

## Results of Competition: Business Basics 3 - SME Technology Use Non-Business Led Trials (Non-Aid, Full Stage)

Competition Code: 1912\_CRD\_BEIS\_BB3\_FULLSTAGE\_NA

Note: These proposals have succeeded in the assessment stage of this competition. All are subject to grant offer and conditions being met.

Participant organisation names	Project title	Proposed project costs	Proposed project grant
GWE BUSINESS WEST LTD	The adoption of proven new technology in small family businesses	£127,266	£127,266
ENTERPRISE FIRST (SOUTHERN) LIMITED		£35,485	£35,485
Lancaster University		£135,873	£135,873
NBV ENTERPRISE SOLUTIONS LIMITED		£34,717	£34,717
TEDCO BUSINESS SUPPORT LIMITED		£33,310	£33,310
University of Warwick		£32,527	£32,527

Note: you can see all Innovate UK-funded projects here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/innovate-uk-funded-projects>

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## Project description - provided by applicants

This trial is led by Business West and includes the other members of the Cavendish Consortium (trading as Cavendish Enterprise) i.e TEDCO, Enterprise First, NBV; together with LUMS. We will be collaborating with WBS for the evaluation, using a Randomised Controlled Trial, and for reporting.

Our goal is to identify a cost-effective, yet productivity-enhancing programme of peer-group learning for family business SMEs which can be replicated and run at scale throughout the Country.

Our experiment addresses a key problem faced by the long tail of low-productivity businesses in England by seeking to reduce barriers to the adoption of digital technologies that have been demonstrated to increase productivity.

By selecting family businesses with low rates of digital technology adoption and working with them in facilitated peer-groups we aim to provide:

- \* a trial that demonstrates measurable improvements in intent to adopt productivity enhancing digital technologies;
- \* although the trial will not be long enough to generate consistent implementation activity, evidence of some adoption of the technologies before the end of the trial; and
- \* in the longer term, and measurable by data-matching by BEIS or its agents, a clear improvement in the productivity of the participating firms.

The treatment group will benefit from LUMS' well-tested leadership development processes, focused exclusively on digital technology adoption. To make the programme less expensive and more scalable, fewer interventions are made over a shorter duration. We believe a tightly-focussed facilitated programme of this sort is innovative in this field. The treatment group and primary control group will both receive access to online resources to improve productivity. The secondary control group will receive no support at all.

We will run a randomised controlled trial involving 7 cohorts. The delivery of each cohort will be completed in four months, within the 21 month period of the project. There will be a gap of six months between programme delivery and data collection. The control and treatment groups, each of 140 family businesses with fewer than 50 employees, will be recruited regionally by the five delivery partners. 140 micro-businesses from the general population, drawn to be consistent in their key characteristics with the treatment and matched control groups will form a secondary control group.

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Cheshire East Borough Council	ADAPT - Adoption of Digital Automated Payment Technology	£326,099	£326,099

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## Project description - provided by applicants

This Randomised Control Trial (RCT) of the ADAPT project is designed to test whether a 'Best Practice Visit' to a world class financial technology company is more effective at encouraging SMEs to adopt digital payment technologies than if they just received best practice information in the form of a 'digital guide'.

It will focus on encouraging the adoption of digital and automated payment technologies, which are proven to boost SME productivity by improving the efficiency of their payment practices. These digital payment technologies can include: digital banking; e-purchase order systems; e-invoicing; e-payments and card payment systems.

To test whether 'best practice visits' are more effective than a best practice guide, at encouraging SME adoption of these technologies, 200 SMEs from Cheshire, who have not used digital payment technologies before, will be recruited to participate in the Trial. 100 will be selected at random to attend a 'Best Practice Visit' to the Barclays Global Technology Campus, based at Knutsford, Cheshire. A further 100 will be randomly selected to receive a digital payment technology best practice 'guide' developed in conjunction with Barclays Bank.

The RCT is being led by Cheshire East Council, working closely with Barclays Bank and an independent evaluation partner, SQW. The concept of harnessing the expertise of larger corporates to exchange best practice knowledge of digital technology with local SMEs was tested through a Proof of Concept, delivered by Cheshire East Council, under Round 1 of the Business Basics Programme. In many ways, Cheshire East is the ideal location to test this approach. The successful economic performance of the Borough is due, in large part, to the presence of several very large, high GVA producing businesses. The GVA contribution of these larger businesses however masks the fact that 99.97% of our businesses are small to medium sized enterprises, with a much lower productivity performance.

If successful, this approach could be scaled up to be delivered in other regions of the UK, as a partnership between the private sector and other local authorities/ LEPs. The results from the Trial will be published in a final report and will be disseminated at a national and local level. This will mean that other banks could learn from the Trial to consider how they could also engage with their small business client base to offer solutions to encourage the take up of digital payment technology.

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Participant organisation names	Project title	Proposed project costs	Proposed project grant
THE PRODUCTIVITY GROUP	Think Digital: Online advice for SMEs on how to improve their productivity through the adoption of proven digital technologies	£265,734	£265,734

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## Project description - provided by applicants

This programme is seeking to evaluate and optimise Think Digital. This website from Be the Business seeks to increase successful technology adoption by providing guidance and information to SMEs on how to purchase and implement the best software for their needs.

The programme focuses on five types of software: CRM systems, ERP systems, HR systems, digital accounting software, and project management software. These were chosen as they are proven to boost productivity, and their use could benefit the majority of firms. The programme is targeting SME firms in England, across sectors, and is intended to test an online, highly scalable approach to supporting SMEs. The site blends resources such as product selection checklists and implementation guides with a user focused approach, built on authentic case studies and best practice content from workshops with SMEs. This approach is inspired by experiences from Be the Business's other programmes which suggest SME leaders are often most receptive to advice which comes from other SME leaders.

Be the Business's strategic partnership with Lloyds Bank will play a key part in this programme. Lloyds's will recruit SMEs for the trial and part of the trial will see their team of Relationship Managers supporting their customers using Think Digital.

Think Digital will be evaluated through a Randomised Control Trial which will compare three groups: A control group; a group who only receive online support via the Think Digital website; and a group who receive online support via the Think Digital website as well as face to face support in its use from their Lloyds Relationship Managers

This programme is intended to evaluate a lower cost, more scalable approach to supporting technology adoption. The intervention is intended to deliver benefits at a fraction of the cost of other measures by using a scalable online platform and leveraging in-person interactions which are already taking place. The trial will test Think Digital, and allow the assessment of the comparative benefits of digital approaches to business support and more traditional in-person support.

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Petroc	Techknowledgey Transfer	£303,406	£303,406
APPLEGATE MARKETPLACE LTD.		£17,215	£12,050
Barr Media		£15,564	£10,895
JANE MAYNARD LIMITED		£16,929	£11,850
LIME CLOUD LIMITED		£17,164	£12,015
LINEAL SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS LIMITED		£15,725	£11,008

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## Project description - provided by applicants

Petroc's Techknowledge Transfer project will test the concept of providing support to SMEs through student projects. Young people on a range of Level 2 and 3 business, administration, enterprise and accountancy courses will work within SMEs, to combine each young person's digital confidence and knowledge and understanding of the latest technologies with the SMEs experience and expertise within their field of business to create and embed models of business and administration technology usage, tailored to each individual business, which are user-friendly and sustainable and which lead to genuine business efficiencies, freeing up business owners and managers to increase productivity and profitability, as well as benefiting from an improved work-life balance.

Participating businesses will initially benefit from a 1:1 diagnostic session to identify areas where technology adoption could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their business and administration processes, followed by up to two masterclasses to learn about relevant technology options and network with peers in similar circumstances.

As this is a research trial, approximately half of all participating businesses will then be randomly selected to work with a student, who will embed the use of one or more identified technologies within their business and administration processes. Students will be selected on a competitive basis for each participating SME to ensure a good match between student and business, and both the student and business will be supported by expert tutors and/or business mentors.

We will undertake a robust evaluation of the impact, comparing and contrasting the short, medium and long-term effects on those businesses that are selected to engage with a student, and those that are not, primarily assessing the extent to which each option results in businesses adopting the use of business and administration technologies on a long-term and effective basis.

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Edge Hill University	Manufacturing Connect_Lancashire	£192,811	£192,811
Manchester Metropolitan University		£74,158	£74,158
University of Sheffield		£119,197	£119,197

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Project description - provided by applicants

Manufacturing Connect\_Lancashire will pilot an adoption sprint process to encourage manufacturing SMEs to adopt known, productivity enhancing, technologies. The project will create and test a replicable model in which key regional partners: HEIs / RTOs; business support organisations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce); and private industry collaborators can play complementary roles to deliver impact.

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