

Apply

The application window for the Legal Access Challenge is now open and will close on 11 August 2019 (23.59 London time GMT+1).

This Apply page will cover all of the information you need when applying. You can also download a printable version of the Apply page.

We encourage you to read this page, contact us with any questions you have, and apply using the application form.

Final and binding criteria for the Challenge are published below.

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What We're Looking For

The section below provides a short overview of what we are looking for. We encourage you to read the full eligibility and assessment criteria further down this page for the full details.

We welcome applications from a diverse mix of entities, including legal tech startups, law firms, alternative legal providers, advice sector organisations and teams based at law schools. We also welcome joint applications from two or more entities.

The solution you submit to the Challenge should be at an early or proof-of-concept stage. If this is the first legal technology solution your team is working on, that's fine. If your team has already brought another legal tech solution to market, that's also fine, provided the solution you submit to the Challenge is at an early or proof-of-concept stage.

Your solution might apply to just one area of law, or to multiple areas of law. We have not prioritised any one area of law, but we'll be particularly interested in legal problems that affect large numbers of people and/or create substantial harm for those affected.

If you're not sure whether your solution is eligible, we encourage you to contact us before ruling yourself out.

Understanding & Resolving

We're seeking solutions which demonstrate how digital technology can directly help individuals and SMEs to understand and resolve their legal problems in more affordable and accessible ways.

The Challenge will reward innovative solutions which appropriately support people through the stages of:

- Diagnosing their issue and whether it is a legal problem, understanding their rights, and understanding the options to resolve a problem; and/or
- Resolving the problem, for example resolving a dispute or generating legal documents, including where appropriate accessing the services of a legal professional

Within SMEs we include both small businesses and small charities.

Standout User Experiences

Individuals, or people who own or work for SMEs, should interact with your solution directly. We'll be looking for legal solutions that create standout user experiences. When users interact with your solution, they should make progress in understanding or resolving their legal problem and save as much time, money and stress as possible. We want to see solutions that are substantially better than existing options available in the market.

Examples of Potential Solutions

Examples of what we have in mind include technologies such as expert systems, guided pathways, document automation, machine learning, natural language processing and other advanced technologies.

Below are examples of the kinds of propositions that we would welcome, but the list isn't exhaustive. We are open to solutions which don't yet exist in the market, as well as substantial improvements to existing solutions. We are also interested in standalone solutions, as well as solutions which integrate a digital technology service with access to

individual support from a solicitor or other legal professional. Applicants operating in both the regulated and unregulated sectors can apply.

- Solutions which provide tailored guidance to support in identifying and/or evaluating a problem and the options to resolve it.
- Solutions supporting the identification and collection of information and relevant evidence in a suitable format.
- Solutions supporting with the completion of court documents.
- Solutions supporting the creation of legal documents.
- Solutions supporting earlier, lower cost and less adversarial resolution of problems, including online dispute resolution platforms.

Prize Fund

Development Grants & Prize Award

The Challenge will provide funding to help you develop your solution and bring it to market:

- if you're accepted onto the Challenge as one of our four Finalists, you'll receive a £50,000 Development Grant in September 2019;
- one of the four Finalists will go on to receive an additional £50,000 Prize Award in March/April 2020.

The Development Grants and Prize Award are equity-free and non-repayable. You'll retain control of your intellectual property (see 'Do you take any intellectual property?' in the Prize Fund section of the FAQs for more on this).

Expert Support

In addition to the funding, the Challenge will provide non-financial support. We are working to finalise the expert support program, but you can expect it to include:

- One-to-one support from experienced SRA technical and legal staff to help you work through any potential regulatory issues. A minimum of two touch-points will be offered to all Finalists, including an introduction and follow up.
- Supported access to the [SRA Innovation Space](#). If your solution requires a regulatory waiver, your request may be prioritised.

- One-to-one support from the Regulators' Business Innovation Privacy Hub within the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if you need guidance on privacy and data protection issues.
- Opportunities to engage with HMCTS if your solution will interface with HMCTS systems. This will include guidance on integration principles, one-to-one engagement, and access to insights from HMCTS research into user needs.
- Opportunities to test your hypotheses with consumer focus groups, law charities, HMCTS and other stakeholders. We'll tailor these interactions based on your specific needs.
- Participation in an investment readiness workshop delivered by the [Nesta Impact Investments team](#) to help you raise additional funding.

Timeline

- 30 May 2019: application window opens
- 11 August 2019 (23.59 GMT+1): application window closes (we won't accept late applications)
- Late September 2019: Finalists announced
- September 2019 - March 2020: Finalists developing their solutions and undergoing assessment and judging
- April 2020: Prize Award winner announced

Application Process

We know you're pressed for time. We'll make the application process as straightforward as possible while getting Judges the information they need to select Finalists.

- You'll need to complete a single application form to apply to the Challenge. We estimate the form will take at least one day to complete. You'll be able to attach a supplementary video *or* presentation slides alongside your application form (max five minutes to watch or read). You will not pitch to the Judges.
- The application form will guide you to explain how your proposed solution meets the various Challenge assessment criteria. We're looking for clear hypotheses and evidence, however early stage, to back up those hypotheses.
- You'll be able to access the application form when the window opens on 30 May 2019. You'll have until 11 August 2019 23.59 GMT+1 to submit your completed application form. We won't accept any forms after this date.

- A Judging Panel will select the four Finalists. The Judging Panel will consist of industry experts, including experts who are well placed to champion the customer interest. The Judges will meet to deliberate before selecting the four Finalists. We'll publish the names and profiles of the Judges before the application window closes.
- Your application form will be reviewed by an external assessment partner, who will submit notes and scores to the Judges. These notes and scores will support the Judges in their deliberations, but the Judges will have the final say. We'll publish the name of the assessment partner before the application window closes.
- The application form will also cover some due diligence questions to check for legal, regulatory, financial and reputational risks. It's important that all Finalists go on to compete for the final Prize Award, so we want to check for risks that could prevent you from completing the Challenge. A due diligence partner will carry out background checks using the information you provide and other information sources. Due diligence information will be provided to the Judges, who will have the final say. We'll publish the name of the due diligence partner before the application window closes.
- You'll need to accept the Challenge's Terms & Conditions, and Privacy Policy, in order to apply. If you're selected as one of the Finalists, you'll need to accept additional Terms & Conditions to receive your Development Grant.

Eligibility Criteria

You, your team or your organisation

- You can apply to and participate in the Challenge as an individual, team or legally constituted organisation. You don't need to be legally constituted to apply for the Challenge. However, if you are selected as a Finalist and you are not yet legally constituted, you will need to become legally constituted before receiving the funding.
- We welcome applications from a diverse mix of entities, including legal tech startups, law firms, alternative legal providers, advice sector organisations and teams based at law schools.
- We also welcome joint applications from two or more entities. If you're applying as a group, we'll ask you to identify a lead applicant and pay the funding to the lead applicant.
- You, your team or organisation may be based anywhere in the world, but your solution must be designed for individuals and SMEs in England and Wales.

- Equality, diversity and inclusion is important to us. The Judges will be supportive of teams encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion. (See ‘What do you mean by “equality, diversity and inclusion” in the eligibility criteria?’ in the Assessment section of the FAQs.)
- You must be 18 or over to apply.

Your solution

- Your solution should be at early or proof-of-concept stage. If this is the first legal technology solution your team is working on, that's fine. If your team has already brought another legal tech solution to market, that's also fine, provided the solution you submit to the Challenge is at an early or proof-of-concept stage. Applicants who only require funding for scaling-up operations will not be eligible.
- The solution you submit to the Challenge may be: a new solution you have only recently started developing; a solution you've been working on for some time which is still at the testing stage; or a significant update to an existing solution, such as new functionality.
- Individuals, or people who own or work for SMEs, should interact with your solution directly.
- An ‘individual’ might be someone experiencing a potential legal problem as a consumer, family member, neighbour, citizen/resident, employee and so on. An SME might be a business, social enterprise, co-operative, charity and so on with fewer than 250 employees.
- By ‘interact directly’, we mean that there should be some sort of interface between your solution and the intended user, and that the user should be aware that they are interacting with your solution. The user might interact with your solution independently and without supervision. Alternatively, they might interact with your solution in the presence of a legal professional or trained advisor (for example, an application on a tablet that an advisor and client work through together).
- We're *not* looking for legal technology solutions that help legal professionals, or trained advisors, do their jobs but *don't* involve any interaction with the end client. We recognise that these enterprise legal technologies will help make the legal services market more efficient and effective. Right now, less investment is flowing into user-facing legal solutions compared with enterprise technologies, so we've chosen to make these user-facing solutions our focus.
- Your solution might apply to just one area of law, or to multiple areas of law. We have not prioritised any one area of law, but we'll be particularly interested in legal problems that affect large numbers of people and/or create substantial harm for those affected.

Assessment Criteria

The Judges will assess eligible applications relative to the published assessment criteria. There are no 'hidden' criteria or expectations. We've been as transparent as possible about what we're looking for. The Judges will deliberate and come to a collective decision.

Keep in mind that the Judges are making a forward-looking judgement. They will select Finalists who they anticipate will make substantial progress - absolutely and relative to other applicants - against the assessment criteria between time of application and the final Prize Award in March 2020.

Innovation & Impact

We're looking for entries which could, if available at scale, have a clear impact on addressing the current unmet legal need of individuals and SMEs. The Judges will be looking for solutions which:

- Demonstrate how technology could directly help individuals and SMEs to understand and resolve their legal issues better than at present.
- Are accessible, intuitive and user-friendly for their intended users. The best entries will explain how their solution meets a real need or needs of its target users better than current solutions. The best entries will engage, or demonstrate plans to engage, users in the design, development and testing.
- Are affordable for the widest range of individuals or SMEs.
- Have considered ethical and equality, diversion and inclusion opportunities and risks associated with the solution and how these could be evaluated and managed. (See 'What do you mean by "ethical and equality, diversity and inclusion opportunities and risks" in the assessment criteria?' in the Assessment section of the FAQs.)

All else being equal, the Judges will favour solutions which:

- Help address legal problems faced by a significant number of users and/or which have significant consequences for those not able to address the problem satisfactorily.
- Are replicable, for example representing an approach which is in principle extensible to other types of legal problem.

Adoption

We're looking for solutions which have the greatest potential to reach and support many individuals and SMEs in resolving their legal problems. The Judges will be looking to understand how credible an entrant's path to adoption is and will be looking for solutions which:

- Have a credible distribution plan to enable the solution to reach the greatest possible number of potential users.

All else being equal, the Judges will favour solutions which:

- Have a credible sustainability plan for supporting the solution into the future. This could be a business or funding plan, or a plan for how the solution could be integrated with existing systems or programmes.

Capability

We're looking for capable teams with the skills, commitment and capacity to successfully deliver on their submitted plans. The Judges will be looking for entries from teams which:

- Have the problem area expertise, legal knowledge and technological capability to develop their solution successfully.
- Have a clearly articulated, ambitious yet achievable plan for the next 6-months of the development cycle. The judges won't be looking to review detailed development plans, but they will want to see clear articulation of the outcomes at the end of the development period, the key milestones and how the team will achieve these.

Application Form

Apply using the online application form. You can also download a PDF for reference.

FAQs

You can read the FAQs [here](#). We'll update these as we receive new questions. You can also download a copy of the Legal Access Challenge FAQs.

Terms & Conditions

You can read the Terms & Conditions [here](#). You can also download a copy of the Legal Access Challenge Terms and Conditions.
