# Returners Fund Round 2 open for EOIs

The Expression of Interest application process for Round 2 of the Returners Fund is open until 16th August 2018.

There was a high demand in Round 1 with 93 EOIs submitted, of which 16 projects were invited to submit a full application.

In this email we set out some advice for applicants to Round 2, based on the feedback from our assessors after scoring the first round applications. You have been sent this email as you have registered on the Returners Fund grants portal to begin an application.

This will not impact the evaluation process of the EOIs, and will in no way affect the evaluation of the EOIs that have already been submitted.

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**Areas to note**

- Despite the GEO's stated desire to see projects outside of London there was still an overwhelming presence of projects from London and the South East – often with no recognition of the existing provision in the capital and why their project would not duplicate this.

- Returners as a cohort were often misunderstood by applicants and were commonly confused with the more general 'unemployed' category.

*The Government Equalities Office defines a 'returner' as a person who has been out of 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. This includes both parents and carers.*

- Applications often failed to demonstrate that they had considered particular additional support needs that returners are likely to require when designing their project.

- The recommended length of a returner placement with an employer is 3-6 months and we would anticipate some lead in time. In total, projects cannot exceed 12 months and we would anticipate most being shorter. Applicants should justify the length of time that they require funding for. The majority of projects proposed were for 12 months in total.

- Applicants should detail what they are proposing to do with the grant, not the work they are currently doing.

- If the programme targets a specific group of Returners this should be made clear.

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**Further common areas where EOIs received low scores:**

- lack of engagement with employers;
- unrealistic numbers of Returners engaged / weak plans of how to engage Returners;
- very few (in some cases, zero) employment opportunities created;
- weak plans for sustainability;
- weak proposal for scalability / replicability.

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**Round 2 Focus**

In light of the organisations that have been shortlisted for Round 1, the GEO is particularly interested to receive applications from the following for Round 2 in order to reach its programme wide targets:

- Projects that target parents rather than carers

- Projects that target both parents and carers. The EOIs will be moderated to ensure that there is a balance between the two at the programme level. So far the majority of applicants have focussed on carers
- The majority of programmes have focussed on the returner side support and evidence. We are equally interested in understanding how we can better support employers to hire and support returners

Continue or complete your application to the Returners Fund at https://returnersfund.flexigrant.com/

Good luck in completing your application!

If you have any questions please get in contact:
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With regards,

The Returners Fund Team

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