



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Pathways to Work Innovation Fund

Applicant Bid Pack

A UK-wide fund supporting organisations to test and develop innovative approaches that support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to move towards, enter, stay and progress in work.

This document is available in alternative formats. See section 2.4 for accessibility support.

Ministerial Foreword	4
1. Scheme Overview	6
1.1 About this Bid Pack	6
1.2 What is Pathways to Work?	6
1.3 What is the Innovation Fund?	7
1.3.1 What is the Fund trying to achieve?	7
1.3.2 Who can apply?	8
1.3.3 What we mean by innovation	8
1.3.4 Funding principles	9
1.3.5 What funding can be used for	11
1.3.6 Should I apply?	11
1.3.7 Tips for a strong application	12
1.4 Summary of the End-to-End Applicant Journey	13
1.4.1 Applicant Journey Overview	13
1.4.2 Important Milestones and Dates	16
1.4.3 Payments	16
1.4.4 How to apply for the grant	18
1.4.5 Important information you will need before applying	19
2. Applicant Support	21
2.1 Application Query Support	21
2.2 Application Refinement Sessions	22
2.3 Partnerships	22
2.4 Accessibility Support	24
2.5 Appeals	24
2.6 Complaints	26
3. Glossary	28
4. Contact Details	30
5. Annex	30
5.1 Application Form	30
5.2 Partnership Interest Form	58

5.3 Further Information on Innovation	61
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Ministerial Foreword

Too many disabled people and people with long-term health conditions face barriers to finding work, staying in work and progressing in their careers. The disability employment gap has been persistent for many years. Through Pathways to Work, we are changing the signed-off and written-off culture that has existed for far too long – by bringing together employment, health, and skills support in a more joined-up and personalised way.



We have a duty to ensure our investment in this has the maximum effect, and that the way it is used should be open to new ideas. This country has a fantastic tradition of innovation and creativity. I want to put that to work to expand opportunities for disabled people and people with health conditions. This is where the Pathways to Work Innovation Fund comes in. Up to £60 million is available to fund new ideas that could improve employment support and support more people to move closer to work, enter work, stay in work, and progress in work.

As part of this call to action, we want to hear from organisations across the UK, including charities, businesses, public sector organisations, social enterprises, researchers and partnerships. We welcome ideas from both established organisations and new entrants. What matters is a clear understanding of the people you want to support and strong ideas that could remove barriers or be a platform for more participation.

Not every innovation will succeed exactly as planned. That is why learning is a core part of this Fund. I want this to be an ideas factory that tests new approaches and ways of delivering support, builds the evidence, and helps us better understand what works.

I encourage organisations of all sizes to consider how they can contribute. Together, we can create better opportunities, improve employment support, and help more people to live their fullest lives.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pat McFadden". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'P' and 'M'.

Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

1. Scheme Overview

1.1 About this Bid Pack

This Bid Pack explains the Pathways to Work Innovation Fund and how to apply to it for grant funding. It will help you decide if the Fund is right for your organisation.

You'll find information about:

- Who can apply
- What the Fund will support
- How to apply
- How applications will be assessed
- Important dates and stages in the process
- Support available to applicants

We recommend reading this pack before starting your application and referring to it throughout the process.

1.2 What is Pathways to Work?

Pathways to Work is a government offer that is supporting disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to move towards, enter, stay and progress in work.

It brings together personalised work, health and skills support so people can access the right support for them, at the right time.

Pathways to Work aims to:

- Create a clear and joined-up system of support
- Improve access to tailored and specialist support
- Support people to reach their employment goals
- Support people to overcome their barriers to work

1.3 What is the Innovation Fund?

The Pathways to Work Innovation Fund will invest up to £60 million over 2 years in grant funding to test new ideas that support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to move towards, enter, stay and progress in work. We are looking for new ideas and approaches and new uses of technology.

The Fund is open to applications for grant funding from organisations across the UK, including public sector organisations, businesses, voluntary and community organisations, and partnerships.

We are interested in ideas that can improve employment outcomes and generate valuable learning.

1.3.1 What is the Fund trying to achieve?

The Pathways to Work Innovation Fund has two objectives:

- To support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to move towards, enter, stay and progress in work
- To build evidence about what works and for whom, so that successful approaches can be adopted more widely

We want to fund ideas that support people to achieve at least one of the following outcomes:

- Move towards work
- Enter work
- Stay in work
- Make progress in work

Applications may focus on a single outcome or multiple outcomes.

Ideas that are tested should generate learning and evidence that can improve future services and have the potential to be adopted, replicated or scaled.

Through this, the Fund will support the wider ambitions of Pathways to Work by building evidence of what works to reduce the disability employment gap, improve employment opportunities for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions, and create a more joined-up system of employment, health and skills support.

1.3.2 Who can apply?

The Fund is open to organisations across the United Kingdom.

Applications are welcomed from:

- Charities and voluntary organisations
- Social enterprises and Community Interest Companies (CICs)
- Private sector organisations and businesses
- Academic and research organisations
- Public sector organisations, including local authorities and mayoral strategic authorities
- Partnerships and consortia (Please see Section 2.3 for more information on how to find potential partners)
- Individuals (as part of a partnership only)

If you apply as part of a partnership, one organisation must act as the lead applicant.

The lead applicant will be responsible for submitting the application and managing any funding awarded.

1.3.3 What we mean by innovation

Innovation can take many different forms and will look different depending on the context. The principles below explain how innovation is understood for the purposes of this Fund and are intended to help applicants assess whether their proposal represents a new or significantly different approach. See Annex 5.3 for further guidance and examples to illustrate the types of innovation that may be in and out of scope.

For this Fund, innovation means doing something new or significantly different to support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to move towards, enter, stay and make progress in work.

Innovation may include:

- A new use of technology
- A new service, intervention, product or delivery model
- A new partnership or way of working that can join up across the system and make it work better for people
- Applying an existing intervention/product in a significantly different context, labour market, or with a new target group
- A new approach that helps employers to support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions

Innovation is unlikely to include:

- Delivering an existing service without a significantly different approach
- Expanding existing support without a significant learning opportunity
- Minor changes to existing support without a significant learning opportunity

We recognise that innovation involves uncertainty. Not every idea will succeed, but every project should generate learning and evidence that can improve future services and have the potential to be adopted, replicated or scaled.

1.3.4 Funding principles

The Pathways to Work Innovation Fund is looking to support a wide range of new and innovative ideas that could improve employment outcomes (moving towards, into, staying and progressing in work) for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. Proposals should generate learning and evidence about what works and demonstrate the potential to inform future services, including opportunities for wider adoption, replication or scaling where appropriate.

There is no minimum or maximum amount that organisations can apply for. Projects must be delivered within 12 months of signing the Grant Funding Agreement. Funding is available up to the end of March 2028.

We welcome applications from organisations of different sizes, sectors and backgrounds.

When assessing applications, we will consider:

- How innovative the proposal is
- How likely it is to lead to improved outcomes
- The value in the learning that could be generated
- How scalable the proposal is
- The funding required
- Whether the proposal represents good value for money

A larger funding request will not make an application more likely to be funded, and a smaller funding request will not make it less likely to be funded.

Applicants should only apply for the amount of funding needed to deliver their proposal successfully. Funding requests should be:

- Realistic
- Clearly explained
- Linked to the milestones and activities being delivered
- Proportionate to the outcomes and learning expected
- Not include existing business-as-usual costs

You do not need to be experienced in applying for grant funding. We are interested in the strength of your idea, the need it addresses, the outcomes it could achieve and the learning it could generate. Clear and simple responses are encouraged.

1.3.5 What funding can be used for

Funding can be used for activities that are needed to develop, test, deliver, monitor and evaluate your innovative proposal.

This could include:

- Developing and deploying new technology, equipment or AI solutions
- Designing and testing new interventions that don't currently exist
- Developing and piloting new products, services or tools
- User research and co-design activities
- Project delivery costs
- Staff, volunteer and participant costs directly related to the project
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning activities
- Technology, equipment or specialist support required for delivery
- Partnership and collaboration activities

All costs must:

- Be directly related to the funded project
- Represent good value for money
- Be incurred during the funded period
- Be clearly explained and justified within the application

1.3.6 Should I apply?

Use this checklist to help decide whether the Fund is a good fit for your idea.

- Does your idea support disabled people or people with long-term health conditions to move towards work, enter work, stay in work or progress in work?
- Is there something new, different or additional about your approach?
- Can you explain the challenge you are trying to address?
- Do you understand who will benefit and why?
- Can you explain the outcomes you hope to achieve?

- Can you deliver the proposal within the available timescales?
- Can you collect evidence and share learning from the project?
- Can your organisation manage public funding responsibly?

If you answered “yes” to most of these questions, the Fund may be a good fit for your proposal.

1.3.7 Tips for a strong application

There is no single model for a successful application. We welcome applications from organisations of different sizes, sectors and backgrounds.

Strong applications typically:

- Clearly explain the challenge they are seeking to address.
- Demonstrate a good understanding of the people who will benefit.
- Explain what is new, different or additional about the proposal.
- Show how accessibility, inclusion and user needs have shaped the design.
- Set out clear and realistic outcomes.
- Include a practical delivery plan with achievable milestones.
- Explain what will be learned through the project.
- Demonstrate the skills, experience and partnerships needed to deliver successfully.
- Provide a clear and proportionate budget.
- Show why the funding requested represents good value for money.

Applications are less likely to score well where they:

- Provide limited evidence that a problem exists or why it matters.
- Do not clearly explain who will benefit.
- Replicate existing services without demonstrating a meaningful change or innovation.
- Have unclear outcomes or no clear way of measuring success.

- Do not show how user needs have informed the proposal.
- Contain unrealistic delivery plans or timescales.
- Do not explain what learning will be generated.
- Request funding without clearly explaining how it will be used.
- Provide limited justification for costs or expected benefits.
- Use jargon, acronyms or technical language without explaining them.
- Do not provide enough information for assessors to understand the proposal.

1.4 Summary of the End-to-End Applicant Journey

This section explains what happens at each stage of the application process, from preparing your application through to funding decisions and project delivery.

Unlike many funding programmes, shortlisted applicants will have an opportunity to refine and strengthen their proposals before final funding decisions are made.

We recommend reading this section before starting your application so you can plan your time and understand what to expect.

1.4.1 Applicant Journey Overview

The application process consists of six stages:

1. Prepare
2. Apply
3. Application Shortlisting
4. Application Refinement
5. Awards
6. Post-Award Activity

The table below explains what happens at each stage, when it happens and what applicants can expect.

Stage		When this happens	What happens	What you need to do
1	Prepare	September 2026	• Learn about the Fund through GOV.UK and applicant webinars • Review the Applicant Bid Pack	• Check that your organisation and idea are eligible • Decide whether the Fund is a good fit for your proposal • Start preparing the information you will need • Consider whether you need to form a partnership to apply
2	Apply	September to October 2026	• The application window opens • Support is available through the Application Portal, drop-in sessions and FAQs	• Complete and submit your application and supporting documents before the deadline
3	Application Shortlisting	October 2026	• Applications are reviewed • You may be contacted for clarification or additional information • You are informed whether your	• Respond to any requests for clarification

			application has been shortlisted • Unsuccessful applicants receive feedback	
4	Application Refinement	November 2026	• Shortlisted applicants receive feedback on their proposals • Application refinement sessions are available to help strengthen applications • Refined applications are submitted for final assessment	• Attend optional refinement sessions • Refine and re-submit your proposal
5	Awards	From January 2027 onwards	• Final funding decisions are made • Successful applicants are notified • Unsuccessful applicants receive feedback	• Review the outcome of your application • Begin preparations for project mobilisation if successful
6	Post-Award Activity	February 2027 onwards	• Grant agreements are finalised • Project mobilisation begins	• Complete any onboarding requirements • Begin mobilisation and project delivery

			• Delivery, monitoring and reporting arrangements are agreed • Mobilisation payments are issued if applicable	
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1.4.2 Important Milestones and Dates

Milestone	Date
Application window open	28 September 2026
Partnership list published	5 October 2026
Application window close	26 October 2026
Application shortlisting outcome shared	9 November 2026
Application refinement one-to-one sessions begin	16 November 2026
Application refinement one-to-one sessions end	27 November 2026
Refined applications submission open	27 November 2026
Refined applications submission closes	4 December 2026
Award decisions communicated	From January 2027
Project mobilisation begins	From February 2027

1.4.3 Payments

Grant payments to successful applicants will be made in arrears through the claims process. This means funding is paid after an agreed milestone has been completed and the required evidence has been provided. We encourage applicants to keep milestones proportionate and practical. In many cases, a smaller number of well-defined milestones will be easier to manage and evidence than a large number of smaller claims. The exception to payment in arrears is a Mobilisation Payment, where funding is provided at the start of a project.

Mobilisation Payments

Some organisations may need funding up front to help start project activity before costs can be claimed. If your organisation needs funding in advance, you can request a Mobilisation Payment of up to 30% of the total grant funding request in your application. A Mobilisation Payment is not guaranteed and will only be approved in exceptional circumstances, where there is a clear need. Mobilisation payment requests will be thoroughly assessed and substantiated based on the criteria below.

When deciding whether to approve a Mobilisation Payment, we may consider:

- Your organisation's financial position, including reserves, turnover and cash flow.
- Whether you genuinely need funding in advance to start the project.
- What the upfront funding will be used for and whether those costs are necessary.
- Whether the amount requested is proportionate and reasonable.
- Whether the project has a credible delivery plan and realistic milestones.
- Whether your organisation can successfully deliver the proposed activity.
- Whether the request represents good value for money.
- Whether the request meets the Fund's governance and approval requirements.

If a Mobilisation Payment is approved, it must only be used for the purposes agreed by DWP. You will be required to provide evidence of how the funding has been spent. Any unspent funds, or funds not used for the agreed purpose, may need to be repaid. Further details will be shared in the Grant Funding Agreement.

Claim Payments

- You must include proposed project milestones and corresponding payment values in your application.
- You can include a maximum of one payable milestone per month.
- The number of payable milestones cannot exceed the length of your grant delivery period.

- Claims must be submitted by the monthly cut-off date to be included in that month's payment run.
- Claims submitted after the cut-off date, or without the required evidence, will be processed in the following payment cycle.

1.4.4 How to apply for the grant

You can apply online through the Application Portal. Details of the Application Portal, including a link to access it, will be shared through applicant webinars, information sessions and other Fund communications. A link to the Application Portal will also be available on the Pathways to Work Innovation Fund page on GOV.UK and through the Government's Find a Grant service.

The application form will ask for information about your organisation, your proposal, the outcomes you want to achieve and your budget. You will also be asked to upload any required supporting documents.

We are committed to making the application process accessible. If you cannot use the online form, or need additional support, alternative application formats or reasonable adjustments are available here: [Pathways to Work Innovation Fund guidance - GOV.UK](#).

Application forms and guidance will be available in the following formats:

- Online application form
- PDF
- Large print PDF
- Easy Read PDF
- British Sign Language (BSL)
- Audio
- Braille

Application forms and guidance will also be available in Welsh.

If you need support, we encourage you to contact us as early as possible. Once submitted, applications will undergo an eligibility and completeness check before making progress to the refinement stage.

1.4.5 Important information you will need before applying

Before starting your application, we recommend gathering the information and documents below.

Organisation information

You will need details about your organisation, including:

- Organisation name and registration number (where applicable)
- Registered address
- Named accountable lead
- Primary contact details
- Information about any delivery partners or partnership organisations

Proposal information

You should be ready to explain:

- The employment-related challenge you are seeking to address
- Who experiences the challenge and how it affects them
- What is innovative, different or additional about your proposal
- The outcomes and evidence you expect to generate
- How lived experience of disability or long-term health conditions, user needs and stakeholder insight have informed your proposal
- How the proposal will be delivered
- Any delivery partners involved and their role
- The future potential of the innovation, including learning, adoption, replication or scaling opportunities

- How your proposed project or initiative will be accessible to disabled people and people with long-term health conditions

Financial information

You will need:

- The total amount of funding requested
- A budget breakdown showing how funding will be used
- Estimated expenditure over the life of the project
- Proposed project milestones linked to funding requests

Supporting templates

You will be required to complete:

- Budget Template
- Delivery Plan and Milestones Template

Supporting evidence (optional)

Supporting evidence is not required to apply.

However, you may wish to provide information that supports your application, such as:

- User research or lived experience insight
- Needs assessments
- Evaluation reports or pilot findings
- Partnership letters or collaboration agreements
- Research, evidence or data relevant to the challenge being addressed

Before you submit

You should be ready to confirm that your organisation:

- Meets the eligibility requirements
- Has appropriate governance and oversight arrangements in place
- Can manage public funding responsibly
- Can sign the Grant Funding Agreement and set out the rationale for how your project will achieve its intended outcomes.
- Can participate in monitoring, evaluation and learning activities if funded

By gathering this information in advance, you should have everything needed to complete the application form and submit your application.

2. Applicant Support

2.1 Application Query Support

We want the application process to be accessible, proportionate and easy to navigate. Support is available throughout the application process to help organisations understand the Fund, prepare strong applications and access any adjustments they may require.

We welcome applications from organisations of all sizes and backgrounds, including organisations that have not previously applied for government funding. If you have questions or need support at any stage, the options below are available to help.

Contact details can be found in Section 4 below. Information can also be provided in alternative formats.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The FAQs document answers common questions about the fund and how to apply. It is updated throughout the application window as new questions are received and shared via email to those registered on the Application Portal or who have reached out via email.

Support Mailbox

If you cannot find the answer to your question in the FAQs, you can contact the support team by email at dwp.pathwaystoworkinnovationfund@dwp.gov.uk.

Drop-In Sessions

Weekly online drop-in sessions will be available while the application window is open.

These sessions provide an opportunity to:

- Ask questions about the Fund
- Seek clarification on the application process
- Access support with completing an application

Dates and joining information will be shared through the Application Portal and other Fund communications.

2.2 Application Refinement Sessions

Applicants who successfully pass the Application Shortlisting stage will be invited to attend a one-to-one Application Refinement Session. Attendance at refinement sessions is optional. Shortlisted applicants will still be able to submit a refined application whether or not they attend a session.

The sessions are designed to help applicants strengthen and refine their proposals before submitting a refined application for final assessment based on the feedback provided after shortlisting. The sessions will take place virtually during November 2026.

Important themes from written feedback during the shortlisting stage will be shared with all shortlisted applicants regardless of whether they attend a Refinement Session.

2.3 Partnerships

Applicants can apply either:

- As a single organisation
- As part of a partnership

Please note that individual applicants (such as sole traders, individual innovators, subject matter experts, etc.) can only participate as part of a partnership and must be included as a delivery partner or subcontractor. Individual applicants cannot act as the lead applicant (prime organisation).

Organisations or individuals that have already identified their partners can form a partnership and apply directly through the application process.

For organisations or individuals that would like to explore partnership opportunities, we will provide a Partnership Directory to help organisations and individuals to connect with potential partners before applications are submitted.

To be included in the Partnership Directory, organisations or individuals can submit a Partnership Interest Form. The directory will be published before applications open and will help organisations and individuals to identify and connect with others that may have complementary skills, expertise, lived experience, delivery capability or innovative ideas.

The Partnership Directory may be particularly useful for organisations and individuals that:

- Are looking for delivery partners
- Have specialist expertise, lived experience or local knowledge they would like to contribute
- Are looking to work with organisations operating in different places or sectors
- Would like to explore opportunities to join a partnership application

Submitting a Partnership Interest Form is optional and inclusion in the Partnership Directory does not create any obligation to form a partnership or submit a joint application.

Applicants will be responsible for contacting potential partners directly and agreeing any partnership arrangements independently.

2.4 Accessibility Support

We are committed to making the Pathways to Work Innovation Fund accessible to all applicants.

If you require any adjustments or support to take part in the application process, these are available here: [Pathways to Work Innovation Fund guidance - GOV.UK](#). We will work with you to understand your needs and provide appropriate support wherever we can.

Support may include:

- Alternative application formats
- British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation
- Accessible digital documents
- Large print, braille, audio or easy read materials
- Reasonable adjustments for webinars, workshops and meetings
- Additional communication or application support
- Other reasonable adjustments based on individual needs

We encourage applicants to tell us about any accessibility requirements as early as possible so that appropriate support can be put in place. If you need any additional support, please reach out to us at dpw.pathwaystoworkinnovationfund@dpw.gov.uk.

2.5 Appeals

Applicants may submit an appeal if they believe that the published process was not followed correctly or that a factual or procedural error affected the outcome of their application.

Grounds for appeal

You may submit an appeal if you believe that:

- The published assessment process was not followed.
- Relevant information included in the application was not taken into account.

- A factual error affected the funding decision.
- There was a conflict of interest or procedural unfairness during the assessment process.

Appeals cannot be submitted simply because an applicant disagrees with an assessment score or funding decision.

How to submit an appeal

Appeals must be emailed to dwp.pathwaystoworkinnovationfund@dwp.gov.uk within 5 working days of the funding decision being communicated.

Your appeal should include:

- Organisation name
- Application reference number
- Contact details
- Grounds for appeal
- Any supporting evidence

We will acknowledge receipt of your appeal and explain the next steps.

Appeal review

The review will consider:

- The original application
- Assessment records
- The grounds for appeal
- Any supporting evidence provided

Appeal outcomes

Following the review, we may:

- Uphold the original decision
- Identify that an error occurred and take appropriate corrective action
- Request additional information before reaching a decision

Applicants will be notified of the outcome via email. The outcome of the appeal review is final and concludes the Fund's appeals process.

2.6 Complaints

Applicants may submit a complaint if they are unhappy with the administration of the Fund or the service they have received during the application process.

Grounds for complaint

You may submit a complaint about:

- Quality of customer service
- Accessibility barriers
- Delays in communication
- Administrative errors
- Technical issues with the application process
- Failure to follow published procedures

Complaints should not be used to challenge assessment scores or funding decisions. Concerns about funding decisions should be raised through the appeals process.

How to submit a complaint

Complaints may be submitted at any time by email to

dwp.pathwaystoworkinnovationfund@dwp.gov.uk.

Your complaint should include:

- Organisation name
- Application reference number (if applicable)

- A description of the complaint
- Any supporting evidence
- The outcome or resolution you are seeking

We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint and explain the next steps.

Complaint review

All complaints will be reviewed by the Grants Administrator.

The review may involve:

- Reviewing relevant records and correspondence
- Speaking with individuals involved in the matter
- Considering any supporting information provided
- Identifying whether improvements or corrective action are required

Where possible, we will provide a response within 5 working days.

If additional investigation is required, we will keep you informed of developments and expected next steps.

Complaint outcomes

Following our review, we may:

- Uphold the complaint and take appropriate action
- Partially uphold the complaint and identify improvements or corrective actions
- Not uphold the complaint where no issue is identified

Applicants will be notified of the outcome via email.

3. Glossary

Word	Definition
Accessibility	Making sure services, information and activities can be used by as many people as possible, including disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.
Adoption	When another organisation starts using an idea, service or approach.
Additionality	Something that would not happen without this funding.
Articulated	Clearly explained and described.
Assessment	The process of reviewing and scoring applications.
Cash Flow Position	The amount of money available to an organisation and how money moves in and out over time.
Co-design	Designing a service or project with the people who will use it.
Compelling	Very convincing and persuasive.
Conflict of Interest	A situation where personal, financial or professional interests could affect decisions.
Credible	Believable and supported by evidence or experience.
Delivery Partner	An organisation helping to deliver part of a project.
Distinctive	Different from other existing ideas, services or approaches.
Due Diligence	Checks carried out to make sure an organisation is suitable, financially sound and able to deliver a project.
Eligibility	The rules that determine who can apply and what can be funded.
Evaluation	Assessing how well a project worked and what can be learned from it. Information on how the government approaches evaluation can be found in the Magenta Book available on GOV.UK.

Governance	The processes, controls and oversight used to manage an organisation responsibly.
Implementation	The process of putting a plan or project into practice.
Innovation	A new or different way of solving a problem or improving outcomes.
Intervention	A service, activity or approach designed to create positive change.
Lived Experience	Knowledge and understanding gained through personal experience of a situation or condition.
Material Change	A significant or meaningful change to an existing service, approach or activity.
Milestone	An important stage or achievement within a project.
Mobilisation	Activities needed to prepare a project before delivery begins.
Mobilisation Payment	Funding paid at the start of a project to help it get underway.
Monitoring	Collecting information during a project to understand how it is developing and performing.
Operational Data	Information collected through the day-to-day running of a service or organisation.
Outcomes	The changes or benefits a project aims to achieve.
Proportionate	Appropriate and reasonable in scale, cost and complexity relative to the proposal, funding requested and expected outcomes.
Public Funding	Money provided by government or taxpayers to support projects and services.
Rationale	The reason or justification for doing something.
Reasonable Adjustments	Changes made to remove barriers and support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to participate fully.

Replication	Using a successful idea, service or approach in another place or setting.
Safeguarding	Protecting children and adults at risk from abuse, neglect or harm.
Scaling	Expanding an idea, service or approach so it can benefit more people, places or organisations.
Stakeholder	A person, group or organisation with an interest in or affected by a project.
Turnover	The total income an organisation receives over a year.
Unrestricted Reserves	Money an organisation has available that is not set aside for a specific purpose.
Value for Money (VfM)	Whether the benefits of a project are reasonable when compared with the funding requested.
Whistleblowing	Reporting concerns about wrongdoing, unsafe practices or misconduct within an organisation.

4. Contact Details

- **Email:** dwp.pathwaystoworkinnovationfund@dwp.gov.uk
- **Post:** Pathways to Work Innovation Fund, Ernst & Young, 1 More London Place, London, SE1 2AF

5. Annex

5.1 Application Form

This form is provided to support early preparation and planning. Once the application window opens, applications can be completed and submitted through the Application Portal. Applicants who require a paper application or an alternative accessible format can find further information in the Accessibility Support section. We encourage

organisations to use this form to develop proposals, gather required information and consider partnership arrangements in advance.

Eligibility

Question 1.

Is the applicant an eligible organisation legally established in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland?

Applicant Guidance:

The Fund is open to organisations only. Eligible applicants include registered charities, companies, CICs, educational establishments, eligible public sector organisations and other eligible legal entities. Individual applicants are not eligible to apply directly.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

Question 2.

Does the organisation have appropriate and proportionate governance, oversight, safeguarding, data protection, ethics, fraud prevention and conflict management arrangements in place to deliver the proposal and manage public funding responsibly?

Applicant Guidance:

This includes having appropriate and proportionate governance and oversight arrangements, organisational capacity to deliver the proposal, arrangements to manage actual or perceived conflicts of interest, and policies covering safeguarding, data protection, whistleblowing, fraud and anti-corruption, and organisational ethics. Where organisations work directly with vulnerable adults, children or young people, safeguarding arrangements should be proportionate to the activities proposed, include a named accountable individual and apply to delivery partners where relevant. Evidence is not required at application stage but may be requested following application assessment.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

Question 3.

Is the organisation financially and legally able to receive, manage and account for public funding, and enter into a Grant Funding Agreement if successful?

Applicant Guidance:

Organisations must be legally and financially able to receive public funding and enter into a Grant Funding Agreement if successful. Organisations should not be bankrupt, subject to legal, regulatory or financial restrictions that would prevent delivery, or under investigation for fraud, financial misconduct or serious regulatory breaches. Evidence is not required at application stage but may be requested following application assessment.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

Question 4.

Can the organisation participate in monitoring, evaluation and learning activities, provide evidence of outcomes and learning, and comply with Fund reporting requirements if funded?

Applicant Guidance:

Generating learning is a core objective of the Fund. Organisations should be willing and able to collect and share information on project delivery, outcomes and learning, participate in monitoring and evaluation activities, and comply with Fund reporting requirements. The Fund recognises that innovation involves uncertainty and that not all projects will achieve their intended outcomes. We are interested in learning from challenges and adapting approaches during delivery as well as capturing success.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

Question 5.

Are you applying on behalf of a partnership?

Applicant Guidance:

Select 'Yes' if this application is being submitted on behalf of two or more organisations working together to deliver the proposed project. The organisation submitting the application will be treated as the lead organisation and will be responsible for managing the application, funding agreement and reporting requirements on behalf of the partnership. All organisations that form part of the partnership or consortium must meet the relevant eligibility requirements set out in this guidance.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

Please only answer the following questions if you answered “yes” to the above:

Who are you partnering with?

Open text (50 words maximum)

Are you partnering with an individual?

Applicant Guidance:

Select 'Yes' if an individual who is not acting on behalf of an organisation will play a formal role in the delivery, governance or decision-making of the proposed project. Individuals should only be listed where they are acting as a project partner in their own right. Employees, volunteers, consultants or subcontractors working for participating organisations do not need to be recorded as individual partners.

☐ **Yes**

☐ **No**

By submitting this application, you become the lead applicant for your partnership.

Do you accept the responsibilities of being the lead applicant?

☐ **I accept**

Application Form Questions

Question 6.

What employment-related challenge are you seeking to address and who experiences it?

Assessment Criteria

Score		Descriptions
1	Limited	The problem is not clearly defined and there is limited evidence or understanding of the people affected.
2	Basic	The problem has been identified, but evidence, target audience or rationale for intervention is only partially developed.
3	Good	The problem, target audience and barriers are clearly described and supported by some evidence or insight. There is a credible case for intervention.
4	Strong	Strong understanding of the problem, target audience and barriers. Good quality evidence or insight is provided and the opportunity for improvement is clearly articulated. The case for intervention is persuasive.
5	Excellent	Exceptionally clear and well-evidenced understanding of the problem. Demonstrates deep insight into needs and barriers and presents a highly compelling case for intervention and improving outcomes.

Applicant Guidance:

Describe the problem your proposal seeks to address, the people it is intended to benefit, and the evidence that demonstrates the need. Proposals must demonstrate how the idea will address barriers to moving towards or entering or staying or making progress in work for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. Evidence can come from lived experience, service insight, community engagement, employer engagement, operational data, research or evaluation findings. Formal research is not required. We welcome evidence from organisations of all sizes and backgrounds. Concentrate on the information most relevant to this question. Bullet points and concise responses are welcome where appropriate. We are interested in understanding the barriers people face.

Open text (400 words maximum)

Question 7.

What is your proposed innovation, and how would this enable employment-related outcomes beyond what would happen otherwise?

Assessment Criteria

Score		Descriptions
1	Limited	The proposal demonstrates little evidence of innovation or improved outcomes above what would happen otherwise for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.
2	Basic	The proposal includes some innovation but largely reflects existing practice. The potential improvement in outcomes above what would happen otherwise for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions is only partially clear.
3	Good	The proposal demonstrates a credible innovation which could contribute to improved outcomes above what would happen otherwise for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.
4	Strong	The proposal demonstrates a clear innovation with clear potential to improve outcomes above what would happen otherwise for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.
5	Excellent	The proposal demonstrates a strong innovation with high potential to improve outcomes above what would happen otherwise for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

Applicant Guidance:

Describe your proposal, what is new or different about it, and why you believe it could achieve better employment-related outcomes for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions than would otherwise happen.

Innovation can take many different forms and will look different depending on the context. The principles below explain how innovation is understood for the purposes of

this Fund and are intended to help applicants assess whether their proposal represents a new or significantly different approach.

For this Fund, innovation means doing something new or significantly different to help disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to move towards, enter, stay and progress in work.

We recognise that innovation involves uncertainty. Not every idea will succeed, but every project should generate learning and evidence that can improve future services and have the potential to be adopted, replicated or scaled.

Innovation may include:

- A new use of technology
- A new service, intervention, product or delivery model
- A new partnership or way of working that can join up across the system and make it work better for people
- Applying an existing intervention/product in a significantly different context, labour market, or with a new target group
- An approach that helps employers to support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions

Innovation is unlikely to include:

- Delivering an existing service without a significantly different approach
- Expanding existing support without a significant learning opportunity
- Minor changes to existing support without a significant learning opportunity

Concentrate on what is distinctive about the proposal and why it matters. Bullet points and concise responses are welcome where appropriate.

Open text (400 words maximum)

Question 8.

What outcomes and learnings do you expect to generate from this proposal?

Assessment Criteria

Score		Descriptions
1	Limited	Few or no meaningful outcomes or learnings identified.
2	Basic	Some intended outcomes and learnings are identified, but they are not clearly linked to the problem.
3	Good	Clear outcomes and learnings have been identified and are linked to the problem described.
4	Strong	Well-defined outcomes and learnings are identified and aligned to the problem identified.
5	Excellent	Outcomes and learnings are exceptionally clear and aligned to the problem identified.

Applicant Guidance:

Describe how the proposal will directly, or indirectly, contribute to supporting disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to:

- Move closer to work
- Enter work
- Stay in work
- Make progress in work

Outcomes can be achieved over the short, medium or longer term. Detail the timeframe in which you expect to see outcomes.

In addition to the four important outcomes above, provide information on other outcomes your proposal may achieve. These could relate to individuals, employers, services, communities or the wider employment support system. Set out the mechanism through which your proposal will achieve these outcomes. This may include access to support, increased engagement, confidence or readiness, employer

outcomes, service improvements or wider system learning. For these additional outcomes, detail what information you would use to determine whether those outcomes have been achieved. Concentrate on the outcomes that matter most and how they relate to the challenge described in previous questions. Bullet points and concise responses are welcome where appropriate.

Open text (400 words maximum)

Question 9.

How have people with lived experience of disability or long-term health conditions and other stakeholders shaped the proposal?

Assessment Criteria

Score		Descriptions
1	Limited	Limited understanding of who will benefit from the proposal, the barriers they face, or how accessibility, inclusion and user needs have influenced the design.
2	Basic	Some understanding of intended beneficiaries and barriers is demonstrated, but the connection between identified needs and the proposed solution is limited or only partially developed.
3	Good	Accessibility, inclusion and user needs have informed important aspects of the proposal design. There is a credible link between identified needs and the proposed approach.
4	Strong	Accessibility, inclusion and user needs are clearly embedded within the proposal and supported by relevant evidence, insight or engagement. The proposal demonstrates a strong and deliberate response to identified needs.
5	Excellent	Accessibility, inclusion and user needs are fundamental to the proposal and clearly reflected throughout its design, delivery approach and expected outcomes. The proposal demonstrates an exceptional understanding of user needs and a highly compelling response to identified barriers.

Applicant Guidance:

Explain how lived experience, user needs, accessibility considerations and stakeholder insights have informed the design and development of your proposal. We are interested in understanding how user insight, lived experience, engagement, research, operational experience or other evidence has informed important design decisions. Explain how your proposal responds to the needs and barriers experienced by disabled people

and/or people with long-term health conditions and how accessibility, inclusion and participation have been considered throughout delivery. We do not expect all applicants to have undertaken formal co-design activities. We are interested in understanding how applicant organisations have identified user needs and how those needs have shaped the design, delivery approach and expected outcomes of the proposal. We particularly welcome evidence of co-design and the ongoing involvement of disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. If people with lived experience have not yet been involved, explain how they will be involved during delivery. Bullet points and concise responses are welcome where appropriate.

Open text (400 words maximum)

Question 10.

How will you deliver your proposal?

Assessment Criteria

Score		Descriptions
1	Limited	Significant concerns regarding delivery feasibility.
2	Basic	Delivery approach is partially developed.
3	Good	A credible delivery approach has been identified, with a reasonable understanding of implementation requirements.
4	Strong	Strong delivery confidence, supported by appropriate capability and partnerships.
5	Excellent	Highly credible delivery approach with strong capability and implementation arrangements.

Applicant Guidance:

Describe how the proposal will be delivered, who will be involved and what gives you confidence that it can be implemented successfully. We will also review the Delivery Plan and Milestones Template provided to assess the feasibility of delivery. Bullet points and concise responses are welcome where appropriate.

Open text (400 words maximum)

Question 11.

Why does the funding requested represent good value, and what is the potential for the innovation to generate wider impact through learning and future scaling?

Assessment Criteria

Score		Descriptions
1	Limited	Limited explanation of the funding request and little evidence that the proposed investment is proportionate to the expected value generated.
2	Basic	Some rationale for the funding request is provided, but the relationship between costs, outcomes, learning or future value is unclear.
3	Good	The funding request is broadly proportionate to the expected outcomes, learning and benefits described. A credible rationale for investment is provided. There is some future potential through adoption, replication, scaling or learning.
4	Strong	The funding request is well justified and supported by a clear explanation of the outcomes, learning and wider value expected. The proposal represents a strong use of public funding. The proposal demonstrates clear future potential through wider adoption, replication, scaling, influence or transferable learning.
5	Excellent	The funding request is exceptionally well justified. The proposal demonstrates compelling potential to generate meaningful outcomes, valuable learning, wider benefits and/or future system value relative to the level of investment requested. The proposal demonstrates compelling future potential through wider adoption, replication, scaling, policy influence, system improvement and/or significant learning value.

Applicant Guidance:

Value for money is not solely about minimising cost. We are interested in understanding

the relationship between the funding requested and the value the proposal could generate. This may include outcomes for individuals or improvements to services. Explain why the level of funding requested is appropriate for the activities proposed and the value expected to be created. We are also interested in the potential value the proposal could create beyond the initial funding period. Applicants do not need a detailed scaling plan, but should demonstrate credible potential for wider adoption, replication or scaling beyond the funding period. Concentrate on the future potential of the proposal and the value that could be generated if it is delivered successfully or produces useful learning. Bullet points and concise responses are welcome where appropriate.

Open text (400 words maximum)

Question 12.

Do you need a Mobilisation Payment?

Applicant Guidance:

Some organisations may need funding up front to help start project activity before costs can be claimed. If your organisation needs payment in advance, you can request this in your application. This is a Mobilisation Payment. A Mobilisation Payment is not guaranteed. We will decide whether payment in advance is appropriate after reviewing your application and financial information.

When deciding whether to approve a Mobilisation Payment, we may consider:

- Your organisation's financial position, including reserves, turnover and cash flow.
- Whether you genuinely need funding in advance to start the project.
- What the upfront funding will be used for and whether those costs are necessary.
- Whether the amount requested is proportionate and reasonable.
- Whether the project has a credible delivery plan and realistic milestones.
- Whether your organisation can successfully deliver the proposed activity.
- Whether the request represents good value for money.
- Whether the request meets the Fund's governance and approval requirements.

Answer:

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, tell us why you need a Mobilisation Payment and what it would be used for.

Open text (400 words maximum)

Tell us how much money you need. The amount cannot be more than 30% of the total grant amount.

£

Complete the table below so we can decide if you need a Mobilisation Payment:

Annual Turnover (Of your most recent financial year)	
Unrestricted reserves (Available to support mobilisation)	
Cash flow position (Any short-term funding gap)	
Grant-to-revenue ratio (Calculated from grant value and income)	

Supporting Information

Budget Template

T1. To provide a clear breakdown of the funding requested and how it will be used to test, develop, implement or evaluate the innovation

Please see provided excel template for completion.

Applicant Guidance:

Funding should only be allocated to activities that are additional and would not have occurred otherwise. Costs should be directly attributable to the innovation, incurred during the funded period, and clearly linked to delivery, outcomes, learning or evaluation activity. Applicants should provide enough detail for assessors to understand what funding is required for, why it is needed and how it supports delivery of the proposal.

Delivery Plan & Milestones Template

T2. To provide a concise overview of how the proposal will be delivered, the important milestones to be achieved and how delivery will be monitored throughout the project.

Please see provided Excel template for completion.

Applicant Guidance:

Provide a high-level delivery plan showing the important milestones required to deliver the proposal. The plan should demonstrate how the proposal will be implemented, monitored and evaluated. We are interested in understanding what will happen, when it will happen and what success looks like at each stage. The template is intended to provide structure while allowing flexibility for different types of innovation.

Supporting Documentation

O1. To provide additional information that supports statements made within the application. You can add up to 3 documents.

Applicant Guidance:

Supporting evidence is optional. Applicants are not required to provide additional evidence to apply. However, supporting information may help assessors better understand the challenge being addressed, the innovation proposed, expected outcomes, user needs or previous learning. Please only include evidence that is directly relevant to your application.

Applicant Declaration

Use of Artificial Intelligence:

Have any AI tools been used in your application?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, briefly explain which tools were used and how they supported your application

Open text (200 words maximum)

Applicant Guidance:

The use of AI tools is permitted; however applicants remain responsible for the accuracy and authenticity of all information submitted.

I confirm that:

- ☐ The information provided in this application is true, accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.
- ☐ I am authorised to submit this application on behalf of the organisation.
- ☐ The organisation meets the eligibility requirements set out in the Applicant Bid Pack.
- ☐ The organisation will notify DWP if any information provided changes during the assessment process.

☐ I understand that providing false or misleading information may result in the application being rejected or funding being withdrawn.

5.2 Partnership Interest Form

Applicant Details

Applicant Type:

- ☐ Organisation
- ☐ Individual (such as sole trader, individual innovator, subject matter expert, etc.)

Please fill in the following responses based on the applicant type selected above:

Organisation Name	
Individual Name	
Website / Online Profile (if applicable)	

Areas of Interest

Which disability and/or long-term health groups are most relevant to your potential proposal? <i>For example: disabled young people, neurodivergent people, people with multiple and complex needs.</i>	Limit 100 words
Which employment outcomes are relevant to your potential proposal? Select all that apply.	Supporting people to... ☐ Move towards work ☐ Enter work ☐ Stay in work ☐ Progress in work
Optional: Do you have a particular idea or approach that you are looking for a partner to deliver? (Please note: this information will be published if populated.)	Limit 100 words

Organisation Offer

What expertise or capability can you bring? (select all that apply)	☐ Service delivery capacity ☐ Concept for innovation ☐ Community engagement ☐ Lived experience insight ☐ Technology or digital solutions ☐ Employer networks ☐ Community networks ☐ Facilities, venues or other resources
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	☐ Other: _____
Geographic scale of potential proposal	☐ Small-scale (example: within one organisation in one place) ☐ Local (example: within a local authority) ☐ Regional (example: within a region) ☐ Country-wide (example: across several regions)

Partnership Preferences

What type of expertise / capability are you looking for in a potential partner? (select all that apply)	☐ Service delivery capacity ☐ Concept for innovation ☐ Community engagement ☐ Lived experience insight ☐ Technology or digital solutions ☐ Employer networks ☐ Community networks ☐ Facilities, venues or other resources ☐ Other: _____
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Contact Information for Directory

Contact Name	
Contact Role	
Contact Method Please provide details for one of the listed contact methods: - Email - Phone	
Secondary Contact Method Please provide details for one of the listed contact methods: - Email - Phone - LinkedIn - Contact Form (via website)	

Consent

☐ I confirm that I am happy for the information provided above to be included in the Partnership Directory for networking and partnership-building purposes.

5.3 Further Information on Innovation

Innovation can take many different forms and will look different depending on the context. The principles below explain how innovation is understood for the purposes of this Fund and are intended to help applicants assess whether their proposal represents a new or significantly different approach.

For this Fund, innovation means doing something new or significantly different to help disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to move towards, enter, stay and make progress in work.

Innovation may include:

- A new use of technology
- A new service, intervention, product or delivery model
- A new partnership or way of working that can join up across the system and make it work better for people
- Applying an existing intervention/product in a significantly different context, labour market, or with a new target group
- An approach that helps employers to support disabled people and people with long-term health conditions

Innovation is unlikely to include:

- Delivering an existing service without a significantly different approach
- Expanding existing support without a significant learning opportunity
- Minor changes to existing support without a significant learning opportunity

We recognise that innovation involves uncertainty. Not every idea will succeed, but every project should generate learning and evidence that can improve future services and have the potential to be adopted, replicated or scaled.

The following sections in this Annex go into more detail about what is likely and unlikely to fall within innovation for this Fund. This is not an exhaustive list of potential innovations but rather further explanations of the above potential innovation types.

A new use of technology

Innovation may involve developing technology, or applying existing technology, in a way that is new or significantly different to current practice in UK employment support, to support people to progress towards work and improve employment outcomes for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. Technology alone does not make a project innovative.

May be considered innovation

- Testing a new technology product to support job matching or career progression.
- Adapting an existing technology product to address barriers to employment experienced by disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.
- Using technology to deliver support in a significantly different way.
- An organisation develops a shared platform where support partners can coordinate support, actions and progress for an individual.
- An organisation develops a product making it easier for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to find out about affordable adjustments that are available.

Unlikely to be considered innovation

- Using an existing technology product that already supports disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to enter employment.
- Expansion of an existing technology product to disabled people and people with long-term health conditions without significant adaptation.
- Technology development that was already going to occur.
- An organisation seeks funding to purchase licences for software already used successfully elsewhere for people with disabilities without introducing any new application or learning component.

A new service, intervention, product or delivery model

Innovation may involve developing or testing a new service, intervention, product or delivery model to improve employment outcomes for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

Innovation can also involve combining existing approaches in a significantly different way or redesigning how support is delivered.

May be considered innovation

- Designing and testing a new short-term intervention to keep disabled people and people with long-term health conditions in work.
- Developing a new product that addresses a specific barrier to employment.
- Extensive redesign of how support is delivered to better meet the needs of a particular group.
- An organisation designs a new intervention that combines condition-specific health coaching for employers.

Unlikely to be considered innovation

- Continuing delivery of an existing service without significant change.
- Rebranding of an existing service (or previous service which lost its funding).
- Routine service improvement activity.
- Replicating a model without generating significant new learning.
- An organisation seeks funding to relaunch a previously funded programme focused on supporting disabled people and people with long-term health conditions into work, without making a significant change to the programme.

A new partnership or way of working that can join up across the system and make it work better for people

Innovation can occur by organisations joining together to deliver services in new ways to improve coordination and join up support across the system for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions.

May be considered innovation

- Developing a new partnership between employers, health services and voluntary organisations.
- Testing new ways of coordinating services across organisations.
- Bringing together organisations that do not traditionally work together.
- Using new methods to build trust between disabled people, people with long-term health conditions and support providers.
- A local area develops a new integrated pathway connecting employers, health services and employment support providers, testing whether this improves transitions into work.

Unlikely to be considered innovation

- Formalising existing partnership arrangements without changing delivery.
- Creating a partnership that supports existing activity.
- Continuing established local delivery models.
- Funding to formalise an existing partnership arrangement that is already operating effectively, where the primary change is documenting the relationship rather than implementing a significantly new way of working.

Applying existing approaches in new contexts

Innovation does not always require creating something entirely new. In some cases, innovation may involve applying existing interventions or products in a significantly different context.

An important consideration is whether the new context creates a meaningful opportunity for learning. Simply delivering an existing approach somewhere new or to more people is unlikely to be considered innovation without significant adaptation.

May be considered innovation

- Testing an existing intervention with a new target group whose needs and barriers differ significantly from those previously supported.
- Adapting an established approach for a different labour market.

- Applying an existing intervention in a substantially different setting where outcomes are uncertain.
- An intervention that has shown promise in urban areas is adapted for rural communities, with the project testing how geography affects delivery and outcomes.

Unlikely to be considered innovation

- Using an existing product or service in a similar way as it is currently used elsewhere.
- Extending eligibility without adapting the underlying service.
- Replicating an existing approach in a new context where there are limited opportunities for additional learning.
- An organisation expands the same service into three additional local authorities using the same model and only slightly adapted delivery approach.