



**Terms of Reference:
Lead Researcher (Multi-country
study on women's access to finance)**

Cherie Blair Foundation for Women

May 2026

Registered Charity No. 1125751.



Cherie Blair
**FOUNDATION
FOR WOMEN**



About us

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women exists to create a future where women everywhere enjoy equal economic opportunities so they can thrive. Together with partners around the world, we work with women in low and middle income countries so they can start, sustain and grow successful enterprises. We collaborate to create fairer business environments so women are not constrained by gendered barriers and can reach their potential on their terms.

Since 2008, our training and mentoring services have supported 300,000 women to build successful micro, small and medium enterprises in over 100 countries. By blending insights from research, strong partnerships and pioneering technology we open doors for women entrepreneurs to skills, confidence, networks, finance and markets. We press for change to stop millions of women being held back from having the choice and opportunity to thrive.

Our gender transformative approach means women can achieve their own economic objectives. They create a better future for themselves, their families, and their communities. They contribute to thriving, fair economies, and global economic justice.

Ways to get in touch

www.cherieblairfoundation.org
recruitment@cherieblairfoundation.org

+44 (0)20 7724 3109
PO Box 60519, London, W2 7JU

Our team

The Foundation is run by a dedicated team of approx. 20 staff, overseen by a Board of eight trustees. Based in London, we have a global reach, working in collaboration with partners across Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

What we do

The Foundation develops and delivers woman-centred services and initiatives that provide sustainable solutions to the challenges facing women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries so that many more women are able to start, sustain and grow successful enterprises. We work to effect change through fairer and more inclusive business environments.

Working with partners worldwide we deliver programmes to women that are designed to build knowledge, skills, confidence, networks and access to resources at different stages of their businesses. As a result, women can transform their businesses and their futures. Our delivery partners are entrepreneurship experts who are essential to our work and support us to adapt our programmes to relevant, local contexts.

- Our award-winning mobile business skills app, HerVenture, offers essential business training and support on-the-go, covering topics like launching a business, expanding market access, e-commerce and mobile money, for women at the start-up and early growth stages of entrepreneurship.
- We provide blended learning training to target key business development areas such as business growth, accessing finance and leadership through the “Road to” suite of programmes.
- Our Mentoring Women in Business programme matches women entrepreneurs with a dedicated professional mentor from elsewhere in the world. Using our online platform, they work one-to-one for 12 months to share new perspectives, build new skills and take their businesses to a whole new level.

Carrying out primary research and listening to first-hand experiences of women entrepreneurs is also a vital part of the work we do. We advocate for change to governments, multilateral organisations and corporations in order create more inclusive and fairer business environments.



Our principles

Women entrepreneurs at our heart: Without women entrepreneurs we wouldn't exist, so it is vital we put their experiences, perspectives and passions at the heart of what we do and how we do it.

Feminist first: We proudly follow feminist leadership principles, building an inclusive environment where everyone feels they belong.

Great to work with: We care. We are experts. We always seek to deliver high-quality work and results. We are positive and professional, and always operate with integrity.

Dynamic and entrepreneurial: The essence of entrepreneurship is creativity and innovation. We harness this spirit of courage, embracing opportunities and making bold moves to achieve our mission.

Powered by knowledge: We seek data to understand and share. We nurture a culture of enquiry and positive challenge. We look outward and encourage dialogue and exchange.

Our strategy

We're going to revolutionise business opportunities for more than one million women by 2030.

Our 'Ready for Business' strategy will see us significantly scale up our work to revolutionise business opportunities for one million more women entrepreneurs in low and middle income countries by 2030 and rapidly accelerate progress for women across the world.

With a global community of partners, donors and institutions, we will fight hard to ensure we contribute all we can towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Goal 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth. This ambitious new strategy guides our work from 2023 to 2026, building on the success of our last strategy that saw us support over 100,000 women in just four years.

In order to reach one million women entrepreneurs and support them to start and grow successful businesses and drastically shift business ecosystems so they are fair and inclusive we will:

- Develop and deliver digital, women-centred services.
- Lead awareness raising campaigns to challenge the systems and structures holding women back from success.
- Create a membership community committed to funding our work so that women have the opportunities to fulfil their potential.
- Evolve our organisation to deliver more effective change.

The resilience, drive and ingenuity of the women we work with inspires us to be unstoppable in our commitment to ensuring the economic rights of women everywhere are fulfilled. With this strategy, we believe we have put ourselves in the strongest possible position to achieve this.

Our annual reports

We encourage all applicants to review our latest annual reports to find out more about our impact, our funding and spending. Our latest Impact Report and the Trustees' Report & Accounts can be found on our website:

<https://cherieblairfoundation.org/about-us/annual-reports>

Job description

Project background

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women (the Foundation) is undertaking a multi-country research project to generate robust, comparative evidence on women entrepreneurs' access to finance. The research will focus on the experiences of women entrepreneurs in the United Kingdom, Mexico, and Vietnam, examining how they access finance, the barriers they encounter and the broader ecosystem and structural factors shaping their experiences.

This research forms part of the Foundation's growing portfolio of applied research within its Research & Impact function, which sits within the wider Programmes & Impact department. The function is responsible for generating high-quality evidence to strengthen programme design, inform external engagement, and contribute to global understanding of women's economic empowerment.

The research will use a mixed-methods approach, combining a consistent quantitative survey instrument across all three countries with targeted qualitative data collection to validate and contextualise findings. The resulting outputs will include a comparative research report and supporting materials for external audiences including funders, policymakers and financial-sector actors.

Consultancy Scope

The purpose of this consultancy is to appoint a Lead Researcher (or research organisation acting through a designated Lead Researcher) to design, deliver, analyse and synthesise this research project, working closely with the Foundation's Head of Research & Impact and wider Research & Impact team.

The Lead Researcher will be responsible for assembling and managing an appropriately qualified research team, ensuring coverage of the three focus geographies and relevant language capabilities. While elements of the work may be delivered by team members or subcontractors, the Lead Researcher will be accountable for the overall quality, coherence, and integrity of the research.

The consultancy will begin in **June 2026** and run for approximately 13–15 months. Specifically, this will entail:

- Designing and refining research questions and overall methodology in collaboration with the Foundation
- Developing high-quality survey instruments that are clear, unbiased, and aligned to research objectives, ensuring comparability across geographies while allowing for appropriate contextual adaptation
- Designing and overseeing survey dissemination strategies to reach relevant women entrepreneur populations across the three countries (minimum 1,000 complete and valid responses)

- Managing translation of survey instruments and responses where required
- Designing and implementing targeted qualitative data collection to support interpretation of survey findings
- Proposing an efficient and contextually appropriate model for qualitative data collection, including the use of local researchers or subcontractors where appropriate to ensure cost-effectiveness and contextual relevance
- Conducting in-depth interviews and/or focus groups with women entrepreneurs, lenders, investors, regulators and ecosystem organisations (35-50 per country)
- Ensuring high standards of data quality and integrity, including quality checks, training interviewers, and checking translated materials
- Cleaning, validating, and analysing quantitative and qualitative data, ensuring accuracy and appropriate interpretation of findings
- Producing high-quality research outputs, including a comparative research report (approximately 20,000 words) and country-specific briefings (15-20 pages), ensuring outputs are analytically robust, clearly communicated, and suitable for external audiences
- Incorporating feedback from the Foundation and external reviewers into iterative drafts
- Collaborating closely with the Foundation team throughout the process, including presenting interim findings, responding to feedback
- Ensuring all data is collected, stored, and managed in line with GDPR and relevant data protection standards

Person specification

Essential

- Significant experience designing and delivering high-quality applied research, ideally for NGOs, research organisations, or similar
- Strong expertise in both quantitative and qualitative research methods, including survey design and data analysis
- Proven ability to produce clear, insightful, and well-structured research outputs for non-academic audiences
- Experience conducting research across multiple geographies and ensuring comparability of findings
- Experience managing research teams and/or externally commissioned research, including coordinating inputs and ensuring quality of outputs with subcontractors
- Strong project management skills, including the ability to manage timelines, stakeholders, and deliverables
- Experience managing informed consent, confidentiality, and secure data handling in cross-country research

Desirable

- Experience working on topics related to women's entrepreneurship, gender, or access to finance
- Experience working in or with low- and middle-income countries

- Existing networks or expertise in one or more of the target geographies (UK, Mexico, Vietnam)

Deliverables

Indicative deliverables for this consultancy include:

- Refined research questions and methodology
- Survey instrument and dissemination plan
- Translated survey instruments (as required)
- Interim analysis and presentation of key findings
- Anonymised dataset, codebook and replication package
- Draft research report for internal review
- Draft report for external review
- Final research report aligned to the Foundation's standards
- Supporting inputs for dissemination and external engagement
- Deliverables and timelines will be finalised during contracting.

Budget

Proposals should include a detailed financial breakdown covering all costs associated with delivering the full scope of work.

Bidders are expected to propose a costed delivery model that is both competitive and realistic, demonstrating clear value for money and alignment between proposed resources and the requirements of the project. The Foundation will assess financial proposals alongside technical quality and delivery approach.

The financial proposal must include, at a minimum:

- Lead Researcher fees
- Team member and/or subcontractor costs

The following should be presented as separate line items

- Software or platform subscriptions required for research delivery
- Travel and accommodation (if applicable)
- Costs associated with qualitative data collection
- Translation costs for data collection (if applicable)
- Translation costs for final outputs into Spanish and Vietnamese

All costs associated with the consultancy must be included in the proposal. The Foundation will not cover additional costs beyond those set out in the agreed contract.

Bidders should clearly justify their proposed resourcing model, including team composition and allocation of effort across tasks. Proposals should demonstrate an efficient and contextually appropriate approach to delivery, including the use of local researchers or subcontractors where relevant.

Proposals that demonstrate strong value for money, while maintaining a credible and deliverable approach to the scope of work, will be viewed favourably.

To apply

If you are interested in this consultancy, please submit the following:

- A proposal outlining your approach to delivering the scope of work, including methodology and team composition
- A detailed financial proposal, including a full cost breakdown and clearly identified line items as outlined above
- CV(s) of the Lead Researcher and key team members
- Two examples of research-based writing produced by the Lead Researcher, which may include academic publications, research reports, white papers, or grey literature

The deadline for application is midnight, BST on Sunday, 7 June. Applications may close earlier depending on the number and quality received, so early submission is strongly encouraged.

First round interviews will be held the week of 15 June.

Scoring criteria for consultant selection

Criteria	Description	Weight
Financial proposal	Clarity, completeness, and overall value for money of the financial proposal, including efficient use of resources and appropriate allocation of costs	35%
Research expertise and experience	Demonstrated experience designing and delivering high-quality applied research, including survey design and analysis	20%
Quality of writing and outputs	Strength, clarity, and analytical quality of submitted writing samples and previous outputs	20%
Multi-country research experience	Experience designing and implementing research across diverse geographies and ensuring comparability of findings	10%
Understanding of topic and context	Familiarity with women's entrepreneurship, access to finance, or related fields	10%
Team composition and delivery approach	Strength and relevance of proposed team, clarity of roles, and practicality of delivery model (including approach to qualitative data collection)	5%

Data protection

The consultant must demonstrate their approach to ensuring that personal data is collected, used, and stored securely and in compliance with relevant data protection regulations, including GDPR.

Payment terms

Payment terms will be agreed with the selected consultant and outlined in the contract.

The consultant is expected to provide their own workspace, equipment, and any resources required to deliver the consultancy within the agreed budget.

Applications will close at midnight, BST on Sunday, 7 June. Applications may close earlier depending on the number and quality received, so early submission is strongly encouraged.

Questions about the consultancy can be directed to Rachel Seftel at recruitment@cherieblairfoundation.org.

Job applicant privacy notice

Data controller

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, PO Box 60519, London W2 7JU

As part of any recruitment process, the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women (the Foundation) collects and processes personal data relating to job applicants. The Foundation is committed to being transparent about how it collects and uses that data and to meeting its data protection obligations.

What information does the Foundation collect?

The Foundation collects a range of information about you. This includes:

- your name, address and contact details, including email address and telephone number;
- details of your qualifications, skills, experience and employment history;
- information about your current level of remuneration, including benefit entitlements;
- whether or not you are disabled for which the Foundation needs to make reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process;
- information about your entitlement to work in the UK; and
- equal opportunities monitoring information, including information about your ethnic origin, sexual orientation, health and religion or belief.

The Foundation collects this information in a variety of ways. For example, data might be contained in application forms, CVs or resumes, obtained from your passport or other identity documents, or collected through interviews or other forms of assessment.

The Foundation will also collect personal data about you from third parties, such as references supplied by former employers, information from employment background check providers and information from criminal records checks. The Foundation will seek information from third parties only once a job offer to you has been made and will inform you that it is doing so.

Data will be stored in a range of different places, including on your application record, in HR management systems and on other IT systems (including email).

Why does the Foundation process personal data?

The Foundation needs to process data to assess your application during the recruitment process and prior to entering into a contract with you. It also needs to process your data to enter into a contract with you.

In some cases, the Foundation needs to process data to ensure that it is complying with its legal obligations. For example, it is a legal requirement to check a successful applicant's eligibility to work in the UK before employment starts.

The Foundation has a legitimate interest in processing personal data during the recruitment process and for keeping records of the process. Processing data from job applicants allows the Foundation to manage the recruitment process, assess and confirm a candidate's suitability for employment and decide to whom to offer a job. The Foundation may also need to process data from job applicants to respond to and defend against legal claims.

Where the Foundation relies on legitimate interests as a reason for processing data, it has considered whether or not those interests are overridden by the rights and freedoms of employees or workers and has concluded that they are not.

The Foundation processes health information if it needs to make reasonable adjustments to the recruitment process for candidates who have a disability. This is to carry out its obligations and exercise specific rights in relation to employment.

Where the Foundation processes other special categories of data, such as information about ethnic origin, sexual orientation, health or religion or belief, this is for equal opportunities monitoring purposes.

For some roles, the Foundation is obliged to seek information about criminal convictions and offences. Where the Foundation seeks this information, it does so because it is necessary for it to carry out its obligations and exercise specific rights in relation to employment.

The Foundation will not use your data for any purpose other than for recruitment of the job for which you have applied.

How does the Foundation protect data?

The Foundation takes the security of your data seriously. It has internal policies and controls in place to ensure that your data is not lost, accidentally destroyed, misused or disclosed, and is not accessed except by our employees in the proper performance of their duties.

Who has access to data?

Your information will be shared internally for the purposes of the recruitment exercise. This includes members of the HR and recruitment team, interviewers involved in the recruitment process and IT staff if access to the data is necessary for the performance of their roles.

The Foundation will not share your data with third parties, unless your application for employment is successful and it makes you an offer of employment. The Foundation will then share your data with former employers to obtain references for you, employment background check providers to obtain necessary background checks and, if a requirement of the role, with the Disclosure and Barring Service to obtain necessary criminal records checks. The Foundation will not transfer your data outside the European Economic Area.

For how long does the Foundation keep data?

If your application for employment is unsuccessful, the Foundation will hold your data on file for six months after the end of the relevant recruitment process. At the end of that period electronic data is deleted and paper copies destroyed by secure shredding.

If your application for employment is successful, personal data gathered during the recruitment process will be transferred to your personnel file and retained during your employment. The periods for which your data will be held will be provided to you in a new privacy notice.

Your rights

As a data subject, you have a number of rights. You can:

- access and obtain a copy of your data on request;
- require the Foundation to change incorrect or incomplete data;
- require the Foundation to delete or stop processing your data, for example where the data is no longer necessary for the purposes of processing or you withdraw your application for employment;
- object to the processing of your data where the Foundation is relying on its legitimate interests as the legal ground for processing; and
- ask the Foundation to stop processing data for a period if data is inaccurate or there is a dispute about whether or not your interests override the Foundation's legitimate grounds for processing data.

If you would like to exercise any of these rights, please contact enquiries@cherieblairfoundation.org stating 'SUBJECT ACCESS REQUEST'

If you believe that the Foundation has not complied with your data protection rights, you can complain to the Information Commissioner.

What if you do not provide personal data?

You are under no statutory or contractual obligation to provide data to the Foundation during the recruitment process. However, if you do not provide the information, the Foundation may not be able to process your application properly or at all.

Automated decision-making

Recruitment processes are not based on automated decision-making.



Thank you for your interest!



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