area to identify suitable job opportunities and broker recruitment.</p>	£187,000
Creative Equals	<p>Creative Equals is an organisation supporting returners in the creative sector. Our grant will allow them to run workshops for 30 returners and support them into roles with 15 employers that will have their recruitment and support practices reformed.</p>	£65,000