

FAQs

If you have questions after reading the Apply page of the website, we encourage you to search these FAQs before contacting the Challenge team. We'll update these FAQs as and when we receive new questions from potential applicants. See the 'Change Log' section at the bottom of this page for additions and amendments.

Application Process

How do we apply?

You'll need to complete an application form. You'll have the option of attaching a supplementary video *or* presentation slides alongside your form (this must be no longer than five minutes to watch or read). You *won't* need to pitch to the Judges.

Where is the application form?

We'll publish it in this section of the Apply page when the application window opens on 30 May.

How long will it take to apply?

That depends how much work you've already done on your proposed solution. But we estimate you'll need at least a day to write your application form.

Can you review our application form and give us feedback?

It's in everyone's interest that the Judges receive relevant, tailored applications to the Challenge. Subject to demand, the Challenge team will offer short review sessions to point out whether there are any obvious areas where your answers require more detail or clarity. The Challenge team will not offer in-depth advice or 'coaching'. The Judges will select Finalists independently.

Can you help us find teams or organisations we can partner with to submit a joint application?

We're interested to see how teams and organisations can work across boundaries to create new legal services solutions. There may, for example, be scope for productive partnerships between technology startups and law firms or advice organisations. We are not able to commit to matching potential partners with one another. However, we do encourage you to register for our launch event, where you will be able to meet like-minded people and organisations. Likewise, do contact us if you are interested in meeting potential partners.

Subject to demand, and with prior consent, we may be able to make introductions and/or publish a directory of people and organisations open to partnership conversations.

Who will see the information we submit as part of our application?

Each of the Judges will see all of your application information, including your application form and your (optional) supplementary video or presentation slides. They'll also receive scores and notes from the external assessment partners, and any notes they receive from the due diligence partner.

In addition, an external assessment partner will review your application form and your (optional) supplementary video or presentation slides. A due diligence partner will review relevant sections of your application form.

We'll publish the names of the Judges, external assessment partner and due diligence partner before the application window closes.

I've spoken with the Legal Access Challenge team about my entry. Will you pass on information to the Judges?

No. The Judges will assess your application based on the information you provide in your application form.

How will you handle our data?

Our use of your data is set out in the application Terms & Conditions. Please also check our Privacy Policy and Terms of Use.

Will you sign an NDA? How do we know you won't steal our idea?

Nesta will not sign an NDA and we will not steal your idea. All Judges and external partners have contracts in place with Nesta which include confidentiality provisions.

If we're accepted onto the Challenge as a Finalist, will we need to travel to the UK at any point?

As a Finalist, you'll need to pitch in person to the Judges in March 2020 when competing for the final Prize Award. We'll cover reasonable travel costs (pre-agreed with the Challenge) for team members travelling long distances.

The expert support programme may include in-person activities in the UK, such as meetings or events. We may cover reasonable travel costs (pre-agreed with the Challenge) for team members travelling long distances, or we may put in place alternatives such as video links.

Assessment

On what basis will the Judges select Finalists?

We encourage you to carefully review the assessment criteria section of the Apply page.

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.

Does our solution need to be built already? Do we need to show evidence of customer adoption?

The Challenge is seeking early and proof-of-concept stage solutions. You may not have started building your solution, or you may have a working prototype ready for testing. Your application could be for a completely new concept, or for a significant update to an existing solution such as adding new functionality. You may or may not have your first beta users.

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.

Either way, you must be able to communicate the hypotheses behind your proposed solution, and provide evidence, however early stage, to back up each of those hypotheses. Evidence might come from any of the primary and secondary sources typically used to validate new product, service and platform ideas. (Resources such as [Universal Methods of Design](#) and [The Mom Test](#) can help you find ways to collect this evidence.)

We'll be looking for you to show that users' needs and behaviours are central to the design and development of your solution. (Resources such as [Better Digital Services](#) contain more information about user-led approaches.)

Providing evidence will help the Judges make decisions amidst uncertainty, and show them that you are serious about putting in the work needed to validate your solution.

Will the Judges select only one solution per area of law?

We expect that the Judges will select solutions that collectively are relevant to multiple areas of law. That said, the Judges will not be precluded, or discouraged, from selecting

two or more solutions within any one area of law. 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. [COMMENT]

Will the Judges select only one solution per area of law?

We expect that the Judges will select solutions that collectively are relevant to both individuals and SMEs.

What do you mean by 'ethical and equality, diversity and inclusion opportunities and risks' in the assessment criteria? What do you mean by 'equality, diversity and inclusion' in the eligibility criteria?

We are optimistic that digital technologies, including AI/ML, can make it easier for individuals and SMEs to resolve legal issues, including those who are less well off.

As with all innovations though, these solutions could create great benefit while simultaneously introducing new risks and harms. Many of these issues will be hard to predict until solutions are adopted at scale. We don't expect you to see the future.

But we do want to see that you are thinking from day one about the ethical and equality, diversity and inclusion implications of your solution, and that you are willing to have an honest conversation with the Challenge about these issues.

We are not prescriptive about what ethical and equality, diversity and inclusion opportunities and risks look like. These could include: the solution not being used in the intended way; challenges assessing the reliability and suitability of the solution output to the intended user; issues which would have a disproportionate impact (positive or negative) on a particular group of people; and systemic issues that would affect the legal services market or legal system on a broad basis.

Similarly, the Judges will be supportive of applicants encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion within their teams and organisations. We don't expect you to have a fully developed equality, diversity and inclusion strategy in place, especially if you're an early-stage company. But there will be a question in the application form which asks about equality, diversity and inclusion, and the Judges will be looking for you to give a considered and credible answer to this question.

Are we being assessed on specific plans for what we would do with the Development Grant money?

We are not expecting detailed plans about how you will spend every last bit of the Development Grant. But the application form will ask some questions about the resources you estimate you'll need to develop your solution, whether the Development Grant will cover the cost of all of the required resources, and how you'll make up any difference if not.

Prize Fund

How much money can we win?

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.

When will we know whether we've been selected as a Finalist?

We expect to contact you in late September to let you know whether you've been selected as a Finalist.

If we win a Development Grant, will we receive the money all at once?

You'll receive the full Development Grant shortly after you sign the Development Grant Agreement. Assuming you sign without much delay, we expect you'll receive the funds in late September or early October 2019.

We'll put in place a light touch checkpoint in December 2019 to confirm that you are making progress and remain committed to pitching to the Judges in March 2020 for a final Prize Award.

Do you take any equity?

No.

Do you take any intellectual property?

You will retain your intellectual property rights with the following exceptions:

The SRA may disseminate the principles and 'know how' they gain through the competition to encourage the broader adoption of technology within the legal sector, for example through guidance, regulatory toolkits and reports. For example, the SRA may share recommendations on good practice. As a matter of regulatory principle the SRA will not disseminate confidential information or reveal trade secrets.

Under the conditions of the Regulators' Pioneer Fund, the SRA will retain a right to develop finalists' IP in the following two exceptions:

- If you fail to exploit IP within five years of completing the Challenge, or

- If you notify the SRA that you do not intend either to continue to develop the commercial application or to exploit the IP.

Any decision to exercise this right will balance the finalist's commercial interests against transparency and the interests of consumers, markets and other third parties.

If we win a Development Grant, are there restrictions on how we can spend it? Will we need to report every expenditure? Can you reclaim the Development Grant under any circumstances?

We will give you broad discretion to decide how best to use the Development Grant to support the development of the solution you submit to the Challenge. You will not need to report expenditures, unless the Challenge team becomes concerned that you are not using the funds in line with the Challenge's objectives.

We would only reclaim the Development Grant in exceptional circumstances, for example where a grant was being used to fund illegal activities or to fund activities unrelated to the solution you submitted to the Challenge when you applied. These circumstances will be set out in the Development Grant Agreement.

Do we get access to office space if we're accepted onto the Challenge as a Finalist?

No, we won't pay for or provide office space. You're welcome to use the Development Grant to pay for office space.

Eligibility

Do we need to be a legally constituted entity in order to apply for, or participate in, the Challenge?

You don't need to be a legally constituted entity in order to apply for the Challenge. However, if you are selected as a Finalist and you are not yet legally incorporated, you will need to become legally incorporated before receiving the funding.

Can I apply as an individual?

Yes.

Is the prize only for tech startups?

No. 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. Individuals, and teams who aren't legally constituted, are also welcome to apply.

Can we submit a joint application with another entity?

Yes. We 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 we will pay the funding to the lead applicant.

Are you looking for solutions in any particular areas of law? Are any areas of law out of bounds?

No. 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. See also the FAQ 'Will the Judges select only one solution per area of law?'. [COMMENT]

What do you mean by: 'Individuals, or people who own or work for SMEs, should interact with your solution directly'. Our solution will be used by legal professionals/advisors. Are we still eligible?

We encourage you to carefully review the eligibility criteria section of the Apply page. These criteria set out what we mean by 'individuals', 'SMEs' and 'interact directly'.

As the eligibility criteria make clear, it's ok if individuals, or people who own or work for SMEs, interact with your solution in the presence of a legal professional or advisor. But there must be some interface between your solution and the individual or SME, and the individual or SME should be aware they're interacting with your solution.

The criteria therefore rule out pure enterprise solutions which, for example, help solicitors with back-office functions but don't involve any direct interactions with end-clients.

If your solution combines B2C and/or B2SME functionality with enterprise functionality for legal providers - for example, your solution is a platform or marketplace - that's fine. But keep in mind that the Judges will only assess the aspects of your solution which individuals and/or SMEs interact with directly.

Finally, it's ok if you intend to distribute your solution via channel partners - similar to how online accountancy packages distribute via accountancy firms, as well as using direct digital marketing activities - again provided individuals or SMEs interact directly with your solution when using it.

What do you mean by early stage and proof-of-concept stage solutions?

You may not have started building your solution, or you may have a working prototype ready for testing. Your application could be for a completely new concept, or for a significant update to an existing solution such as adding new functionality. You may or may not have your first beta users.

If you've found product/market fit and are looking for scale funding for an existing solution, this Challenge isn't right for you.

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.

See also the FAQ 'Does our solution need to be built already? Do we need to show evidence of customer adoption?'.

Can we apply if we're planning to apply to another competition, or we've received funding from another competition ?

Yes, but check the terms and conditions for the other competition.

Can we submit more than one application?

Yes, you, your team or organisation may submit more than one application. Likewise, groups may submit more than one joint application. However, you may only submit one application per proposed solution. So, if you do submit more than one application, you must make sure they're for clearly distinct solutions.

Can we apply if we're not based in England or Wales?

Yes, but you must be able to show that your proposed solution will be available to, and benefit, individuals and/or SMEs in England and Wales.

Change Log

If we amend, or add to, the FAQs above, we'll note the changes here.