



Department for
Science, Innovation
& Technology

AI Utilisation Challenge

**Government Efficiency Accelerator &
GCF Commercial Innovation Hub**



Background and Objectives of the Pathfinder Project

The Public Sector AI (PSAI) Directorate within the Department of Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) exists to help the government make brilliant public services that empower people in the UK. We work at the very centre of government to drive digital transformation focused on user needs and to reimagine how government uses AI to deliver public services and initiatives.

The newly established Government Efficiency Accelerator (GEA) programme is a flagship initiative aimed at driving operational efficiencies across some of the government's key enabling functions (Finance, Policy, HR) through the safe and responsible adoption of AI. The GEA is working in collaboration with the GCF Commercial Innovation Hub (CIH) to better understand the availability of AI based solutions that can be used by teams across government departments to drive efficiency and increase productivity.

The goal of this Pathfinder Project is to engage with the market to understand current capabilities, initially focusing on three core business areas: Finance, HR and policy (more details on a specific problem area below).

Applicants should note that this engagement is not intended to lead to the procurement of a particular solution for DSIT or any other UK Government Department. Rather, we are looking to build a catalogue of tested and “kitemarked” products that will be made available to public sector organisations to consider procuring them in the knowledge that they have been tested and will meet requirements such as security, usability, transparency etc.

We are interested in hearing from all types of suppliers and would particularly encourage SMEs and VCSEs to submit proposals.

Challenge Summary

As noted above, the GEA and CIH are engaging with the market to build a deeper understanding of how AI based solutions and products can help make government departments more efficient and productive. We appreciate there are a multitude of potential use cases so for this initial engagement we have chosen to focus on problems relating to budgeting and workforce forecasting.

We are inviting suppliers to submit proposals outlining how their products could be used by finance teams across UK government departments in a safe, transparent and unbiased way. We are keen to explore solutions which can reduce the level of repetitive tasks required specifically when budgeting and conducting workforce forecasting. Submissions should demonstrate how the solution can streamline tasks, improve



accuracy, and shorten time spent on repetitive work in order to free colleagues up to complete higher-value work.

There is no fixed scope, as we aim for platform-agnostic, AI driven and innovative tools that adapt to various organisational needs. Solution should be accessible to organisations of all sizes and is not dependent on any specific ERP platform.

What's the application and evaluation process?

Using the application form attached we want you to explain your idea and how your product or solution can help civil servants in the ways outlined previously. You should clearly explain what the solution is, including key features and functionality. What we're looking for here is a clearly thought-out solution that fully addresses the types of challenges we are looking to solve. There are also questions on your previous experience delivering solutions like this and the relevant standards it meets. There are clear word limits for each question – please stick to these. The word limit on your response is 750 words and should clearly explain what the solution is, including key features and functionality. What we're looking for here is a clearly thought-out solution that fully addresses the types of challenges we are looking to solve.

You can include a small number of diagrams or visuals if they help explain your proposal, however other material such as videos, slide decks and external links will not be considered.

We also want to know how your solution complies with relevant standards.

Initial applications will be scored against the following criteria for each question. Please note the full evaluation criteria provided in the application form. Your responses to each of the three criteria will be assessed against the scoring below.

1. Your proposal, and how it responds to the Challenge
2. Describe how your solution / product complies with relevant standards
3. Equality & Diversity
4. Environmental

Your proposal and how it responds to the challenge set (Q1):

- **4: Excellent** - solution would create significant efficiencies whilst delivering accurate budgeting and/or workforce forecasting. The solution presents easy-to-use processes that could be adopted and/or scaled across multiple government departments without significant additional investment.



- 3: Good - solution would create efficiencies whilst delivering accurate budgeting and/or workforce forecasting. The solution presents easy-to-use processes with the potential to be adopted in several government departments.
- 2: Satisfactory - solution would create efficiencies whilst delivering accurate budgeting and/or workforce forecasting.
- 1: Poor - solution has some potential to create efficiencies whilst delivering budgeting and/or workforce forecasting, though effective deliverability/ useability may require further investment.
- 0: Doesn't answer challenge.

Your solution's compliance with the following relevant standards (Q2):

- **Data protection:** [Data Protection Impact Assessment \(DPIA\)](#) following the standards of the [AI Playbook for the UK Government - GOV.UK](#)
- **Security risks:** Cyber Security Compliance and [ETSI/NCSC Technical Specifications for AI Implementation](#)
- **Ethical standards:** Follow [Public Sector Equality Duty \(PSED\)](#) and [Ethics, transparency and accountability framework for automated decision making](#)
- **Legal:** Follow [guidance for AI procurement](#)

Your solution's compliance to the above standards will be scored against the following criteria:

- 4: Excellent: solution complies with all relevant standards
- 3: Good: Solution is compliant with most relevant standards; clear plan to achieve compliance in remaining areas.
- 2: Satisfactory: Solution is compliant with most relevant standards; viable mitigations proposed for areas not fully compliant
- 1: Poor: Solution is compliant with some relevant standards but unclear or not fully compliant in all areas. Where unclear/ not compliant, no potential mitigations have been presented
- 0: Not compliant and no mitigations

Your organisation's approach to the Equality & Diversity (Q3):

- 4: Excellent: response details the organisation's approach towards Equality & Diversity and clearly demonstrate they are capable of meeting the requirement.
- 3: Good: response describes the organisation's current approach towards Equality & Diversity and shows a clear understanding of areas of improvement and plans in place to do this.



- 2: Satisfactory: response is acceptable but remains basic and could have been expanded on.
- 1: Poor: Poor response only partially satisfying the selection question requirements with deficiencies apparent. Some useful evidence provided but response falls well short of expectations.
- 0: Response does not answer the question.

Your organisation's approach to the environment and carbon neutrality (Q4):

- 4: Excellent: response details the organisation's approach towards environmental and carbon neutralities and clearly demonstrate they are capable of meeting the requirement.
- 3: Good: response describes the organisation's current approach towards environmental and carbon neutralities and shows a clear understanding of areas of improvement and plans in place to do this.
- 2: Satisfactory: response is acceptable but remains basic and could have been expanded on.
- 1: Poor: Poor response only partially satisfying the selection question requirements with deficiencies apparent. Some useful evidence provided but response falls well short of expectations.
- 0: Response does not answer the question.

Applicants will be scored against the criteria detailed above, each response to the criteria will be receive a score of 0-4. The maximum score a response can achieve is 16. The minimum success criteria to be taken forward to the second stage (outlined below) is a minimum score of 3 in each of the 4 criteria (minimum of 12 out of 16) The GEA will determine at its sole discretion the number of applicants taken forward to the second stage; this will be determined on a merit basis in order of the highest scoring applicant(s) first.

Successful applicants following completion of the first stage will be invited to pitch to an evaluation panel made up of a subject matter expert from finance, a technical specialist and a member of DSIT's commercial team. The pitch sessions will run for one hour:

1. Introduction (10 minutes): Contextualise the solution within the challenge brief and provide an overview of its capabilities.



2. Demonstration (20 minutes): Showcase the software's capabilities, integration with existing systems, and the measurable benefits it offers.

3. Technical and Platform-Specific Questions (10 minutes): Address platform-specific functionalities, deliverability and any technical queries.

4. Q&A Session (20 minutes): Provide an opportunity for assessors to ask questions and clarify technical and operational aspects. We will leave some time at the end for questions from applicants.

Following the evaluation panel we will share feedback based on a questionnaire covering the tool fit, technical adoption and use, security and compliance to specific standards.

Timeline

Publication of engagement notice – 24th October 2025

Written submissions deadline – 13th November 2025

Initial down selection – 14th November to 20th November 2025

Invitations to pitch – 21st November to 26th November 2025

Pitches – 1st December to 5th December 2025

Outcome letters – 15th December 2025

