Warwickshire County Council

Tech Challenge Fund

Guidance for Applicants

October 2020

1. Introduction

Covid -19 has had a significant impact on our Town Centres. Given the strength of our local digital creative community we want to encourage and support collaboration between our town centre businesses and this sector, to develop initiatives that will play a vital role in supporting the resilience and recovery of town centres across the area and help to stimulate the local economy through the implementation of digital solutions.

Warwickshire County Council have allocated funding to kickstart a bigger project to identify and support a scalable digital initiative that will focus on promoting our town centres as places to visit, enjoy and engage with safely.

Our town centres were already facing significant challenges and the events of 2020 have exacerbated and accelerated the need for creative and innovative approaches to redefining how town centres promote themselves and our reasons for visiting them.

This document provides more information about the Challenge Fund and explains how to apply.

2. Who can apply?

All applications need to be a collaboration between at least 2 local businesses or organisations (within the Warwickshire geography). We would like applicants to demonstrate partnership working with town centre businesses and organisations for which they are seeking to provide a solution for.

3. How much funding is available?

The scheme will provide support for eligible projects requesting between **£10,000 and up to £80,000 of grant** and can be a mixture of new or existing solutions. (The total value of projects can exceed this amount however evidence of match funding being secured must be detailed.)

There is no requirement for match funding for projects however the level of match funding will be taken into account as part of the appraisal process and therefore we would encourage all projects to include where possible an element of Match funding into their proposals. Please be clear in your application where there is cash match for a project and where there is 'in kind' contributions.

Applying is a competitive process, and value for money/ impact will be a key factor when projects are appraised and selected.

Up to £80,000 is available through the Tech Challenge Fund. We are looking to support up to 4 scalable initiatives that could be implemented across the county. (the total pot would only be awarded to a project that can demonstrate impact across the entire county and can address all of the challenges outlined in this document.). Warwickshire County Council (WCC) reserves the right to increase or decrease these indicative allocations or to support more or fewer projects depending on the volume and quality of the applications received.

4. What activities are eligible?

We are not being prescriptive about what types of projects should be submitted. If you have an achievable project idea we want to hear about it, however it must clearly demonstrate it can address at least one of the following goals successfully through the development or use of digital technology.

- Helps create a Town Centre's sense of place, why should people visit, how and when
- Helps consumers feel confident about visiting their favourite businesses in the town centre
- Supports the promotion of businesses both individually and as a whole town experience
- Increases engagement between the local community and the town centre businesses
- Increases engagement between a wider audience and the town centre businesses

We are open to everything, from start-up ideas to using the fund for an existing initiative which just needs to be scaled or accelerated.

There is a list of ineligible activities and costs which cannot be claimed in Appendix A.

5. Previous Grant Recipients

Businesses who have already received a grant from Warwickshire County Council or another public sector funded programme (the European Regional Development (ERDF) Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) Growth Programme, etc.) can apply. Applicants will need to demonstrate the need for the requested level of public funding and how their project will comply with European Union State Aid rules.

6. The Application Process

The application process is competitive and those projects offering the greatest return on investment are more likely to be supported.

As part of your application, you will need to demonstrate the need for your project in the marketplace and the demand that has been identified.

Applications may be competitively ranked against each other. The assessment will consider the extent to which a project supports the objectives of the Tech Challenge Fund, value for money and deliverability.

A range of supporting documentation is required along with other information depending on your project. For example, you will need to demonstrate that you have the relevant statutory approvals or permissions required for your project to be able to proceed (such as planning permission).

Applications will be appraised by an expert panel made up of Local Authority and Industry representatives.

All successful applicants will be required to work with WCC to provide a case study at the end of the project to showcase the impact of their project.

All projects must be completed by the 31st March 2021.

7. State Aid

Your project must comply with European state aid rules. Funding will normally be awarded under the de minimis regulation which restricts the amount of aid that any business can receive over a three year period to €214,000 (about £189,330).

Therefore, applicants must declare how much public sector funding they have received under the de minimis regulation within the last five years. This may reduce the amount of money that you can apply for.

We will also work with you, as part of the application process, to confirm that your project meets state aid rules.

8. Procurement

In order to ensure best value for money, all goods and services claimed for as part of the project need to be openly and fairly procured.

If you are securing services from any 3rd party supplier which do not form part of the consortium applying for funds, you are required to provide written quotes, references to catalogue listings or formal tenders as part of the application. The following table provides general guidelines depending on the value of an individual item.

£500 or below	Two written quotes or references to catalogue listings.
£501 up to £10,000	Three written quotes or references to catalogue listings.
£10,001 and above	Three written quotes or formal tenders.

Supplementary guidance on the requirements expected from quotes and ensuring value for money is included on Appendix B.

Advice on procurement and the requirements is available as part of the application process.

9. Permissions and Consents

If your project requires permissions or consents (e.g. planning permission or landlord consent), you can still apply but you will need to explain your timetable for obtaining them in your application.

Grant funding is not available towards the costs of getting any permissions or consents.

10. Output Definitions

All projects will be assessed on the number, type and quality of outputs they will deliver. This section of the guidance should be used to help determine the outputs for your project. Should your project be

approved, then the outputs included in your application will form part of the grant agreement. The realism of your outputs will be tested as part of the assessment process.

Number of new to the market/ new to the firm products introduced: If the project involves new products, either new to the market or new to the firm, these should be also reported. Products can be tangible or intangible (including services and processes).

A new to the market product is one where there is no other product available with the same functionality or it is fundamentally different in design or technology to already existing products. A new to the firm product is one where there is no other product available at that business with the same functionality or it is fundamentally different in design or technology to already existing products at that business.

11. Grant Offer

Successful projects will be invited to enter into a grant agreement with Warwickshire County Council. This will explain when a project can start and all terms and conditions including any project specific conditions.

Our standard terms and conditions are available to applicants on request and it is recommended that you familiarise yourself with them.

The County Council must always be notified immediately of any changes to a project. This might involve changes to the timing or the financing of a project. All changes must be agreed in writing by the County Council.

12. Publicity

The grant agreement will also explain the rules for publicising the grant support from Warwickshire County Council. We may ask you to acknowledge the funding in any press releases or when communicating with customers (for example on web sites). We may also ask you to display a poster or plaque (depending on the project).

Advice on publicity will be available as part of the application process and at any grant offer stage.

13. Contact

Warwickshire County Council

Economy and Skills
Communities Group
PO Box 43
Shire Hall
Warwick
CV34 4SX

Tel. 01926 418001
stacyoconnor@warwickshire.gov.uk

Appendix A

Ineligible costs

The following costs cannot be claimed:

- Expenditure incurred before the start date in the grant offer letter;
- The costs of getting any permissions or consents;
- Working capital;
- Business as usual activities including salaries and marketing;
- Mobile infrastructure such as vehicles, mobile plant;
- Overheads allocated or apportioned at rates materially in excess of those used for any similar work carried out by the applicant;
- Notional expenditure;
- Depreciation, amortisation and impairment of assets purchased with the help of the Grant;
- Interest charges unless under an approved State Aid scheme;
- Service charges on finance leases, hire purchase and credit arrangements;
- Costs resulting from the deferral of payments to creditors;
- Reclaimable VAT;
- Expenditure supported from other government sources, local authority grants, charges paid by leaseholders, or European Community (EC) structural funds, to the extent that the combined grants and other support total more than 100% of the project or scheme costs;
- Any cost relating to insurance policies.

This list is not exhaustive. Applicants should contact Warwickshire County Council's Economy and Skills Group on 01926 418001 to check the eligibility of their project or email stacyoconnor@warwickshire.gov.uk.

Appendix B

WCC Tech Challenge Fund – Supplementary Guidance on Quotes

Quotes

If you are securing services from any 3rd party supplier which do not form part of the consortium applying for funds, you are required to provide three quotes or tenders (or two if the value is £500 or less for every item included in your application). Where you have been unable to provide three like-for-like quotes, please explain the reasons why and you will need to show that the quotes you are providing demonstrate value for money and the items are fit for the purpose of the project.

If you are unable to provide three quotes, we may not be able to include the item in the grant offer if you are unable to demonstrate value for money.

The following requirements apply. All quotes must:

- Be independent of each other (i.e. from different suppliers that trade as standalone business entities that are not linked through shared ownership);
- Be independent of the applicant;
- Be comparable (e.g. of same or similar specification (quality), size, quantity, units);
- Include a detailed and itemised breakdown of costs;
- Be dated within the last six months and still valid;
- Be addressed to the grant applicant business at the address shown on the application form – any online quotes should also quote this address;
- Show the supplier's address, telephone number and contact details;
- Give the VAT number (if the supplier is VAT registered and VAT is charged on the quote); and
- Show the supplier's company registration number (if they are a limited company).

Where catalogue listings are allowed as set out in the guidance, applicants should send references to a catalogue listing as print-outs or photocopies, and they should include:

- the date on which it was printed or copied;
- the item description and the price;
- the name of the company or catalogue; and
- the page number or webpage

Value for money

In order to demonstrate value for money, it is expected that applicants use the cheapest supplier of each item, demonstrating best value on the market for the project item. If your preferred supplier is not the cheapest, please explain why. We may not be able to accept the cost of your preferred supplier and this may reduce the grant for the item to the cheapest quote.

The following are not acceptable reasons for using a more expensive quote:

- the location of the supplier;
- the fact that the applicant has bought from a supplier before; or
- any offers the supplier makes to the applicant about future service or maintenance of equipment.

Independent quotes

The quotes you provide should be from businesses/ individuals who are independent from your business and you. If any of them are not, please provide details and explain how they are connected. If you are proposing to use a supplier that is connected to you or your business in any way and the quote is accepted, the total cost permissible for this item may be reduced when the grant is calculated.

Procurement rules

You are expected to comply with the procurement rules set out in the guidance for applicants. In most circumstances we expect that three quotes for each item will be sufficient. If you decide any of your project items need to be tendered, please explain the process you have followed to source the chosen tender and how the tenders comply with your process. You are advised to discuss your process with WCC before proceeding. If your business has a Procurement Policy, please provide a copy with your application.

Conflict of Interest

Businesses who are looking to apply for a Tech Challenge Fund need to explain, in the application form, if there is any conflict of interest between the small and medium enterprise (SME) and a supplier providing a quote or tender for the project.

Conflict of interest will include being a Director or Shareholder of the Company providing the quote, or if the Supplier is part of the business Group is a sister company, or is a family member.

If a business is aware of any other conflict of interest other than outlined above, they need to speak to Warwickshire County Council to discuss further.