

**Tenders sought for research project**

**Downward Mobility, Opportunity Hoarding and the “Glass Floor”**

**Overview**

The Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission ([www.gov.uk/smcpc](http://www.gov.uk/smcpc)) is inviting proposals for research into the relationship between socio-economic background, cognitive and non-cognitive skills, and adult job outcomes. This research forms part of the Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission’s role as an advocate for social mobility in the UK.

The purpose of this work is to understand why some people from advantaged backgrounds succeed in the labour market despite apparent low ability or fewer academic achievements. Conversely, the research should examine why some people from disadvantaged backgrounds do not succeed, despite apparent ability or academic attainment. These different outcomes should be explained in terms of correlations with individual characteristics using longitudinal cohort study data.

The successful bidder will have a track record of working in this subject area and will be an individual or group experienced in producing well-evidenced, newsworthy, conclusions.

This research will be commissioned via a single procurement phase, for which succinct proposals are invited. Assessment of tenders will be on the basis of the criteria at the end of this document. The contract between the Commission and the successful bidder will run from the date of issue until no later than the middle of March 2015. Research will be published on the Commission’s website and should be drafted with Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission branding and format.

Tenders should be submitted to [contact@smcpcommission.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:contact@smcpcommission.gsi.gov.uk) no later than 17:00 Tuesday 6 January. They should be in Word or PDF format and include:

* Your proposed approach to the research (2 sides max). You may wish to set out in this section:
  + Overview of analytical approach, including approach to defining ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ socio-economic groups;
  + How you can add value and why you should be selected;
  + Proposed datasets;
  + What individual characteristics your proposals will assess;
  + Expected findings;
  + Timeline for research and risks.
* Examples of key relevant experience and individual/staff expertise and qualifications (1-2 sides max);
* Summary of cost (1 side max).

Communication of complex information in a straightforward way is necessary to this project. Therefore **tenders that exceed 5 sides of A4 will be not be considered**.

**Research questions**

This research seeks to replicate a study from the USA conducted by the Brookings Institute [(Reeves and Howard 2013)](http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/research/files/papers/2013/11/glass%20floor%20downward%20mobility%20equality%20opportunity%20hoarding%20reeves%20howard/glass%20floor%20downward%20mobility%20equality%20opportunity%20hoarding%20reeves%20howard.pdf). It seeks to establish whether a ‘glass floor’ exists in the UK to prevent social mobility downwards as well as upwards. We anticipate the study would draw on data from the British Birth Cohort Study 1970, but researchers may propose other or additional datasets.

Key questions for the research are:

* To what extent are both cognitive and non-cognitive skills in adolescents from high and low income background linked to their household income in later life?
* Do individuals from a higher socio-economic background outperform the trajectory that their skills and educational attainment would indicate they are on course to meet? Do individuals from a lower socio-economic background underperform on the basis of skill and attainment?
  + The research will need to create a simple model predicting adult income on the basis of cognitive ability and non-cognitive ability, then compare this to longitudinal survey data;
  + The study should identify two groups of individuals: those from a high social economic background (for example, top 40% of earners) with low ability who, on the basis of this, would be predicted to be downwardly mobile and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (for example, bottom 40% of earners) and high ability predicted to be upwardly mobile.
* What factors enable individuals from an advantaged background with lower skills to avoid downward mobility? For example, their own education, their parents’ education or entry into certain occupations?
  + The research should develop a model to estimate the characteristics that determine whether individuals from the two groups above do in fact end up in the top of earners in adulthood. For example, a [recent study](http://www.chicagofed.org/digital_assets/publications/chicago_fed_letter/2015/cfl330.pdf) has considered the link between income elasticity and numeracy, literacy, problem solving and non-cognitive skills, characteristics that may be of interest for this research.

**Acceptable standards of bidders**

The following sets out the acceptable standards of bidders for this research and how these should be evidenced:

* Experience of working flexibly with clients in developing complex research and analysis;
* Clarity in communicating progress of work to clients and explaining issues that arise in a timely manner;
* Risk management expertise including track record in escalating risks to clients for discussion;
* If necessary, experience in working with other organisations as part of larger research programmes.
* A track record of research drawing on longitudinal data resulting in news-worthy conclusions.

*In specific for this quantitative research*

* a track record of research in this area, extracting original, news-worthy conclusions from existing public datasets and presenting this in a clear way.

**Evaluation criteria**

Tenders will be evaluated against the criteria below. A primary weighting means the criteria will be given greater consideration in assessment of bids.

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| **Criteria** | **Potential examples** | **Weighting** |
| Team and organisational experience in conducting and presenting quantitative research | * Examples of research using longitudinal datasets * Experience of presenting findings in catching and clear ways | Primary |
| Expertise of proposed staff | * Experience of staff in relevant research techniques * Experience of specific research in this area and familiarity with relevant data | Primary |
| Cost | * Estimation of cost for whole life of project | Primary |
| Experience in field of social mobility | * Examples of publications or other research demonstrating expertise * Examples of work adding substantially new contributions social mobility particularly labour market trajectories | Secondary |

**Delivery Requirements**

Based on commissioning in January 2015 the deadline for final products will be mid-March 2015. Final products should be in electronic format.

We estimate the research should cost no more than £15,000.