

The Regional State of Women's Enterprise in England – Tender Brief

This brief sets out the objectives and requirements of the body chosen to research and prepare a report on the regional state of Women's Enterprise in England, for which you are invited to tender. This should be read in conjunction with the background briefing paper enclosed.

The research will commence early November 2004 with the aim of signing off the main report, ready for dissemination by the 2nd week in February 2005. PROWESS will want to publish the findings for use at various events, commencing with International Women's Day on 8 March 2005.

Key objectives of the tender

1. To survey the activities of the English Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), regarding their levels of support and development for Women's Enterprise (WE). This could be undertaken in a number of ways, which the applicant is required to set out in their methodological proposal.¹
2. As part of this survey, to identify relevant strategies and policies of the RDAs and rigorously ascertain the levels of female business involvement, together with their effectiveness in addressing women's enterprise issues. This could be undertaken through analysing published data, budgetary allocations or interview, for example.
3. Incorporate PROWESS case studies of regional good/best practice of WE development in England, ensuring a good spread of examples vis-à-vis backgrounds/ethnicity etc. The report should also signpost PROWESS to other examples of good practice that may emerge during the course of the research.
4. Following investigation, to develop a methodology to objectively and effectively assess the base line and future progress of development of WE on a regional level.

Key outcome of the tender

5. To produce a dissemination report, detailing and highlighting the results of the above activity.²

¹ PROWESS would make appropriate reference material available, including the conference notes from 'Making it Happen', an event which took place on 1 July 04 to elicit feedback from all RDAs about their response to the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework.

² The report should contain a full list of references, and list of contacts used during the research.

The report should include

- Information on key participating stakeholders in the region, preferably categorising these according to set criteria (that should be identified in your methodology).
- 'Who knows what' – where intelligence and information is held on women's enterprise.
- Barriers to strategic implementation – who, or what is holding initiatives back
- Mainstreaming – are regional economic strategies and implementation plans taking into consideration the involvement of, and impact on women in the regions?

In summary, the report should address

- The state of women's enterprise across the regions of England, set out region by region.
- What needs to be done to address both strategic imperatives and any operational barriers.
- A robust framework for monitoring and evaluating the progress toward the regional implementation of the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework, including key targets.

Arrangements for managing the research project

The appointed researcher/team will be expected to work closely with the following

- Steering Group chaired by PROWESS's Associate Director, Kiki Maurey, and comprising the PROWESS Strategy Group – this steering group will meet a minimum of three times to ensure that the research is on track and to provide support and guidance when necessary.
- Advisory Group, independently chaired and comprising representatives of all the English RDAs. The purpose of this group will be to support the research with information, data and contacts as well as ideas around overcoming barriers etc.

In order to apply for this tender, we require the following details from you

1. Name, address and contact details of you/ your organisation.
2. Relevant past experience of undertaking such an activity – to include when, what, where and outcomes.

3. Demonstration of a working knowledge of what is happening in each of the English regions vis-à-vis women's enterprise.
4. A profile of the key person/people who will be involved with the project, stating their role in the project, together with experience of involvement in similar work. It is essential that you can clearly demonstrate an ability and willingness to work in meaningful partnership with grassroots women's organisations. To this end we are more than happy to consider collaborative tenders for this work.
5. The proposed detailed methodology for approaching this work, including the rationale behind using chosen methods to approach this subject.
6. A detailed robust project plan setting out key tasks and outputs against the set timescale.
7. Your fees. These should include a detailed breakdown of daily rates, travel, overhead costs and proposed expenses. We envisage an inclusive budget of £25,000.
8. Two relevant referees, who can comment on your ability and competence to undertake this work.

Three copies of your tender should be addressed to:

**Kiki Maurey, Associate Director
In strict Confidence
RSWEE TENDER DOCUMENTATION
C/o Admin, PROWESS
Lion House
20-28 Muspole Street
Norwich NR3 1DJ UK**

To arrive by post at our offices above by 5pm on 20 October 2004.

**Alternatively, you can send an electronic copy to Prowess Admin:
Admin@prowess.org.uk, by the due date.**

Please note, we are unable to accept any proposals beyond the deadline.

Short-listed candidates will be invited to present their proposals on 28 October.

PROWESS thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal.

Prowess is the UK-wide advocacy network for the promotion of women's enterprise support. The Prowess vision is to create an environment where equal numbers of women and men are starting and growing businesses. Prowess aims to achieve this by

promoting and raising awareness of women's enterprise and the organisations that support this key area of economic growth, lobbying on their behalf to create a policy environment and opportunities which support the development of women's enterprise.

<http://www.prowess.org.uk/> The UK gateway to women-friendly business support.
Tel: 01603 762355/Fax: 01603 227090

The Regional State of Women's Enterprise in England: Briefing Paper

A. The Women's Enterprise Strategic framework – a catalyst for change

Women's enterprise in the UK has not previously been given such a high profile, in policy and strategy terms. Historically, the needs of women in business have largely been subsumed or marginalised in mainstream policy initiatives. However, in 2000 the government pledged to make the UK 'the best place in the world to start and grow a business'. Because of this, focus was given to ways in which business start up and viability could be improved across all regions and sections of UK society. The issues of the invisibility and lack of gender parity of women in the 'enterprise environment' then became apparent. When comparing the rates of start up and growth of women's businesses in the UK with other economically developed nations, Britain showed a poor position in its rate of women's business start up. Some examples are:

- In the UK women comprise 27% of self employed and own account workers compared with 34% in Austria, 28.7% in Belgium, 33.4% in Canada, 32.3% in Finland, and 39.8% in Portugal.
- In the United States, around 30% of businesses are wholly or majority women-owned; in the UK this figure is much lower at around 14%.
- Men are at least twice as likely to be an entrepreneur in the UK than women.
- The peak age groups at which people start businesses is 35-44 for both men and women – however the difference between male and female entrepreneurial activity is also at its highest in this age category.

(GEM report, 2004).

With this position established, the government launched the Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise (SFWE) in May 2003, in order to take steps to redress the balance. The DTI's Small Business Service took lead responsibility for the development of the Framework, which was drafted in consultation with PROWESS, the lead advocacy body for women's enterprise support providers. Other key strategic partners were HM Treasury, DTI's Women and Equality Unit and a number of private and voluntary sector bodies.

PROWESS focuses on four main elements of activity which impact on women and their potential to start and grow businesses. These are:

- business support provided to women;
- Access to finance and financial services for women;
- Impact of childcare and caring responsibilities;
- The transition from dependence on welfare benefits to self-employment.

The overarching targets set in the SFWE are:

- By 2006, women will account for 40% of customers using government sponsored business support services.

- By 2006, women owned businesses will account for 18-20% of the UK total (currently 12-14%).
- By 2006, the number of women from ethnic minority communities receiving business support assistance will be proportional to their representation in the relevant local/regional population.

The SFWE places the onus of delivery on agencies and organisations engaged with women at a local and regional level. Given the range agencies engaged in issues relating to the four key themes of the SFWE, there is an imperative for a multi-agency, multi-stakeholder strategic partnership in each English region. The aim is for such a body to take ownership and take the lead on the implementation of the SFWE at regional level.

The SFWE states the implications for delivery bodies across the country. These include, for example, the provision of flexible business support, greater numbers and access to networks, more affordable childcare, greater inter organisational collaboration on WE issues (eg Banks, Jobcentre Plus etc), and improved access to financial products and services.

B. The regional dimension

1. Regional development agencies

Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott announced the new programme for the regions in December 1997, launching the White Paper 'Building Partnerships for Prosperity'. The RDAs were established under the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998 and formally launched in eight English regions on 1 April 1999. The ninth, in London, was established in July 2000 following the establishment of the Greater London Authority (GLA).

The nine Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) set up in the English Regions are non-departmental public bodies. Their primary role is as strategic drivers of regional economic development in their region. They aim to co-ordinate regional economic development and regeneration, enable the regions to improve their relative competitiveness and reduce the imbalance that exists within and between regions.

Under the Regional Development Agencies Act 1998, each Agency has five statutory purposes, which are:

- To further economic development and regeneration
- To promote business efficiency, investment and competitiveness
- To promote employment
- To enhance development and application of skill relevant to employment
- To contribute to sustainable development

This remit makes the RDAs a natural focal point for involvement in the strategic development of regional women's enterprise initiatives. It is with these agencies that much of the strategic work to date has occurred. PROWESS has adopted a strategy to develop a network of women's enterprise regional coordinators, or champions across the RDAs. A conference was held in July 2004, at which all nine RDAs attended and gave update reports on their progress to date on a strategic approach to women's enterprise in their regions.

Although momentum has been created, progress has been relatively slow. Two coordinators have already been recruited, with one or two more likely to be recruited by the end of 2004. Progress on the strategic development of women's enterprise has been achieved to varying degrees in all regions, with differing approaches and processes adopted across England. It is expected that the research will analyse this situation in detail.

2. Other strategic regional/national stakeholders

Besides the key pivotal position of the RDAs in the region, it is important to note that women's enterprise issues impact on other regional strategic bodies in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Business Link Operators (which are to be directly contracted and funded by the RDAs from April 2005) currently play a key operational part in achieving the targets for business support within the SFWE. The Department for Trade and Industry (DTI), The government Offices for the regions (GO), Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), Department for Education and Skills (DFES), Local Authorities, private sector organisations such as Banks and Accountants and voluntary sector groups all play a part in developing and supporting women's enterprise.

In addition, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is responsible for addressing the needs of transition from benefits to business, and numerous agencies are involved in the funding, support and provision of childcare across the UK. In spite of increased visibility of women in the labour market, women still remain as primary carers within the home. For example 40% of women business owners combine childcare with work (NOP/NatWest 2000). It is therefore also important to consult with regional bodies involved in all caring activities, including elderly care and care for the disabled (eg Age Concern, Primary Care Trusts) in order to ascertain a full picture of the barriers women face, often overlooked in general debates and statistics.

The needs and requirements of organisations currently supporting women entering or growing businesses also need to be considered. Many of these are members of PROWESS, and hold 'flagship status' for providing excellence in the forms of support offered to women in business. These are exemplar organisations which need to be involved as role models in regional dialogue with other stakeholders.

C. Other strategies impacting on the proposed report

Given the cross-departmental, multi-disciplinary nature of economic and social policy on women, there are a number of other strategies which will need to be considered in

order to obtain the full picture of the state of women's enterprise in England today. Examples of two of these are given below.

- The recent DTI Innovation report – 'Competing in the Global Economy' (DTI, Dec 2003) places a responsibility on RDAs to prepare action plans for women's enterprise support, and work in partnership with PROWESS 'flagship agencies' to establish good practice in enterprise support.
- Another DTI document 'Social Enterprise: a strategy for success' (DTI, July 2002) explores the role of social enterprise in the modern economy. Women are more active in social economy businesses than in the wider business environment, with a number of regions showing higher levels of female social entrepreneurship than males (GEM, 2003).

A number of reports have been drafted by organisations, seeking to gain an overview of strategic issues on a national level. Examples include 'Social Enterprise in English RDAs (SEC 2003), 'Achieving the Vision, Female Entrepreneurship' (BCC, 2004), and the 'Review of Area Based Initiatives: Impacts and outcomes' (ODPM, HMSO 2003). All of these reports have sought to look at the state of regional approaches to key national strategic policy initiatives. The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) have also recently published a report on women's entrepreneurship in partnership with GEM³ and includes a number of policy recommendations for consideration by government and others.

An important study which provides valuable longitudinal information on the state of entrepreneurship in the UK in general with specific detailed analysis on women and social enterprise, is the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) (Harding, R. LBS, 2004). As part of a world survey, the GEM report offers the most up to date statistics on the state of women's participation as entrepreneurs in the UK.

More recently, the Annual Business Survey has been published by the Small Business Service (July 2004). The report provides some contemporary useful gender data and observations on the state of women's business activity.

Reports have also been undertaken in Northern Ireland ('Investing In Women' report on strategy development and implementation, 2003), and reports into aspects of women and work and enterprise are available for Scotland and Wales (from the Scottish Development Agency and Chwarae Teg/Fairplay), which have their own devolved assemblies and strategic approaches.

D. Why a report now?

Over fifteen months have passed since the launch of the SFWE. Prior to this and over the last 20 years a few organisations had been undertaking valuable work on women's enterprise. In late 1999 (?) the government launched the Phoenix Development Fund which was created to address certain of the recommendations set out in the Policy Action Team report 'Enterprise and Social Exclusion' published by H M Treasury in

³ 'Achieving the Vision – Female Entrepreneurship'

November 1999. The fund gave funding to a number of organisations that had been working to support women's enterprise for some time, and built capacity through grant funding a number of valuable new projects, including the formation of PROWESS.

Over the last four years, the 'justification' for government backed support has shifted in emphasis, from the Social inclusion and Equality agendas to the economic imperative. The present Chancellor in launching the "Make your Mark" enterprising campaign in June 2004 confirmed his belief in the importance of stimulating women's enterprise as a key economic driver by stating that:

"... the key factor in increasing the UK's business start-up rates is getting more women to start their own business."

Related to this, in the current Public Spending Review announced on the 12th July 04 was a commitment to improve the number of childcare places available in addition to two key policy shifts affecting women's enterprise and the regions. Chapter 23 of the Review, outlines:

"Further increases to the RDAs funding (and) devolves to them additional resources and responsibilities"

In section 23.4, that the RDAs "increased resources " allows the Review to devolve:

- "...responsibility to the RDAs for the delivery of Business Link services from April 2005" and,
- "....new responsibilities for the delivery of research and development (R&D) grants and for parts of the successor to the Phoenix Fund, which focuses on enterprise in disadvantaged areas, to enable an integrated approach to business support at the regional level"

It can be seen from the above that there is at present a complex set of agencies and organisations crucial to the overall achievement of greater numbers of women, both entering and remaining in business in England. It is given this contextual background that the need for further investigation into the state of women's enterprise policy and practice in the regions, has occurred.