

# EO Knowledge Programme: Invitation to Quote

*7 September 2022*

Please find below an invitation to quote (ItQ) for the EO Knowledge Programme (KP). This will be a grant funded project run as a collaboration between the funder (Employee Ownership Association), the programme manager and subject-matter expert (Ownership at Work) and a credible and capable independent third party research provider(s).

The process launches today (7 September 2022) and will close at midnight on Wednesday 5 Oct, allowing 4 weeks for responses from interested parties.

## Ambition

The KP intends to transform the UK's understanding of employee ownership (EO) and the sector's knowledge about itself. The KP has been commissioned by the sector's trade body the Employee Ownership Association. It has been designed and will be programme managed by the independent charitable think tank Ownership at Work.

## Outputs

Whilst there is growing interest in EO, the sector faces rapidly growing demands to prove the claims that are made on behalf of the model. To do that the sector needs:

- **Better evidence** including facts and data that demonstrate the impact of EO
- **EO-specific good practice data** so EO firms can benchmark, learn and improve
- **To demonstrate any difference EO makes** compared to other business types
- **To give a full account of EO impact** on commercial performance and on employees, communities and the planet

## Outcomes

High quality data can support EO business performance and help the sector to thrive. If the evidence generated by the KP demonstrates any benefits achieved through the model, it will:

- Encourage continued support from **national and local policymakers (including HM Treasury)**
- Help **EO companies** to routinely benchmark against good EO practice
- Support understanding by **business owners** of EO as a credible succession option
- Secure easier and more affordable access capital from **banks and investors**
- Win better recognition for EO businesses from **public sector buyers, large firm supply chain managers, regulators, standards setters and mainstream media**

## Delivery

The KP will deliver a 12-18 month research programme. The EOA and OAW will partner with world-class, independent research institutions to deliver three parallel projects:

1. **The EO Performance project:** Extensive research on EO firms' economic, social and environmental performance and how that compares with non-EO businesses
2. **The Good EO project:** A benchmarking survey allowing firms to routinely access EO-specific good practice from high-performing peers
3. **The EO Integrated Impact project:** Development of a free-to-use model that enables EO businesses to measure and manage social and environmental impact

This will provide rigorous quantitative and qualitative data, taken across a large and representative sample of EO businesses, measuring multiple impact variables (including size, sector, ownership level and type) and providing a depth and quality of insight that doesn't exist today.

This project will mark a step change and build on the sector's last significant at scale exercise to capture and showcase evidence for the model: [The Ownership Dividend, 2018](#).

Contributing funders for this Programme include the Employee Ownership Association, the John Lewis Partnership, Mott MacDonald, Howden Group, Scott Bader Commonwealth, Fieldfisher, Gripple, Loadhog, and MAKE Architects.

## Process

### Timings

Please find below the timetable for our process:

Key dates:	
Publish ItQ	Weds 7 Sept
Deadline for clarification questions	Tues 20 Sept
All clarification questions answered by	Fri 23 Sept
ItQ response deadline (midnight)	Weds 5 Oct
Sift and shortlist	Thurs 6 Oct
Interviews/presentations	Mon 10-Weds 12 Oct
Confirm successful respondent(s)	Thurs 13 Oct
Complete contracts	Tues 18 Oct
KP kick-off session	Weds 19 Oct

Please submit any clarification questions to [nathan.thomas@employeeownership.co.uk](mailto:nathan.thomas@employeeownership.co.uk) by midnight on Tuesday 20 September. We will attempt to reply to questions promptly and will

share answers to questions we think will be relevant to all applicants. We will have replied to all questions by no later than close of business on Friday 23 September.

***Deadline for submissions is midnight on Wednesday 5 October.***

We recognise the timings post-submission are tight, but we ask applicants to please try to protect time for potential shortlist interviews/presentations and capacity to complete contracts within the dates outlined.

**Applications**

We are looking for highly credible research partner(s) who can deliver high quality outputs across all 3 strands at a price that demonstrates clear value for money.

Our preference is for applications to set out a comprehensive offer across all 3 requested work packages. We are very happy to consider consortium approaches and can see there could be considerable benefits to combining the strengths of different types of providers (including academic institutions and commercial research firms).

We will also consider applications that only address one or two of the workstreams and will consider introducing applicants to one another if necessary post-submission, though we are running our process to a tight timetable so are looking to applicants to find the best fit partners in advance. If you are happy for us to share your details with other applicants, so that applicants can consider potential partners in advance of submitting a proposal, please let us know as soon as possible.

If applying with partners, please remember we are judging based on cost as well as quality and are looking for efficiencies in approach across workstreams.

We are looking for the main application document to be not more than 10 pages of a Word document or 20 slides of a PowerPoint, and we will accept a reasonable and proportionate amount of supplementary information in annexes.

We expect applications to cover at least the following areas:

- Why you want to be the research partner in this collaborative project
- Which of the 3 work packages you will deliver
- Whether and how you are working with any partners
- Your detailed proposed approach to delivering those work packages with clear rationale (including research methodology)
- Clearly defined outputs and a delivery timetable
- Seniority levels of personnel working on specific elements of the project
- Your proposed costings broken down by delivery element and outputs
- Track record: We ask applicants to provide at least 3 examples of reasonably recent previous work that involves similar scale projects, similar types of activity and outputs, and named references at least 2 of those projects.

**Price**

The financial envelope for this programme is approximately £150,000 (final funding subject to discussion). This is grant funding so no VAT will apply.

## Scope

Please find below a more detailed breakdown of the scope of the 3 proposed work packages to inform your responses:

Research aspect	What we're looking for
<b>Title of research project</b>	The EO Knowledge Programme
<b>Purpose of project</b>	To significantly upgrade the quality and rigour of the national evidence base for the employee owned business (EOB) model.
<b>Define EOBs</b>	We are using the EOA's definition of an EOB: minimum 25% stake held by employees, all employees can become owners, comes with additional opportunity for voice and participation.
<b>Main objectives</b>	<p>To deliver 3 parallel research work packages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) A multi-level research project to capture and analyse the economic, employee and (as far as possible) wider social and environmental performance of EOBs - and compare to those of non-EOBs. The aim will be to create the substantive evidence baseline for the sector.</li> <li>2) Design and roll-out a survey and produce in-depth analysis of management practice in EO firms (including employee voice, representation, governance, sharing reward, wider operating practice) and correlate to key performance metrics. This will support identification of good practice and creation of sector-specific benchmarks that enable comparison and improvement. The aim will be to produce an approach that can be rolled out annually.</li> <li>3) To develop a detailed model for measuring and accounting for the social and environmental impact of sharing ownership in a business, that can be picked up and used by any EO business. This will be tested with a small range of EOBs. The aim will be to share this approach/tool with the sector as a public good.</li> </ol> <p>We want the findings and outputs from each of these work packages to be immediately relevant and accessible to our key audiences.</p> <p>We want the approach taken to gathering and analysing the data in each work package to be designed and captured in way that allows it to be straight-forward to replicate, supporting the sector to compound the depth of its research base over upcoming years.</p>
<b>Rough project timescale</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) 12-18 months with 6-monthly interim outputs</li> <li>2) 12-15 months with publication of Year 1 findings in month 13</li> </ol>

	3) 3 months with publication of impact measurement model in month 3
<b>Target audiences for findings</b>	Policy-makers – national, regional and local (particularly HM Treasury); EO management teams and employee leaders; non-EO business owners; banks and investors; public and private sector buyers/supply chain leads; business education, accreditors, standards setters and regulators; mainstream media commentators.
<b>Type of companies to be studied</b>	EOBs – of a broad range of sizes and EO ownership models/levels, across multiple geographies and industry sectors.  Control group of comparable non-EOBs in work package 1.
<b>Broad type and scale of primary research</b>	Balance differs between the 3 work packages and is highly price/cost sensitive. Assumption is: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Largely quantitative, at least 120-150 EOB respondents</li> <li>2) Largely qualitative, at least 75 EOB respondents</li> <li>3) Mix, at least 10 EOB respondents</li> </ol> <p>We expect qualitative research to be conducted almost exclusively remotely/virtually.</p> <p>Supporting the Main objectives, we welcome approaches that consider correlating findings where relevant against existing recurring datasets to provide credible external benchmarks or points of comparison.</p>
<b>Recruitment of research respondents</b>	OAW supported by EOA will be able to support research partners to access EOBs across all 3 work packages (which we believe will provide time and cost savings).  We will look to understand how applicants will identify the non-EOB control group for work package 1.
<b>Applicant personnel</b>	Given OAW and EOA reputation will be on the line, particularly with EOA support to recruit EOB research candidates, we will look for reassurance that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any applicant contact with EOBs is conducted in a highly professional way and at an appropriately senior level</li> <li>• Any qualitative interviews are conducted by relatively senior individuals with relevant/credible EO knowledge</li> </ul>
<b>Programme management, reporting and monitoring</b>	OAW will provide a Programme Manager who will lead coordination across all 3 work packages, support the Programme Oversight Board, and oversee research partner delivery to agreed timelines and provision of regular reporting updates to standardised formats.

	<p>Successful applicants will be expected to attend a kick-off meeting, followed by regular programme update meetings and any relevant meetings of the Programme Oversight Board; and subsequently to produce a clearly defined and detailed final scope and implementation plan and timetable for their work package(s), including setting out robust project management and reporting arrangements. (For clarity, we do not expect this detail for ItQ response.)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Research outputs required</b></p>	<p>For 1) we will expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A systematic literature review</li> <li>• Publishable interim findings on a roughly 6-monthly basis</li> <li>• A final report capturing research findings including a concise and publishable executive summary in Word and PowerPoint formats</li> </ul> <p>For 2) we will expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A final report capturing research findings including a concise and publishable executive summary in Word and PowerPoint formats</li> </ul> <p>For 3) we will expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A summary of feedback from test businesses and resulting refinements to the draft measurement model</li> <li>• A final publishable version of the measurement approach (and any relevant tools) that can be easily made available online to the whole EO sector</li> </ul> <p>From the Programme overall, we will expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand how the applicant could include peer review of findings</li> <li>• To understand what role the applicant can/would expect to play in dissemination of findings</li> <li>• To outline how the applicant would support creation of a publicly accessible online database that EOBs and potentially wider audiences can easily access</li> <li>• Recommendations on follow up research topics</li> <li>• Clarity from academic applicants on whether they would want to create a parallel academic output for publication</li> </ul>

## Contacting us

We are tremendously excited about this Programme and look forward to working closely and enthusiastically with our future research partner(s). If you have any non-process questions regarding Ownership at Work or the Employee Ownership Association, please reach out to us via [nathan.thomas@employeeownership.co.uk](mailto:nathan.thomas@employeeownership.co.uk) and we will reply promptly.