



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Local Digital Covid-19 Challenge Prospectus

Using digital and technology to support Covid-19 recovery across Local Government

July 2020

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government



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Local Government



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This document/publication is also available on our website at <https://localdigital.gov.uk/c19-challenge/>. If you have any enquiries regarding this document/publication, email fund@localdigital.gov.uk.

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Introduction	4
The challenge	4
Overview	4
Who can apply	4
Eligibility and assessment criteria	5
Covid-19 challenge fund timescales	5
Application process	5
MHCLG as a partner	6
Procurement options	6
Deliverables and outcomes	6
Further information	7
Annex A: Covid-19 Challenge eligibility criteria	8
Annex B: Glossary of terms	10



Introduction

1. On 18 June 2020 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) opened an £800,000 funding round for local government digital and data projects focused on Covid-19 recovery and renewal efforts.
2. As lockdown restrictions start to lift, Local Authorities across the country are figuring out how to safely reopen public services. In particular, responding to increasing demand for services in ways that do not expose residents or workforce to Covid-19.
3. Local Digital Covid-19 Challenge is intended to support and equip local government with the requisite resources to recover from Covid-19, whilst delivering the agenda set out in the principles of the [Local Digital Declaration](#).
4. The funding announced on 18 June 2020 is available for the financial year 2020/21. No subsequent funding will be made available to the projects funded by the Local Digital Covid-19 Challenge.

The challenge

Overview

5. Support is offered to stimulate and support digital service recovery from Covid-19 effects in a collaborative and joined up way that benefits the wider local government sector.
6. Funding is confirmed for 2020/21 and amounts of up to £80,000 per project will be awarded as proposals move successfully through the bidding process and assessment criteria, as defined in Annex A.
7. Local authorities are invited to submit proposals for digital and data-enabled projects from three thematic areas:
 - data and reporting
 - community engagement
 - developing new working practices.

Who can apply

8. Local authorities¹ in England are eligible to make an application to the challenge.

¹ local authorities - County Councils, District Councils, London Borough Councils, the Common Council of the City of London, Combined Authorities and Greater London Authority.



9. Central government departments, third sector organisations, other public sector organisations and local authorities from elsewhere in the UK are not eligible to make an application but can be partners on a project.
10. A lead council should submit the application on behalf of all project partners, if you have partners. You do not need project partners to submit an application.
11. Lead applicants must be Local Digital Declaration signatories (partner councils do not have to be Declaration signatories).
12. Each local authority can submit up to 2 proposals to lead Covid-19 projects and can be a partner on as many projects as they can actively support.

Eligibility and Assessment criteria

13. In making awards, priority will be given to those proposals that offer the greatest potential for immediate impact, as opposed to longer term savings. Full Eligibility Criteria can be found in [Annex A](#).

Covid-19 challenge fund timescales

14. Timescales

Applications open	1 July 2020
Slack Q&A session	6 July 1-2pm on the #mhclg-fund Slack channel in the LocalGovDigital workspace
Applications close	15 July 2020 (5pm)
Panel interview (virtual)	23/24 July 2020
Selected projects announced	w/c 3 August 2020
Outputs due	30 October 2020

Application process

15. Applications will be made available to councils from 1 July 2020, via the [Local Digital Website](#).
16. All applications must be submitted by 5pm on 15 July 2020, by a lead authority.



17. Applicants will be expected to robustly demonstrate their readiness to meet the fund eligibility criteria outlined in this prospectus [Annex A](#), as well as availability to start the project from w/c 3 August 2020.
18. Shortlisted applications will be invited to present their proposals to a panel for final review and scrutiny.
19. All applications will be published openly on the [Local Digital website](#).

MHCLG as a partner

20. Funded projects will be partnered with a Collaboration Manager from the MHCLG Local Digital Collaboration Unit (LDCU). The Collaboration Manager will provide oversight, support and guidance to projects and provide a link to MHCLG.

Procurement options

21. If procurement is required (for example to engage digital agencies) the procurement process can be approached in one of two ways:
 - Option 1: MHCLG will run the procurement process for the project. Supplier contracts will be awarded and performance managed by MHCLG. Payments to the supplier will also be managed by MHCLG.
 - Option 2: The lead council will run the procurement process for the project. MHCLG will issue funding to the lead authority for the successful project via Section 31 payment. Supplier contracts will be awarded and performance managed by the lead authority. Payments to the supplier will also be managed by the lead authority.
22. Projects will be asked to specify their preferred approach to running the project (on their application), however final decision on selecting a suitable approach will remain with MHCLG.
23. If no procurement is required and funding will be used to backfill council officers working on the project, MHCLG will issue funding to the lead authority via Section 31 payment.

Deliverables and outcomes

24. Projects can build on existing work or start from scratch, as long as the intention is to deliver outcomes that are of relevance to other councils and can be of immediate use.



25. Projects deliverables and outcomes can include proof of concepts, prototypes, guidance, draft standards, and design patterns, among others.
26. Projects should provide implementation guidance that supports the sharing with and adoption of the outputs by other councils.
27. You do not need to produce a benefits case, research report or recommendations report.
28. As per the Declaration principles, we expect projects to work in the open and this can consist of blogs, show and tells and week notes.
29. At the end of the challenge, we will run a wrap up event and expect project teams to present their outputs.

Further information

30. All Local Digital Covid-19 Fund related information will be routinely published and updated on <https://localdigital.gov.uk/c19-challenge>. If you have any specific questions about the fund you can use the #mhclg-fund Slack channel in the LocalGovDigitalworkspace. All question and answers will be published on <https://localdigital.gov.uk/c19-challenge/questions-about-applying-c19-challenge/>
31. Local authorities wishing to join the Local Digital Declaration can do this online at <https://localdigital.gov.uk/sign/>.



Annex A: Covid-19 Challenge eligibility criteria

The criteria below will be used to determine whether proposed projects are eligible for the Covid-19 Challenge. Eligible applications will be assessed in line with the principles outlined in the [Local Digital Declaration](#). When completing an application into the fund, each project proposal will need to evidence how its team and project will work to meet these criteria.

We will review applications on the following basis:

Must have

- All project lead councils must have signed up to Local Digital Declaration
- Councils must not submit more than 2 applications as the lead council
- Projects must have a clear link to Covid-19 recovery and renewal
- Projects must directly address one or more of the following thematic areas: data and reporting, community engagement, developing new working practices
- Projects must be of relevance to the wider local government sector, not just one council
- Project applications must be submitted by a lead council
- Project applications must clearly articulate the Covid-19 related problem they are hoping to solve and a rough delivery plan detailing key milestones
- Project applications must be submitted by 15 July 2020 (5pm)
- Project outcomes and deliverables must be achievable within 8 weeks from the project start date
- Project outcomes and deliverables must be reusable by other councils
- Projects must seek funding up to and not more than £80,000
- Projects must have the endorsement from at least one named senior manager (Head of Service or equivalent) in the lead council
- Project applications must outline a key contact person from each partner authority and the expected time council staff can commit to working on the project over its duration
- If a supplier is required to deliver the project, applications must detail the type of support and skills that would be expected from the supplier
- Project applications must detail procurement requirements and the procurement support they expect from MHCLG

Won't have

- Projects won't receive further grants from the Local Digital Covid-19 Challenge fund
- Projects won't be focused on only delivering an outcome or output specific to a single council
- IT hardware projects won't be considered
- Projects applications won't be accepted if they are overambitious or need more than 8 weeks to complete
- Project applications won't be considered if they do not relate to the three challenge themes: data and reporting, community engagement, developing new working



practices. Separate grants exist for Covid-19 related challenges such as [local test and trace services](#)

- Project applications won't only propose a discovery phase of research
- Project applications submitted by a supplier won't be accepted
- Project applications won't be considered if they only relate to plugging BAU funding gaps
- Project outcomes and deliverables won't be limited to user research reports
- Local authorities won't submit more than two applications as the lead council



Annex B: Glossary of terms

Lead authority	The local authority which takes the responsibility for leading the project through to completion. This tends to also be the authority which instigates the project but might not necessarily be the case. This authority must have signed the Local Digital Declaration before funding can be awarded to the project.
Partner authorities	The local authorities which are actively involved in developing the project. These authorities will be listed on the application form.
Project lead	The person from the Lead authority who is personally takes responsibility for leading the project through to completion.
Local Digital Declaration	The Local Digital Declaration is a shared ambition for the future of local public services written in 2018 by a collective of 45 local authorities, sector bodies and government departments.
MHCLG	The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's (MHCLG) job is to create great places to live and work, and to give more power to local people to shape what happens in their area.
LDCU	The Local Digital Collaboration Unit is a team within the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, created to help the sector deliver on the ambition of the Local Digital Declaration. LDCU supports collaborative projects and the development of skills and capability within the local digital community.