

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: RESEARCH ON FAMILY GOVERNANCE

The IFB Research Foundation is requesting research proposals to investigate the family governance or the governance of families in business in the UK.

Background

Family governance enables family business owners to manage both their family business asset and the relationship between the family and the business. Family relationships can be strengthened and next generations nurtured by effective family governance. And in some cases, family governance mechanisms may be associated with improved performance.

Over the past two years, the IFB Research Foundation has investigated the governance of family firms and best practice in this area. Whilst each business family has different dynamics, identifying best practice in family governance can help to ensure the smooth transition of businesses through generations of a family; for example, the IFB Research Foundation has recently published [practice guidance](#) on family governance designed for family business owners.

In May 2019, we published [Corporate Governance in Large UK family firms](#) which took an in-depth look at the corporate governance practices of large family businesses in the UK. This was followed by [Governance in Family Businesses: Evidence and Implications](#) which presented a comprehensive review of research and guidance on family business governance. Drawing on evidence from over 200 studies, the authors identified key insights, gaps in knowledge, and implications for practice, policy and future research. The report also included an analysis of national guidance and codes from around the world on family business governance, many of which cover both corporate and family governance.

This review concluded that, whilst there are many prescriptive texts arising from the experience of family business advisers, there has been limited research on family governance and what works, and recommended further work in this area. In particular, there is limited research on what works best in different circumstances, and few studies have investigated how different approaches to family governance impact on the family business.

To address this gap, the IFB Research Foundation is inviting proposals for new research on family governance.

Project objectives

The IFB Research Foundation is commissioning this research to address the following research questions:

- How do UK business families or families in business exercise their ownership rights and responsibilities, and manage the relationships between family members?
- What are the main challenges they face in establishing a family governance system?
- How do family governance practices and structures interface with the family's business or businesses, and what impact do they have?
- How does the effectiveness of family governance vary in different circumstances? For example, size and age of firm, generational context, involvement of women family leaders in the business, level of family involvement in management and ownership, etc.

A key goal of the project will also be to develop evidence-based guidance for family business owners on their family governance.

Project outputs

There will be two main outputs from the research:

1. A research report summarising the data collected, the methods used, and key findings. The report should incorporate best practice guidance for family business owners on how to plan, organise and evaluate their family governance activities.
2. A research briefing or summary (approximately 4-6 pages) summarising the main learning from the research.

The research report and briefing should be written in a language/style that is appropriate for our key audiences: family business owners, managers, and advisers, policy makers, and family business researchers.

In addition, the research provider will be required to submit a brief interim report detailing progress on the project.

How to apply

Proposals should be submitted by email to Dr Martin Kemp, Head of Research at the IFB Research Foundation, at martin.kemp@ifb.org.uk by Monday 14th September

Proposals may focus on one or more of the objectives/research questions set out above and should include a detailed research strategy to address these. Because of the challenges associated with conducting surveys in this field of research, we are open to new or innovative methodological approaches. For example, qualitative methods could be used to understand family governance practices and processes among family firms in the UK.

If this research is something that you might be interested in, then please submit a fully costed research proposal by Monday 14th September. The proposal should be no more than 1,500 words in length (excluding CVs and references) and address the following headings:

1. Research questions/objectives

As specified above.

2. Methods and data sources

Please describe how you would address the research questions, including details of any methods you would use to collect and analyse the data, and the data sources that you would use. Please also give the reasons for why these methods, techniques and data sources are most suitable for addressing the research questions, taking into account time and resource constraints.

3. Ethical issues/data protection

In this section, please specify any ethical issues relevant to the conduct of the research, including any issues relating to data protection and confidentiality. Please indicate how you will address these issues in the proposed research.

4. Timetable

Please provide a project timetable, including start/end dates and showing milestones for each stage of the project.

5. Risk assessment

Applicants should identify possible risks or potential difficulties that might affect progress in the research and the steps taken to mitigate and manage such risks.

6. Project team

Applicants should supply information on members of the project team, their responsibilities and the time they will each allocate to working on the project. CVs of members of the project team should be attached to your proposal, including qualifications and previous experience relevant to the research. Applicants should identify who will be leading the research project.

7. Budget

A detailed budget should be included showing costs for staff time, expenses such as travel, equipment, payment of incentives etc. This should be in the range of £15-£25k. The IFB Research Foundation is a charity and therefore does not cover indirect costs.

8. References

Any publications and sources cited in the proposal should be listed in this section.

Definition of “family business”

The IFB Research Foundation adopts the EU definition of “family business”.

A firm, of any size, is defined as a family business, if

- the majority of decision-making rights is in the possession of the natural person(s) who established the firm, or in the possession of the natural person(s) who has/have acquired the share capital of the firm, or in the possession of their spouses, parents, child or children’s direct heirs;
- the majority of decision-making rights are indirect or direct;
- at least one representative of the family or kin is formally involved in the governance of the firm; and
- listed companies meet the definition of family enterprise if the person who established or acquired the firm (share capital) or their families or descendants possess 25 per cent of the decision-making rights mandated by their share capital.

About the IFB Research Foundation

The IFB Research Foundation is a charity (no. 1134085) established to foster greater knowledge and understanding of family firms and their contribution to the economy and society, as well as the key challenges and opportunities that they face.

The IFB Research Foundation’s vision is to be the UK’s centre of excellence for family business research, and to this end its publications are designed to create a better understanding of family business for the benefit of all stakeholders. Alongside Family Business Research and White Papers, providing thought leadership on key family business characteristics and issues, its work covers a broad range of publications, including:

- Family Business Sector Report – benchmarking the size and importance of the sector.
- Family Business Challenges – offering practical guidance for family business owners on a broad range of topics, including family business dynamics, governance, performance, succession and wealth management.
- Family Business Case Studies – showcasing family business exemplars.
- The Foundation disseminates knowledge and best practice guidance through printed publications and online media accessible via the IFB website and other activities.

The Research Foundation works closely with its sister organisation, the Institute for Family Business (IFB), which is a membership association representing the UK’s family business sector. The IFB is a member of FBN International, the global network for family businesses.

