Using Behavioral Science to Reduce Work-Life Conflict

Invitation to Apply

In previous research, ideas42 identified four specific problems that contribute to work-life conflict for workers: Too much email. Too much time spent in meetings. Not enough restful vacation time. Too many working hours. Sound familiar? We identified promising interventions backed by insights from behavioral science, and now we want to test their impact. That's where you come in. 501(c)(3) public charity (non-profit) organizations interested in partnering with ideas42 to implement and test interventions to help their employees be healthier, happier, and more productive should apply. Preliminary work is scheduled to start as early as August 2018.

What is work-life conflict?

Workers experience "work-life conflict" when they find that their work obligations and non-work obligations must be fulfilled within the same period of time. Example behaviors of work-life conflict include: working during times that weren't planned for work, getting less sleep than desired because of work obligations, or responding too quickly to work communications during non-work time. As a result, workers are more likely to experience health risks, have lower job satisfaction, and produce lower quality work.

Why behavioral science?

Many organizations have policies aimed at improving their workers' well-being, but without an evidence-based understanding of how and why people make decisions, there are often unintended negative consequences. For example, with flexible work hours, people consistently underestimate how much time is required to complete their tasks, and end up working on weekends. With increased collaboration, workers can end up spending entire days in meetings and are often left to do individual work in the evenings.

It doesn't have to be this way. Behavioral science can use insights about how people make actions and decisions to improve the design and effectiveness of programs, policies and other innovations aimed to reduce work-life conflict. ideas42 is seeking partners who want to work with us to implement and test solutions at their organization and improve employees' health, productivity, and well-being.

Who is ideas42?

ideas42 is a non-profit behavioral design firm that uses behavioral science to help solve difficult social problems and achieve impact at scale. We grew out of research programs in psychology and economics at top academic institutions. Our work draws on decades of experimental scientific research in decision-making and the most rigorous methods in program and policy evaluation. We work in the US and internationally on important challenges in domains such as consumer finance, economic mobility, education, safety and justice, and health, among others. We work with foundations, government bodies, private companies, and non-profits of all sizes.

Detailed Information

- The application is short and easy consisting of six key questions. Applications are due by Friday, June 15th at 11:59pm EST. Applications can be submitted on the RFP website. 501(c)(3) public charity (non-profit) organizations are eligible to apply. We are especially interested in partnering with organizations that employ "knowledge workers". Knowledge workers are individuals who spend most of their time accessing and applying information (ex. reading, writing, meeting with colleagues), rather than performing manual tasks or direct services to clients.

- ideas42 will hold a webinar to provide more information about behavioral science and the application process on Wednesday, May 23rd at 1:00pm EST. This webinar will be recorded and made available on the RFP website.

- ideas42 may conduct follow-up interviews or request written answers to follow-up questions with applicants after the applications are due and prior to the final selection notification.

- **Semi-finalists:** Up to six organizations will be selected as semi-finalists and receive an on-site visit from ideas42 staff. This visit will be fully funded with zero cost to the semi-finalists. A $5,000 subgrant will cover staff time for the site visit. While on-site, ideas42 will observe the office space and interview employees to learn more about the specific behavioral problems highlighted in the application. After the visit, each semi-finalist organization will receive a personalized design memo from ideas42, outlining our suggested solutions and paths to implementation at their organization.

- **Finalists:** ideas42 will select a subset of the semi-finalist organizations as finalists based on their willingness and ability to conduct an impact evaluation. Finalist organizations will partner with ideas42 to develop, implement and evaluate an intervention to reduce work-life conflict. This process will be led by ideas42, though partners will have final say on whether an intervention is implemented. Partners will receive a $20,000 sub-grant to support this work. Additionally, partners are encouraged to support the development of the intervention with matching funds, either from an in-kind donation or external support.

- ideas42 will develop, implement and test interventions with each finalist organization independently. Additionally, finalist organizations participate in an "innovation network" to learn more about how ideas are being implemented across different contexts.

- Visit our FAQ page on the RFP website if you have questions, or reach out to us directly at work-life@ideas42.org.

- If you are interested in the opportunity, but not sure if your organization meets the application requirements, we'd still love to hear from you. Email us at work-life@ideas42.org.

Application Preview (Submit Online)

Applications should be submitted via the online form at on our RFP website. To help you prepare, here are key application questions.

1 **Introduce us to your organization.** What information is important to understanding the people who work there? If any, please include relevant socioeconomic details shared by employees, e.g., "there are several families who need flexible time for childcare". *(100 words or less)*

2 **Tell us about your organization's interest in improving work-life conflict.** Please include information about leadership and staff buy-in. *(100 words or less)*

3 **Why are you interested in the opportunity to design behavioral interventions?** *(100 words or less).*

4 In our previous research, we identified four specific problems that contribute to work-life conflict for workers. **Please identify the problem from the list below that most resonates with how workers at your organization experience work-life conflict.**

- Too much email
- Too much time spent in meetings
- Not enough restful vacation time
- Too many working hours
- Other

If you think employees at your organization experience a problem in work-life conflict that is outside the scope of this list, please select other and describe the behavior in 1-2 sentences.

5 **Explain more fully the details and background of your problem.** *(100 words or less)*

6 **What measures do you use to track employees' performance?** Do you have objective measures of performance? How do you approach subjective measures? *(e.g., performance reviews, feedback given online, $ raised/month; 100 words or less)*

Selection Criteria

In considering which applicants to select as semi-finalists, ideas42 will use the following criteria:

1. **Presence of behavioral problems.** The problems presented by applicants must have likely behavioral factors or bottlenecks associated with them. Structural problems that stem from a lack of capacity or resources are usually best suited for organizations other than ideas42, though they may sometimes have a related behavioral component.

2. **Excitement about applying behavioral science and willingness to innovate.** Applicants should demonstrate enthusiasm for new approaches that incorporate behavioral science into their work. ideas42 ultimately looks to work with partners who are willing to innovate to achieve better outcomes. Innovation is inherently risky; while many low-cost behavioral interventions succeed, these outcomes are not guaranteed, especially in early iterations. However, the rewards of success can be significant.

3. **Leadership and staff buy-in, and organizational capacity to implement solutions**. Applicants should also demonstrate strong support from both the organization's executives and a mid-level leader. The creation of a new process, program, or product, especially one that may involve some element of organizational change, requires clear organizational commitment. Managers should be enthusiastic about behavioral science and the potential for innovation, responsive to requests for data and information, and able to bridge relationships throughout the organization and community. The organization needs to have some capacity to actually implement an intervention.

4. **Potential for social impact.** Our ultimate goal is to create interventions that reduce work-life conflict for employees at scale. Organizations facing limited resources or working with employees most affected by work-life conflict will be given special consideration in this RFP.

5. **Geography.** In the instance of a "tie breaker" scenario, we will consider a geographic mix as part of our selection criteria.

For More Information

- **Visit the RFP website:** www.ideas42.org/request-for-partners
- **Email questions to:** work-life@ideas42.org
- **Join us for our webinar** May 23rd at 1:00pm EST

Support provided by
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation