NOT-EQUAL

EPSRC NetworkPlus: Social Justice through the Digital Economy

Project Review Form - Mid-Term Review Pilot Project

Please submit this form **to notequal@ncl.ac.uk**.

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Lead Applicant (PI): Jamie Woodcock **Email address: jamie.woodcock@open.ac.uk** **Job Title: Senior Lecturer** **Department: People and Organisation** **Organisation: The Open University**	**Co-Investigators (names and organisations):** Six Silberman (Organise, UK); Hannah Johnston (Independent) **Supporting Partner(s):** **Project Title: Crowdsourcing Wage Pledge** **Project Reference Number:**

1. SUMMARY

Please provide a summary of the activities and/or initial findings of your research project to date. This also includes events, engagement activities with non-academic partners and any other activities. Please include any images or website links that could be used for dissemination purposes (at least 500 words).

Our grant application outlined three phases of the project. Phase 1, which we titled *Drafting the Pledge* consisted of a revised and expanded international survey of academic users of crowdsourcing services ("requesters") and stakeholder meetings which would be used to draft language for the wage pledge and to inform the project design. We successfully designed the survey, and over 100 respondents completed it. The respondents include researchers in a variety of phases in their careers, including MA/MS and PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, pre- and post-tenure faculty, and IRB/ethics board officials. While most respondents are based in the United States, we also received responses from researchers in the UK, Japan, Mexico, Canada, and India.

As planned, the data provided by the survey respondents produced insights that clarified the appropriate language and structure for the wage pledge. We have decided to "leave the survey open" longer than initially planned - i.e., to extend the data collection period - as the survey is also serving the additional beneficial function of identifying possible future signatories and "allies" such as university officials who support the ideas behind the pledge.

Our survey data revealed findings that are valuable for the project. Among others, these include:

(1) That academic requesters are overwhelmingly willing to commit to paying workers the minimum wage where requesters' academic institutions are located; over seventy percent of our respondents either agreed or strongly

agreed with this statement and fewer than 10 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Survey respondents, regardless of their academic position (graduate student, tenured faculty, etc.), did not express concern about their ability to pay workers at these rates. This finding is consistent with our 2018 survey data showing a willingness to participate in the type of voluntary governance mechanism that we seek to create.

(2) Through our data collection, we learned that most academics feel that their respective universities do an adequate job of protecting research participants (a category that would, in many cases, include crowdworkers). Additionally, and perhaps a testament to this, the process of recruiting survey participants revealed several universities that either have policies or offer guidance for researchers who use crowdwork sites, and further research has revealed over a dozen others. Some university recommendations highlight concerns about worker pay that our project seeks to address. This is an encouraging finding, but our research makes clear that these initiatives are in their very early phases, and our work could complement them.

(3) That while most academics are willing to commit to a wage pledge, they are not necessarily willing to commit to allowing workers to re-do work. We heard this most often from academic researchers in fields like psychology and business, where crowdworking sites are frequently used for experimental purposes. Such sentiments, we believe, are underpinned by methodological concerns. We have thus elected to develop pledge language that focuses solely on worker wages as this is the area where we see the greatest opportunities for support.

In addition to contacting academic requesters via the survey, we have also been in touch with other relevant stakeholders. Notably, this includes the crowdworker organizers affiliated with Turkopticon. These crowdworkers provided input on our survey questions before we circulated the survey. Workers saw our survey as a valuable opportunity to identify additional platforms that academics are outsourcing crowdwork to. MTurk and Prolific Academic, both identified in our project proposal, appear to remain the most popular sites (although this finding may be an artifact of our sampling strategy), yet respondents also drew our attention to CloudResearch, Lucid, and to Qualtrics, the survey design company, which now offers researchers assistance recruiting respondents.

With a view to the development of our technical tools, this aspect of the project is now well underway (approximately 65 percent complete). At present, we have developed the infrastructure (web-accessible database and web interface) required for pledge signatories to create and modify their user accounts. Individuals can also sign the pledge, and view their draft, current, and past pledges. A visual template of the signatory dashboard is appended to this report.

Regarding dissemination, we have already presented the project to (1) an advanced undergraduate course on "Crowdsourcing and Human Computation" (Prof. Chris Callison-Burch) in the University of Pennsylvania's Networked and Social Systems Engineering Department and (2) the Not-Equal Award Showcase, 12th November 2020**.** We also have an early paper draft that is in development and aim to submit this to a social science journal soon. (Specifically, we plan to submit the paper as a 'Research Note' to the SAGE journal *Work, Employment & Society*.) In the paper we outline the concept of a wage pledge and present some of our survey findings.

Once the pledge infrastructure has been fully prepared, we will hold a first workshop to present the project to academics, IRBs, and funding agencies where they will be able to offer input about the design and about the third part of our project, the enforcement mechanism. In conjunction with these consultations, we will continue to advance on the technical aspects of the project by developing an API and browser extension so that data about wage pledge commitments can be quickly accessed by workers.

Please indicate if these details can be shared in a blog post on the Not-Equal website   <u>YES</u>   NO

* We would ask that Not-Equal refrain from mentioning the details of the pledge design or details of our survey results; however, if the blog post is released before the end of June, we would be happy for Not-Equal to share a link to our survey on academic use of crowdworking:

HTTPS://COREXMSWBTMQ4TLFS2DX.QUALTRICS.COM/JFE/FORM/SV_EVDKM0WD0UNKRYE

We also respectfully request that a draft of any blog post to be published be shared with us for review prior to publication.

2. WORK PLAN
Please explain any deviations from your work plan, the reasons for this and plans to address the issue (up to 250 words)   To date, there have been no deviations from our work plan.

Further Information

If you have any further questions regarding this form, please contact notequal@ncl.ac.uk.

Appendix A: Pledge Website Screenshot

Crowdsourcing Wage Pledge

Create a New Pledge

Project name
Use the title of the tasks ("HITs") you plan to post.

Mechanical Turk Requester Name for this project
The Requester Name you are using on Mechanical Turk for this project.
This may be your name, or, if you have changed it to protect your privacy, it may be something else, such as "ABCD Research Lab".

Mechanical Turk Requester ID for this project
The Mechanical Turk ID of the Requester account you are using for this project.
This is typically a string of letters and numbers starting with "A", like "A123ABC45DEFG".

Project start date
Enter an approximate date for when you plan to start posting tasks for this project.

`dd / mm / yyyy`

Project end date
Enter an approximate date for when you expect the last tasks associated with this project to be completed.

`dd / mm / yyyy`

Let other people manage the pledge for this project

https://not-equal.tech/   @notequaltech