



Learning technologies: design for impact

SBRI competition for design and development contracts
May 2014

Summary >

The Technology Strategy Board and the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) are to invest up to £1.1m in exploratory studies into the design of technology-based products and services that will improve learning outcomes.

This SBRI competition seeks to stimulate business performance in an already vibrant education technology sector by supporting high-quality design of commercially viable products and services that can be delivered at scale while being affordable and easy to use.

We are looking for proposals for products and services that will improve attainment among learners above five years old (from Key Stage 1) and in formal (primary, secondary, higher or further education) or in non-formal learning environments.

The competition is open to all organisations that can demonstrate a route to market for their solution. Successful organisations will attract a 100% funded development contract of up to £80k (inclusive of VAT) and projects will last up to six months.

SBRI competitions are organised in two phases. At this stage we will let contracts for Phase 1 only.

A decision on whether to move forward with Phase 2 (contracts for product and service development) will be dependent on the outcomes from Phase 1.

This competition opens on **12 May 2014**. The deadline for registration is noon on **2 July 2014** and the deadline for applications is noon on **9 July 2014**. Partner-finding workshops will run during April and May 2014 and a briefing event will be held in London on 13 May 2014.

Background >

There is a growing global trend of innovation in education involving converging digital technologies in areas such as:

- mobile learning
- adaptive learning and analytics
- technology-based science, mathematics and computing education
- interactive e-books and multimedia publishing
- MOOCs (massive open online courses)
- interactive white boards
- school management systems.

Although such digital technologies are used in the UK education system, those specifically designed to enhance the learning process have not been adopted as widely as anticipated. The difficulty has been

in reconciling the needs of learners and the education system itself with the economics of the supply base.

There are considerable challenges in serving 10 million learners in the UK. Any technology-based products and services need to be commercially viable and also easy for education providers to manage at scale in a system where there are up to one million people working in 25,000 educational institutions.

Companies in the supply base therefore need to collaborate with education partners and to explore imaginative ways of balancing commercial supply and system-wide demand.

For businesses to design improved learning products, services or business models, learners and educators need to contribute to their development at an earlier stage so that solutions are based on the needs of students and teachers, are easy to use and support good educational practices.

Collaboration and good design will increase demand and encourage adoption of products and services that are appealing, affordable and meet learning objectives.

Scope >

This competition supports exploratory studies into the design of technology-based products and services that will improve learning outcomes.

There are three important aspects to design – feasibility, desirability and usability – and all three elements are central to the scope of this competition. We lay particular emphasis on easy and effective **usability** by customers (learners, educators and purchasers) and **desirability**, meaning that the products and services should be widely used and will benefit learners and businesses alike.

In inviting proposals for exploratory studies into design of technology-based learning products and services, we expect them to address issues such as, but not necessarily limited to, the following:



- improving learning outcomes and attainment
- helping educators with the delivery of teaching, learning, and assessment
- maintaining good teaching practice
- demonstrating efficacy
- ensuring privacy and security
- deploying the product or service commercially and sustainably, at scale.

In exploring all of these areas, we are particularly interested in proposals that:

- deliver a high quality design
- engage significantly with the key stakeholder groups
- can make significant improvements to learning outcomes
- consider the ways in which education is financed and purchasing decisions are made
- consider how the product or service would be commercially viable at scale.

Projects should focus on the design of technology, particularly of software, in improving learning and attainment. Proposals must therefore demonstrate how the technology could lead to better learner outcomes and also offer a sustainable, commercial business model. Design work can also relate to new or enhancements for existing learning technology products and services, and associated business models.

Projects can be specific to any curricular subject or group of students, including childhood and adult learning, private learning, work-based learning and continuous professional development.

Learners can be of any age above five years (from Key Stage 1) and in formal (primary, secondary, higher or further education) or non-formal learning environments. Design for multi-environment use must be credible and specified.

An app for Enterprise Education

Following Lord Young's review into Enterprise Education, there is an opportunity to encourage young people to go into business on their own. To support this, BIS is providing additional funding to design an app to teach people, in an engaging way, how to set up and build their own business. Applications will be assessed in the same way as for all other educational uses of technology in this competition. Proposals should be clearly marked 'Enterprise Education App'.

We recommend that projects draw upon the collective experience of design professionals, educators, learners, education ICT departments and academic institutions. Where appropriate, they may involve researchers, sector membership bodies, professional bodies and associations.

Projects that do not relate directly to enhancing learning, such as products or services for use in education administration, infrastructure, or access to buildings, are out of scope.

SBRI and funding allocation >

SBRI is a mechanism which enables public sector bodies to connect with innovative ideas and technology businesses to provide innovative solutions to specific public sector challenges and needs.

The public sector is able to find innovative solutions by reaching out to organisations from different sectors, including small and emerging businesses.

New technical solutions are created through accelerated technology development, while risk is reduced

through a phased development programme. SBRI also provides applicants with a transparent, competitive and reliable source of early-stage funding.

SBRI competitions are open to all organisations that can demonstrate a route to market for their solution. The SBRI scheme is particularly suited to small and medium-sized business, as the contracts are of relatively small value and operate on short timescales. Developments are 100% funded and focus on specific identified needs, increasing the chance of exploitation.

Suppliers for each project will be selected by an open competition process and retain the intellectual property generated from the project, with certain rights of use retained by the contracting authority. This is an excellent opportunity to focus the design of new technology on the needs of future customers.

In this competition, we are using SBRI to accelerate the development and adoption of well-designed digital learning technologies.

SBRI competitions are organised in two phases. Phase 1 is intended to show the technical feasibility and commercial viability of the proposed concept, while Phase 2 contracts are awarded to develop and evaluate prototypes or demonstrators from the more promising technologies identified in Phase 1.

At this stage we will let contracts for Phase 1 only. A decision on whether to move forward with Phase 2 (contracts for product and service development), will be dependent on the outcomes from Phase 1.

We are therefore investing up to £1.1m in Phase 1 projects that meet the challenge outlined in the scope. We expect the value of contracts to be up to £80k (inclusive of VAT). Projects should last up to six months (see the *Guidance for Applicants* for further information).

All applications are assessed on individual merit by an independent panel of experts.

Although collaborations are encouraged, contracts will be awarded to an individual organisation, and they will be expected to meet the costs associated with any collaboration with others in the education sector and designers. Applications should indicate the anticipated use of sub-contracted costs.

We will encourage the sharing of best practice by projects funded under this competition. Each project will be expected to produce an end of project report, outlining the specific challenges addressed and explaining how their design resolves them. They will also be expected to participate in a Collaboration Nation event organised by the Technology Strategy Board (see *Guidance for Applicants* for further information). We will not require anything that conflicts with a company's commercial interests.

Application process >

This competition opens for applicants on **12 May 2014**. The deadline for registration is noon **2 July 2014**, and the deadline for applications is noon **9 July 2014**. Applicants will be informed of the outcome by **15 August 2014**.

Partner finding workshops will be run during April and May 2014 and a briefing for applicants will be held in London on **13 May 2014** to highlight the main features of the competition and explain the application process. **Applicants are strongly recommended to attend this briefing event.**

Key dates >

Competition opens	12 May 2014
Briefing event	13 May 2014
Registration deadline	2 July 2014, noon
Deadline for applications	9 July 2014, noon
Applicants informed of outcome	15 August 2014

Note: All deadlines are at noon.

Further information >

For more information and all the documents you need to read before you apply, including the *Guidance for Applicants*, go to the web page for this competition at **www.innovateuk.org** under Funding & support > Funding competitions.

To apply you must first register with us through the competition page on the website. Registration opens when the competition opens and closes a week before the deadline for applications.

For more information about SBRI see **www.innovateuk.org/-/sbri**

Competition helpline:
0300 321 4357

Email:
competitions@innovateuk.org

Publicity >

As part of the application process all applicants are asked to submit a public description of the project. This should adequately describe the project but not disclose any information that may impact on intellectual property, is confidential or commercially sensitive. The titles of successful projects, names of organisations, amounts awarded and the public description will be published once the decision to offer an award has been communicated to applicants by email. Information about unsuccessful project applications will remain confidential and will not be made public. E-mail pressoffice@tsb.gov.uk with any queries.

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The SBRI scheme is one of the tools the Technology Strategy Board uses to drive innovation.

The Technology Strategy Board is the UK's innovation agency. We accelerate UK economic growth by stimulating and supporting business-led innovation.

We are a business-led executive non-departmental public body, sponsored and funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

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