



Australian Government

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS TEAM OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

BETA PHASE 2 PROJECTS COMMISSIONING PROCESS

Handbook for departments and agencies

March 2017

INTRODUCTION.....	3
AN OVERVIEW OF BETA.....	3
BETA'S MISSION	3
OVERVIEW OF COMMISSIONING PROCESS.....	4
BETA PROJECT HIGH LEVEL CRITERIA	5
THE FOUR KEY PHASES OF THE COMMISSIONING PROCESS.....	6
Idea Generation (Departments and agencies to lead this phase)	6
Co-Development and Feasibility Testing (Collaborative phase between BETA and departments and agencies).....	6
Project selection (Panel)	6
Funding and agreements (Collaborative phase)	6
IDEA GENERATION PHASE	7
Idea Generation Phase: High Level Timeline	7
PROJECT IDEA TEMPLATE	8
CO-DEVELOPMENT AND FEASIBILITY TESTING	8
PROJECT SELECTION	9
Project Funding And Agreements	9
BETA's Costing Model	9
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	9
USEFUL GUIDANCE AND TOOLS	11
INFORMATION ON WHERE TO GET HELP AND HOW TO CONTACT BETA.....	11
ATTACHMENT A: PROJECT IDEA TEMPLATE FOR IDEAS GENERATION PHASE	12
Project Idea Template – Agency	12
ATTACHMENT B: EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED PROJECT IDEA TEMPLATE	15
Worked example 1: Based on Going Blind to See More Clearly: Unconscious bias in recruitment	15

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information, tools and guidance to support the submission of ideas for BETA's Extension Phase project work plan.

For further information, please contact BETAProjects@pmc.gov.au

AN OVERVIEW OF BETA

We are the Australian Government's first central unit applying behavioural economics to improve public policy.

BETA started work in PM&C on 1 February 2016 as a joint initiative across the Australian Government. Working with a range of partner agencies, BETA is putting real people at the centre of policy and programme design and testing what works.

Headed up by Professor Michael Hiscox of Harvard University, the team uses behavioural economics, science and psychology to improve policy outcomes.

More information is available on the BETA website at <https://www.dpmc.gov.au/domestic-policy/behavioural-economics>

BETA'S MISSION

BETA's mission is to build behavioural economics capability across the APS and drive its use in policy design by testing what works, where and in what context. To deliver on its mission during its Establishment Phase (February 2016 – June 2017), BETA committed to:

- build the APS capability needed to support greater use of behavioural economics in policy-making, program design and service delivery
- provide behavioural economics expertise on a number of projects that apply and test policy, programme and administrative designs
- establish links between the APS and the behavioural economics research and practitioner community, in Australia and overseas.

OVERVIEW OF COMMISSIONING PROCESS

BETA has experienced high demand for project collaboration in its Establishment Phase and expects to launch up to 20 partner projects arising in this phase.

These projects aim to improve outcomes across a range of policy and program areas, including retirement income savings, increasing compliance with tax and employment laws, unconscious bias in recruitment, and energy efficiency labels.

From July 2017 onwards (in its Extension Phase), BETA will continue to work on a range of projects with APS partners.

BETA's projects typically involve two core pillars:

1. Designing behaviourally-informed interventions
2. Testing those interventions using randomised control trials (RCTs)

This is a policy-making approach that starts with the outcomes of interest, then explores the causal behaviour before developing interventions and testing them.

The commissioning process is a mechanism to ensure that BETA's resources are allocated to the best possible projects, measured broadly in terms of:

- Potential to improve the lives of Australians and / or Government efficiency
- Potential to demonstrate the value of behavioural economics
- Potential to build APS capability in behavioural economics.

The commissioning process has been designed to be:

- **Accessible:** all APS Departments and some pre-existing portfolio agency partners (APSC, FWO, ATO, NDIA) are invited to participate in the process
- **Equitable:** ideas will be assessed against clear impact and feasibility criteria
- **Collaborative:** shortlisted ideas will be co-developed with BETA and other relevant stakeholders as appropriate, including willing academics with expertise and partners (e.g. other governments and potential field partners)
- **Supportive of rigorous evaluation approaches:** ideas that lend themselves to rigorous testing through randomized controlled trials will be prioritised.

BETA intends to run regular tranches to commission projects (at least annually).

This will provide multiple opportunities to submit new ideas or build on early ideas.

BETA PROJECT HIGH LEVEL CRITERIA

The high level criteria for BETA's projects are:

- Potential to improve Australian Government policy, program and service delivery outcomes or improve Australian Government administrative efficiency.
- Potential to provide new and useful evidence on what works
 - Potential to build evidence through rigorous evaluation
 - Potential to provide new insights and evidence
 - Potential to scale up or be replicated
 - Potential to provide generalizable insights that could improve a range of policies, programs, services or administrative practices
 - Project findings to be 'published by default'
- Potential to build APS capability in behavioural economics
- Potential to be delivered within BETA's Extension Phase (mid-2017 to mid-2020). While projects can run across financial years, the first tranche of proposals will need to commence during the 2017-18 financial year.

THE FOUR KEY PHASES OF THE COMMISSIONING PROCESS

Idea Generation (Departments and agencies to lead this phase)

- Departments generate and submit ideas to BETA
- Ideas that meet BETA's high level criteria will be identified to continue to the co-development and feasibility testing phase.

Co-Development and Feasibility Testing (Collaborative phase between BETA and departments and agencies)

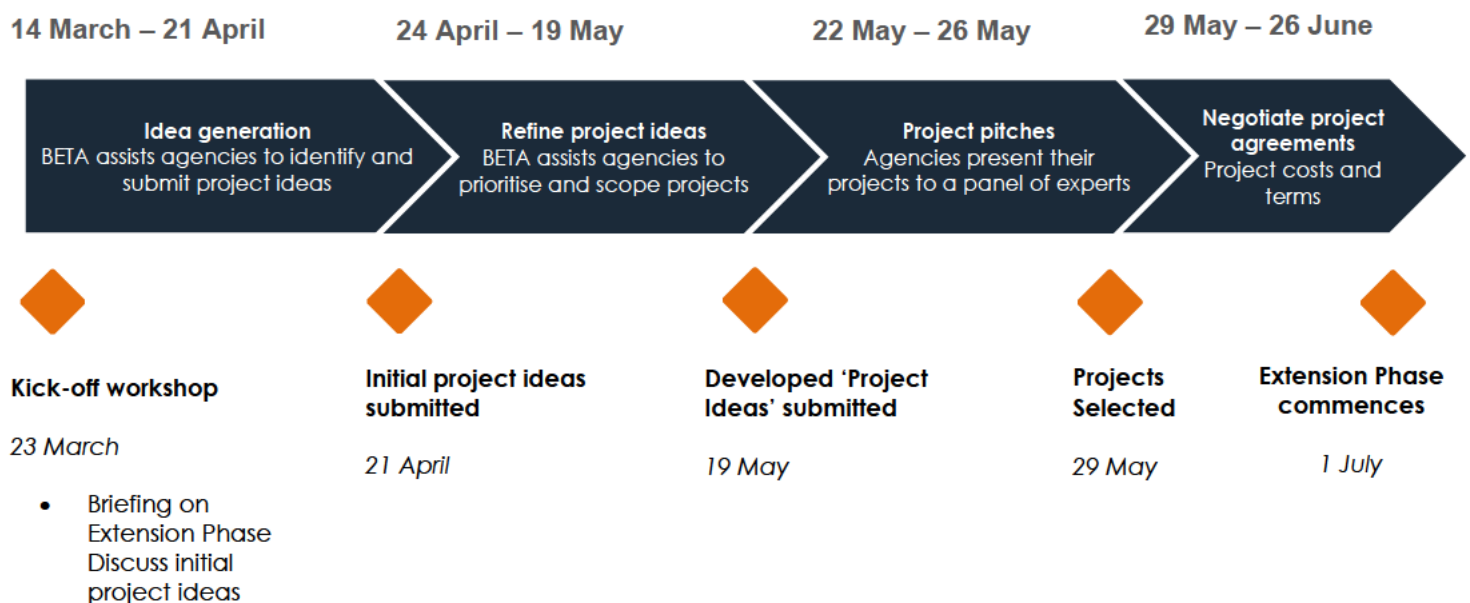
- BETA conducts detailed impact and feasibility testing with partners
- Co-development with BETA and other relevant stakeholders, including willing academics and partners (e.g. other governments and potential field partners)

Project selection (Panel)

- Projects are selected by a panel comprising senior leaders from BETA, PMC and other senior APS leaders with experience in behavioural economics

Funding and agreements (Collaborative phase)

- Selected projects are costed and project agreements signed



IDEA GENERATION PHASE

The idea generation phase will run for approximately 4 weeks, from
23 March - 21 April 2017

Idea Generation Phase: High Level Timeline

What	How	When	Who
Identify a lead contact to work with BETA and coordinate internal ideas	Send contact details to BETAProjects@pmc.gov.au	By COB 31 March	Department or Agency
Engage with relevant internal line areas to raise awareness and increase idea generation <i>Note: PM&C is aiming to leverage a new crowd-sourcing intranet based tool to maximize PM&C specific project ideas</i>	BETA has prepared standard briefing, tools and guidance for dissemination to a broader departmental / agency audience	W/c 27 March 2017	Department or Agency
Determine if your department or agency would like a presentation on the process	Send request to BETA at BETAProjects@pmc.gov.au	By COB 3 April	Department or Agency
Collate department or agency ideas and submit ideas to BETA	Submit ideas to BETAProjects@pmc.gov.au <i>A project ideas template should be completed for each idea submitted</i>	By COB 21 April	Department or Agency
BETA conducts high-level assessment of project ideas	Using project criteria	24 April – 28 April	BETA
BETA informs Departments and agencies of ideas selected for co-development phase	BETA emails Department/ Agency coordinators	W/c 1 May	BETA

Departments are responsible for coordinating ideas within their own department or agency and, if desired, with agencies within their portfolio. BETA has prepared some standard briefing that may assist agencies with coordinating this process. BETA will also provide support, and can provide a departmental presentation.

For each idea, a BETA project idea template should be completed. The template is designed to be straightforward and ensure that all ideas can be outlined and assessed on a consistent basis. It focuses on identifying the behavioural problem, the outcome that is sought, timeframes, stakeholders and sensitivities.

BETA will conduct a high-level initial assessment of all ideas within one week of receipt (i.e. during the week commencing 24 April).

PROJECT IDEA TEMPLATE

For the Idea Generation Phase, project ideas need to be submitted in a short version of the Project Ideas template at [Attachment A](#).

A worked example of a project idea is provided at [Attachment B](#). If you would like further information or assistance to prepare a project idea, please contact BETA.

CO-DEVELOPMENT AND FEASIBILITY TESTING

The co-development phase will run from **1 May 2017 – 19 May 2017**.

This phase is intended to develop and refine eligible ideas.

The participants, processes and activities will vary according to the nature and complexity of each idea. The parameters of co-development will be agreed between BETA and each department at the beginning of this phase.

Other stakeholders may be invited to participate in this phase, including:

- **Other departments and agencies:** where the idea involves cross-portfolio responsibilities or objectives or where other departments or agencies can contribute to delivery, e.g. data or channels to end users
- **Front-line staff:** where the idea relates to service delivery
- **State governments:** where the idea requires collaboration with states to deliver

- **Academics or other experts:** where there is expertise outside government that could be leveraged to assist with refinement and potentially to identify collaborations in the delivery phase
- **Field partners:** where the idea requires partnering with business, NGOs or other providers the co-development phase could explore partnerships.

PROJECT SELECTION

Projects will be selected by a high-level panel comprising senior BETA leaders, co-opted PM&C deputy secretaries and co-opted senior APS leaders with behavioural economics expertise. The panel will assess ideas against BETA's high level project criteria and feasibility to be delivered.

Project Funding And Agreements

BETA has provisioned around one month in June to cost projects and develop detailed project and funding agreements that would be executed by senior BETA and agency project champions, once selected.

BETA's Costing Model

Successful BETA projects will be delivered with partners on a fee for service model.

No two projects are the same, and the cost of each project will depend on a range of factors, including the type of project, the availability of data, the extent to which previous research exists, and the number of project partners. As a broad indication, project costs are expected to range from around \$60,000 to \$240,000 but will vary from project to project.

In some cases, ASL or secondments may be negotiated for an agreed time period, where required and where agencies wish to explore opportunities to offset costs and build capability by embedding a staff member in the team.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How many projects will be selected?

BETA expects to complete around 60 projects over the 3 year Extension Phase, with projects identified in rolling tranches. In 2017-18 BETA expects to complete up to 20 projects; the precise number will depend on the types of projects selected.

Will there be other opportunities to submit ideas for BETA projects?

BETA intends to run regular tranches to commission projects (at least annually). This will provide multiple opportunities to submit new ideas or build on early ideas.

What are some examples of government priority areas?

- By way of a short indicative list (not exhaustive), government priority areas include projects that:
 - contribute to fiscal repair;
 - are productivity enhancing;
 - are innovative;
 - relate to Australia's ageing population; or
 - improve APS efficiency.

Can ideas be submitted that involve cross-agency and cross-government responsibilities?

- Project ideas should seek to address policy, program or service delivery issues for which the Commonwealth has responsibility, or where it shares responsibility with the States and Territories and could be pursued through COAG or existing processes.

Can departments submit multiple ideas?

- Yes. In fact, you are encouraged to submit more than one project idea. As a guide, we expect that many departments and agencies will submit multiple project ideas.

Can departments submit ideas that are not ready to implement immediately?

- There will be ongoing opportunities to submit new ideas. Ideas that are not ready to implement during the 2017-18 financial year may be considered for Phase 2.

USEFUL GUIDANCE AND TOOLS

[BETA Guide to developing interventions for randomised controlled trials \(BETA, September 2016\)](#)

[BETA Guidance Note 1: Randomised Controlled Trials \(See Appendix 1 of BETA Guide to developing interventions for randomised controlled trials \(BETA, September 2016\)](#)

[Behavioural insights and public policy: Lessons from around the world \(OECD, March 2017\)](#)

INFORMATION ON WHERE TO GET HELP AND HOW TO CONTACT BETA

BETA is available to meet with departments and agencies to discuss potential project ideas, or to provide more information about the process by which projects will be selected.

Please contact BETA by email: BETAProjects@pmc.gov.au

ATTACHMENT A: PROJECT IDEA TEMPLATE FOR IDEAS GENERATION PHASE

Project Idea Template – Agency

Agency:	[e.g., DHS]
Policy Issue:	[e.g., Early childhood health]
Project Name:	[e.g., Improving XYZ program appointment attendance]
Potential partner(s):	[e.g., Health, any specific academic partners]
Agency Contact:	Enter name/contact information for project lead
Date:	Application date
New or existing policy/program/procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> New
	<input type="checkbox"/> Existing. Name of program: _____

Project Information – 1-2 pages

Please try to complete as many of the following questions as possible.

What is the problem to be addressed?

Please describe the policy, programme or service delivery problem that you are trying to address.

What is the extent of the problem?

Please describe the characteristics of the population. Who is affected by the problem? For example, how large is the population, is the population in a particular age group, and where in Australia are they located?

How is this currently measured?

Please provide information on the data sources tracking this outcome (if they exist), such as where it is held, and outline any foreseeable issues with sharing de-identified data with BETA.

What is the outcome of interest?

Please identify the outcome that needs to be achieved as a result of this project. The outcome should be specific (clearly defined), measurable (quantifiable), assignable (to participation in the intervention or control group), realistic (given resources) and time-related (when they will be achieved).

Please describe how the population is not meeting the outcome. For example, what is the percentage of the population not achieving the desired outcome? What is the implication of the population not achieving the outcome?

What is the current behaviour of the population?

Please describe the process that the population follows at the moment. What steps do they currently take, and what are the processes that they follow?

What are the potential benefits of the project?

Please describe the potential benefits that could be realised by addressing the policy, programme or service delivery problem. Where possible, please provide an indication of the size of the potential benefits. Please also describe how the project would link to key priorities of government.

What current attempts are made to influence the behaviour?

Please outline any current behavioural and non-behavioural interventions which attempt to improve the outcome.

(Optional) Are there behavioural interventions or project designs in mind?

Please outline if there is an early view as to what the intervention or project design might be. For example, sending 'call to action' SMS reminders ahead of scheduled appointments

Are there other stakeholders / agencies involved with the project? In what capacity?

Please list which other stakeholders / agencies may be involved in the project, and in what capacity. For example, will another party be involved in delivering the intervention (e.g. a service delivery partner, a non-government organisation, a business, or a portfolio agency)? Does another party hold the data?

Are there any sensitivities for this project?

Please list any sensitivities. For example, does the project target a vulnerable population?

When could the project commence?

Please list any factors that may have an impact upon the timing of the project. Is it time critical?

(Optional) Is there any other additional context BETA should receive? For example, is there any relevant previous research that has been undertaken in the area?

ATTACHMENT B: EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETED PROJECT IDEA TEMPLATE

Worked example 1: Based on Going Blind to See More Clearly: Unconscious bias in recruitment

Agency:	Australian Public Service Commission
Policy Issue:	Unconscious bias in APS recruitment processes
Project Name:	Going blind to see more clearly: Unconscious bias in recruitment in APS shortlisting processes
Potential partner(s):	Fourteen departments and agencies
Agency Contact:	N/A
Date:	N/A
New or existing policy/program/procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> New
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Existing. Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2016 -19

Project Information – 1- 2 pages

What is the problem to be addressed?

Women are under-represented in management and executive-level positions in the private sector and in many areas of the Australian Public Service (APS). This may be a result of gender discrimination in hiring and promotion decisions.

De-identifying CVs may offer an effective way to mitigate biases in hiring and promotion decisions.

What is the extent of the problem? How is this currently measured?

As at 31 December 2015, women made up 58.7% of the APS, but only 41.8% of the Senior Executive Service (Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy: 2016-19).

What is the outcome of interest?

Primary outcomes of interest are:

- a) Gender discrimination effects
- b) The effect of CV de-identification on gender discrimination
- c) Ethnic discrimination effects

Secondary outcomes of interest include a range of demographic characteristics and other variables that previous research has identified as being related to bias. These include (but are not limited to):

- a) Demographic characteristics: age, gender, APS classification level, role type/function.
- b) Other variables: how efficient the process was, confidence in shortlisted candidates, and intensity of current workload.

What is the current behaviour of the population?

Selection panels within the APS generally undertake a shortlisting process by considering applications that identify a candidate's name, gender, and other personal details.

What are the potential benefits of the project?

There is potential to reduce the effects of unconscious bias in recruitment across the APS shortlisting processes.

What current attempts are made to influence the behaviour?

Addressing the gender imbalance across the APS is the key priority of the Australian Public Service Gender Equality Strategy 2016-19. Aimed at driving high performance and boosting productivity the strategy calls for the APS to reflect contemporary reality and states that the APS must embrace diversity and that it should benefit from people of all backgrounds.

Are there behavioural interventions or project designs in mind?

The intervention (treatment) in this project involves removing the names from CVs. By de-identifying CVs in this way, any indication of gender and ethnicity is removed.

To identify any effects, participants will be asked to complete a fictitious shortlisting exercise with 16 fictitious CVs. The study is a randomised controlled trial, conducted in partnership with fourteen APS agencies. Participants will be drawn from senior-executive and executive-level officers in these agencies.

There have been no similar studies conducted in Australia and the APS to determine the effect of de-identifying CVs on shortlisting outcomes.

Are there other stakeholders / agencies involved with the project? In what capacity?

Senior Executive Band 1 and Executive Level staff from fourteen departments and agencies will be participating in the project.

Are there any sensitivities for this project?

N/A

When could the project commence?

The project would be undertaken in 2016/17.

(Optional) Is there any other additional context BETA should receive? For example, is there any relevant previous research that has been undertaken in the area?

In the 1970s and 1980s, American symphony orchestras attempted to overcome biases in hiring by introducing a screen during auditions to conceal the identity of the musician from the jury evaluating the performance. In a well-known study analysing data on auditions and hiring by orchestras over this period, Goldin & Rouse (2000) found that the use of blind auditions had a major impact on gender bias in orchestras, increasing the likelihood of female musicians being selected by 25-40%.



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Project Idea Template – Agency

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New or existing policy/program/procedure	<input type="checkbox"/> New
	<input type="checkbox"/> Existing. Name of program: _____

Project Information – 1-2 pages

Please try to complete as many of the following questions as possible.

What is the problem to be addressed?

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Please describe the characteristics of the population. Who is affected by the problem? For example, how large is the population, is the population in a particular age group, and where in Australia are they located?

How is this currently measured?

Please provide information on the data sources tracking this outcome (if they exist), such as where it is held, and outline any foreseeable issues with sharing de-identified data with BETA.

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What are the potential benefits of the project?

Please describe the potential benefits that could be realised by addressing the policy, programme or service delivery problem. Where possible, please provide an indication of the size of the potential benefits. Please also describe how the project would link to key priorities of government.

What current attempts are made to influence the behaviour?

Please outline any current behavioural and non-behavioural interventions which attempt to improve the outcome.

(Optional) Are there behavioural interventions or project designs in mind?

Please outline if there is an early view as to what the intervention or project design might be. For example, sending 'call to action' SMS reminders ahead of scheduled appointments

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Please list which other stakeholders / agencies may be involved in the project, and in what capacity. For example, will another party be involved in delivering the intervention (e.g. a service delivery partner, a non-government organisation, a business, or a portfolio agency)? Does another party hold the data?

Are there any sensitivities for this project?

Please list any sensitivities. For example, does the project target a vulnerable population?

When could the project commence?

Please list any factors that may have an impact upon the timing of the project. Is it time critical?

(Optional) Is there any other additional context BETA should receive? For example, is there any relevant previous research that has been undertaken in the area?



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Growing a care workforce – Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Agency:	PM&C
Policy Issue:	Encouraging growth in the care workforce to meet increasing demand
Project Name:	Growing a care workforce
Potential partners:	Departments of Social Services, Human Services, Health and Employment and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA)
Agency Contact:	s 22 , Disability and Aged Care Section
Date:	21 April 2017
New or existing policy/program/procedure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New
	<input type="checkbox"/> Existing. Name of program: _____

Project Information

What is the problem to be addressed?

Growing the care workforce to meet demand in the aged care and disability care, especially as the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) launches to full-scheme will be a challenge.

What is the extent of the problem?

In New South Wales alone, the NDIS workforce will need to double by 2019 from approximately 25,000 to about 60,000 full time equivalent staff. Similarly, the aged care workforce will need to increase exponentially from 352,145 people to over 800,000 people by 2050.

How is this currently measured?

The NDIA publishes market position statements [online](#) to inform market stakeholders and help current and prospective providers of supports and services. The statements help inform demand growth and characteristics of particular markets for all states.

The [Aged Care Workforce Census and Survey 2016](#) provides a comprehensive profile of the workforce (conducted every four years). A Senate Inquiry on the Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce is due to report on 21 June 2017. It is examining the current composition of the workforce and future requirements, including changes to meet growing demand.

What is the outcome of interest?

The proposal would engender interest from a wide range of skill and interest areas to bring self-employed workers to provide quality care that is innovative, safe and may provide inspiration to people with care needs.

It would aim to ensure:

- overall numbers in the carer workforce increase,
- there are clearer career pathways and opportunities for advancement, and
- harness a variety of skills and interest to the care workforce.

Without an increase in the carer workforce to meet demand, there will be a significant shortfall in the amount of suitably qualified or experienced staff to provide care to those that need it most. This may have significant risks for implementation of the NDIS and aged care reforms or may impact the quality of service provided.

What is the current behaviour of the population?

Current data indicates care occupations do not present comparative monetary or career progression benefits. Caring roles are characterised by poor working conditions, lack of secure employment opportunities and limited options for advancement. There are particularly large shortfalls in some health professions, with an [estimated](#) shortfall of over 100,000 nurses anticipated by 2025.

What are the potential benefits of the project?

- Increasing the number and skillset of the carer workforce
- Aligned to the outcomes of the NDIS and aged care reforms – helping people to achieve their goals or develop abilities or interests as well as participate in the community
- Better career pathways for self-employed carers and improved retention of skilled workers
- Potential insights for the broader health sector as well as early childhood education and care

What current attempts are made to influence the behaviour?

There are a number of actions underway to help growth of the care workforce. For example, there are a number of information sources available to job seekers, such as Job Outlook. This Government [service](#) conveys the job opportunities to this market.

[Hire Up](#) provides information for people with disability to find and directly employ support workers. This is a private start-up information service with a diverse range of workers on this site that fit the needs and share the interests of clients.

Are there behavioural interventions or project designs in mind?

An intervention could be to encourage self-employed workers to advertise their services through the use of Peer 2 Peer (P2P) online platforms for such as Hire Up. P2P approaches connect clients to self-employed care workers, presenting excellent opportunities for care workers in local communities, particularly rural and remote areas.

Self-employed workers would be directly targeted through a range of communication opportunities and through Government services or educational institutions (ie. career information sites or events). There may also be opportunities to encourage self-employed workers other vehicles such as job networks, Centrelink or business registration services.

P2P care workers would deliver the kind of care consumers want to receive, not the kind of care more traditional providers want to deliver. This could be a particularly valuable approach in aged care as the baby boomer generation ages – informed consumers may prefer care in their home rather than institutionalised approaches. Engaging more self-employed workers to provide services will help alleviate the emerging workforce gaps.

Services may include:

- Home maintenance or in-home care,
- Education and employment,

- Personal or specialist care, and
- Help participating in the community (support to get out, take a class, exercise, volunteer or be social).

This intervention would also support a transformative approach to care rather than the 'transactional care.' For example, a P2P site could list the services of artists who are available to provide care and support to people with disability, while at the same time – utilising their art skills to provide therapy and inspiring their client to pursue goals in this area. Improved health and wellbeing and the facilitation of better access and participation to community are potential outcomes in this example.

Are there other stakeholders / agencies involved with the project? In what capacity?

- Departments of Social Services, Health, Human Services and Employment
- Key stakeholder groups (ie. Hire Up, peaks and not for profits)

Are there any sensitivities for this project?

The abuse of vulnerable persons in institutional settings such as older persons and those living with disability has received extensive public attention. Activities that may be vulnerable to unscrupulous behaviour (ie. mistreatment, neglect or fraud) may be scrutinised.

When could the project commence?

Projects to examine the feasibility of a P2P or similar could commence in the second half of 2017. Any activities in the aged care should be informed by the Senate Inquiry on the Future of Australia's aged care sector workforce.