

Assistive Technology Testbed Programme

Q&A from webinar sessions on 4th and 5th February 2020

We have collated the questions asked and answers provided over both sessions. Please be aware that answers have been combined where questions were duplicated across sessions.

Q. Is there a target number of total pupils/schools to engage?

We do not anticipate having a target number of pupils / schools / colleges to engage in the programme. The number should depend on the research design and the stated funding (maximum £300,000) and time constraints of the programme (until the end of July 2021).

Q. How many schools/ colleges do you expect the delivery partner to work with?

The number of schools and colleges we expect the delivery partner to work with will depend on the research design. However, analysis of similar Testbed programmes suggests that engagement with between 50-100 schools and colleges is possible within the timeframes and funding available.

Q. Is there an absolute minimum number of schools and colleges that the delivery partner is expected to work with?

There is no minimum expectation.

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Q. What is the intended school / college sector balance?

We're aiming for an equal balance between the school and college sectors.

Q. What role will the DfE take in recruiting schools?

We anticipate that the delivery partner will be responsible for recruiting schools and colleges to the programme. DfE will be able to help with communication of recruitment materials.

Q. What incentives will the department offer the participating schools and colleges to take part?

The DfE will not provide any incentives for schools and colleges to participate in the programme. Bidders can build incentives into their proposals if they believe them to be necessary.

Q. Does DfE have a list of schools and colleges that have already chosen to adopt AT?

No, the DfE does not hold that sort of data set. We do know however that there is a varied landscape of AT use and implementation across the country.

Q. Are you expecting non-participating schools can be used as control groups?

This programme should not use control groups where Assistive Technologies are actively withheld from pupils with SEND. The appropriate use of other types of control groups will depend on the research design put forward.

Q. What role will DfE's Demonstrator Schools and Colleges play in the AT Testbed Programme?

We're not expecting any formal role for selected Demonstrator schools or colleges in the Testbed Programme. Some Demonstrators might want to take part in the Testbed programme too however.

Q. Is there a published list of DfE's Demonstrator Schools and Colleges?

There is not yet a published list of Demonstrator Schools and Colleges as we are still working through the selection process.

Q. Have other testbeds looked at special needs?

The DfE's other Testbed programmes do not focus on special educational needs and disabilities. There have been other evaluation programmes of assistive technology around the world however.

Q. Does the programme cover Higher Education too?

The programme does not cover Higher Education or employment. It is directed towards building the evidence of impact in schools and colleges in England.

Q. Will the programme look at the impact at the transition stage into employment and further education?

The programme does not cover Higher Education or employment. It is directed towards building the evidence of impact in schools and colleges in England.

Q. As AT is a very broad area and the level of support varies depending on the complexity of disability, is the DfE interested in either end of the spectrum or the whole? This would impact the type of school or college involved.

DfE is interested in the whole spectrum on of AT and SEND. The programme however will focus on the most promising technologies identified in the rapid literature review.

Q. Who is leading the rapid literature review on the impact of assistive technology use for pupils with SEND? And what is the literature review question?

Knowledge By Design will be conducting the rapid evidence assessment for DfE. Dave Edyburn, Ph.D. will serve as the principal investigator and lead researcher.

The review will focus on: 'The impact of assistive technologies in education for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)'

Q. When will the rapid literature review be published?

We're expecting the rapid literature review to be complete by the end of March and published in April.

Q. What kind of outputs is the DfE looking for? Who is the target audience for the outputs?

There are some set outputs that the DfE will be looking for, including a final written research report and evaluation report both of which will have to be in accordance with the DfE's Style Guide and Template. We are expecting proposals that will also summarise key findings in a way that parents, teachers, SENCOs and pupils can understand and use to inform their practice.

We will expect further outputs that are in line with bidders' proposed communications plan.

Q. What is the available budget for the programme?

There is a maximum of £300,000 available for this programme in financial year 2020/2021.

Q. Is there budget for purchase of AT by the schools/colleges for the trials or will it be provided by the fund for this project?

There is no separate budget available for the purchase of AT for schools and colleges. If they think it is appropriate, bidders can include funding for AT for schools and colleges as part of their proposals. Bidders should bear in mind that one of the necessary requirements for schools and colleges who wish to be included in this programme is that they must already be using AT or are already planning to use AT. Bidders should also be aware that some AT companies have indicated that they will be happy to provide AT for free for the duration of the trials.

Q. Can you confirm that the statement regarding IP ownership is for foreground IP generated or is this to include background IP too?

Any background IP will be retained by the delivery partner. Foreground IP will be owned by DfE. IPR is covered by Clause 24 of the Terms and Conditions associated with the DPS which will apply to this contract. These T&Cs are available for review on the DPS system and will be signposted once the opportunity launches.

Q. Are the expected timelines negotiable?

The timelines for the programme are flexible and will depend on the bidders' research and management design for the programme. The set deadlines which are not negotiable are for the funding and length of the programme. The programme will not run past July 2021 and all funding will be provided in the 2020-21 financial year.

Q. How do you envisage the relationship between the AT companies and the delivery partner for this testbed? Related to this, who would make the decision as to which AT is in place? Would that be the School, the delivery partner or the AT companies?

We expect the delivery partner to work with a range of stakeholders throughout the programme, including Local Authorities, regional support bodies, charities and AT companies. Bidders should detail how they propose working with these different organisations in their proposals.

One of the key requirements of the programme is that schools and colleges must have already chosen to adopt AT to be included (i.e. are either already using or planning to use AT with some of their pupils / students). The decision on what AT to use will be for the school / college and pupil / student to decide. Bidders should detail how they propose working with schools and colleges to support this assessment and decision making.

Q. Can you confirm that the scope of the evaluation is just within England?

Yes, we are only looking to recruit schools and colleges in England.

Q. Would you expect SEN schools and colleges to be included in the evaluation?

Yes, we are looking for a broad range of schools and colleges to be included in the AT Testbed Programme, including both special and mainstream schools and colleges.