Planning a project involving migrant researchers: an 8 point checklist

- **Do you need to persuade a funder or partners about co-production?**

This may be good initial surprise: if you're submitting a funding bid, you may not need to persuade the funder or partners that co-production is a good idea. We've funded at least three projects like this and never been asked to justify this aspect of our bid. Focus on the quality of the project rather than trying to win an argument that is largely already won.

- **Are you seeking funding for a set number of hours, part time or full time posts?**

The more researchers you recruit, the wider diversity among the researchers and thus greater potential to reach more and connect with diverse research participants. Part time posts might help those studying or those with caring responsibilities to get work experience. Some people need full time work. Part time staff can't make every meeting or get as involved in the

organisation as full time staff, and so you might inadvertently make alienation from the work culture more likely. Your organisation or project needs could be the crunch point in this decision.

- **Do you plan to create temporary or permanent jobs?**

This is rather a no-brainer; of course permanent jobs are generally a better option for any worker, and temporary jobs can reproduce uncertainty for people who have already lived with a great deal of uncertainty in their lives. Unfortunately, if you are applying for project funding fixed term contracts might be your only option. The pragmatic aspiration could be for temporary posts to potentially lead to more permanent ones – this might happen for example if a job comes up within the team that's advertised internally.

- **At what grade or level are you creating a migrant researcher job?**

The lowest possible salary (particularly when you may also be creating a temporary job) won't be empowering for a lot of people - but if you want to provide an opportunity you may not want to ask for a lot of experience. The salary has to reflect the skill level of the job. For us at Migration Yorkshire, we have no real control over setting a pay grade – we design the job profile we want, and our HR department advises what scale that job should be set at.

- **How would you describe and target the applicants you want to appoint?**

Are you looking for someone with experience of migration generally, or forced migration? Do you need someone with specific characteristics or language skills to communicate well with a particular population in your sample? You should consider whether you want to argue for an exemption from the Equality Act 2010 on certain grounds. These answers will also affect how you market the job application – the publication(s), the language, the social media channel(s) and the overall tone.

- **What's in a name? What job title will you devise?**

Words matter, and so our job titles matter – they define us as we endlessly introduce ourselves this way. You can't usually consult the job holder themselves until it's too late! If the job title implicitly or explicitly refers to a person's experience of being born outside the UK, then you are making a statement about part of the reason they were employed, their value to your organisation. At Migration Yorkshire we were advised not to pick a generic job title like 'researcher' or 'research assistant' if we wanted one of the critical criteria for the post to be lived experience of migrating to the UK, as it would invite a much wider pool of applicants who weren't really the people we had in mind when we created the job opportunity. Further, it is frankly easier to grab the attention of a funder or someone you want to influence if you make this clear rather than using euphemistic, opaque language. However, once in post you can be flexible

about how your researcher describes their role in their email signature or in meetings and fieldwork, rather than insist on using the precise job title in their contract.

- **How far are you prepared to listen to and adapt to the views of migrant researchers?**

We aspire to provide a work environment that gives valuable, rich, meaningful experiences and opportunities, and genuinely allows input and participation by all members of staff. At the same time, I want to avoid patronising my team by over-elevating members of staff with a migrant background, and which would not prepare them for other workplaces in the future. We can't promise to migrant researchers that all their input will be acted upon, or that there will be significant, immediate influence and change as a direct consequence of their research, in a world where researchers clamour for the holy grail of research impact – and frankly, a context where colleagues and practitioners that have may have little interest and time for your research at all.

- **How broad an experience of research will you offer?**

It seems common to focus on data collection, perhaps because that is where there is a clear advantage expected from working with migrant researchers who are likely to relate to potential research participants, especially those who may be distrusting of officials. But research involves so many other stages (design, analysis, writing, dissemination at least) that could be part of a migrant researcher's job too. It feels a more ethical approach to

actively include migrant researchers in all stages of a research project. In practice it’s a mountainous practical challenge to be able to have migrant researchers in post before a project has been designed and funded (which leads back to the ideal of having migrant researchers as permanent members of staff who can be involved in research bidding and so on).

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