## Round 6 Fund application - Beta project : Entry # 8052

### 2. Project contact details

**2.1 Lead authority name**

Southampton City Council

**2.2 Details of the person leading this application**

Matt Allison

**Role**

Project Manager

**Email address**

[Matthew.Allison@southampton.gov.uk](mailto:Matthew.Allison@southampton.gov.uk)

**Phone number**



**2.3 Details of a senior stakeholder from lead authority**



**Role**



**Email address**



**2.4 Details of a Section 151 Officer from lead authority**



**Role**



**Email address**



**2.5 List your project partners and provide a single point of contact for each organisation.**

| Project partner organisation | Name of single point of contact | Role of single point of contact | Email address of single point of contact | Phone number of single point of contact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Isle of Wight Council (IoW) | | | | |
| Portsmouth City Council (PCC) | | | | |

## Round 6 Fund application - Beta project : Entry # 8052

## 3. Your project proposal

### 3.1 Project title

Exploring the use of Automation Tools to address issues with and improve the Starter, Movers and Leavers process across partner organisations.

### 3.2 Project description

Using agile methodology, our Project will improve our Starters, Movers and Leavers process, by implementing automation software tools. It will save Line Managers, applicants, and support Teams time completing multiple forms, improve security and improve notifications. This will result in timely recruitment, return of specialist hours to Line Managers and driving down waste from error and delay, benefiting over 7K Staff and Applicants and maximise existing investments across the partners.

### 3.3. How much funding are you applying for?

350000.00

## 4. Project assessment

### 4.1 Describe the problem that your beta project seeks to provide a solution to.

## Round 6 Fund application - Beta project : Entry # 8052

Inefficient HR Starters and Leavers processes, caused by manual activity including duplication of forms, multiple notification points, lack of reminders & visibility of request progression result in inefficiencies which divert management time from service delivery plans, result in applicants drop out 47% (3896, SCC), significant delays occur in payroll & IT. The alpha project proved automation can reduce failure by simplifying user processes and enhancing levels of audit and transparency.

We will create an automated Starters, Movers and Leavers process to simplify applicant journeys, return hours to managers and remove manual process steps for IT & HR to reduce waste.

By expanding automation to our Starters, Movers and Leavers processes a dedicated team, will simplify the applicant journey, day 1 & last day IT and payroll processes, notifications, and interfaces between siloed systems.

The Primary users - job applicants (20000+/annum), 1200+ Line Managers across all three LAs, including social care practitioners delivering services to the public, IT, Facilities and Payroll. Vital departments delivering services to the public will benefit from a more effective identification & recruitment of talent, efficient onboarding with minimal effort, with improved application data used for monitoring and compliance.

Our project will:

- Streamline key processes impacting the Starters, Movers and Leavers process, to become more efficient and effective
- Improve:

  - User experience and feedback from staff
  - Record keeping supporting greater accessibility, auditability and security

- Provide users with a limited number of tools, prioritising digital solutions and automation
- Reduce Line Manager recruitment work by an estimated 1 hour per week returning 913 days of specialist time.
- Increase business knowledge and approach to reasons for leaving
- Eliminate errors & delays:

  - IT
  - Payroll

- Avoidance of Agency costs

Recruitment is an ongoing challenge. All LAs report similar pressures most acutely in Social Care. Small HR Teams result in effort pushed to Managers and time diverted from core service delivery to recruitment activity. Last year SCC filled just 37% of the 802 posts advertised. Similar metrics are reported across all partners.

August 2022: Addressing the workforce capacity crisis in local government | Local Government Association

Widespread workforce shortages revealed | Local Government Chronicle (LGC) (lgcplus.com)

### 4.2 Describe the outcomes and outputs you aim to achieve by the end of the project.

## Round 6 Fund application - Beta project : Entry # 8052

The primary outcome is to produce:

- Simplified, more efficient and automated processes including a set of reusable scripts
- The relevant technical documentation associated with the release including

  - Designs
  - Technical specifications
  - Release notes

In addition, all partners would get to enhance their knowledge of using the automation tools in multiple environments and different software packages. This will also allow for a list of use cases for each tool to be compiled so the appropriate tool can be selected for future automations.

The setup of the automation workstream will allow for ongoing process improvements across any organisation using an agile approach following the Beta completion.

During the life cycle of the project all 3 organisations will be involved in:

- Governance meetings
- Project Boards
- Sprint Prioritisation meetings or design reviews

This will ensure that all partners actively contribute and influence the project direction. SME's from all partner councils will also be involved at relevant scoping, design, development and test stages to drive a successful outcome.

A shared Teams site has already been created between partner organisations to share knowledge and resources. Updates will also be made available to other organisations on the aims, progress and outcomes via LocalGovDigital, Slack and MS LRG Champions network. More targeted updates, either face to face or digitally, are proposed for any organisations that have shown an interest.

### 4.3 Tell us how your project will make local government services safer, more resilient and/or cheaper to run in the context of the problem area.

Our aim is to make the Starters, Movers and Leavers process more efficient and remove manual process and introduce cost efficiencies. Automation will also highlight software tools which are not supported or which can be migrated to other solutions, enabling IT System compliance and adherence with security policies. There will also be improved system resilience by moving to automated and supported systems which can be transferred between organisations.

GDPR is also a key consideration and DPIA's have been completed for all stages which have been agreed by the Organisations Data Protection Officer. Assessments will also be completed for the Beta phase and each area that the process interacts with to make sure that all data is managed and stored in the required manor.

Sources supporting automation:

[LocalGov.co.uk - Your authority on UK local government - 'Shockingly small' number of councils embrace automation, study reveals](#)

[Negotiating Automation - report_0.pdf (tuc.org.uk)](#)

### 4.4 Tell us about who your project stakeholders are and how you plan to engage them.

**Round 6 Fund application - Beta project : Entry #
8052**

The principal stakeholder group will be the Project team and business areas involved in the automation of the Starter, Movers and Leavers process. This main group will include:

- Business Subject Matter Experts and Senior managers
- Project staff
  - Developer's
  - Business Analysts
- Wider teams involved from the partner organisations

They will be engaged through start-up workshops, the creation of user stories, As Is process reviews, regular sprint reviews such as daily stand ups and project governance checkpoints. In addition to the regular meetings and touchpoints knowledge and process updates will also be provided via the project MS Team site that is open to all partner organisations.

Updates, learning and any products will be made available for other interested stakeholders via LocalGovDigital and Slack. Plus, automations created by the various tools would be made available via the appropriate forums.

**4.5 Tell us about any local government sector engagement you've carried out or intend to carry out.**

In the initial stage of the project 5 Local Authorities around the South Coast were approached regarding the skills and tools they had in automation. Following this consultation, the partnership for this bid was formed and other Local Authorities expressed an interest in regular updates which will be covered at established working groups.

Microsoft and UiPath were engaged and UiPath provided Automation Hub and Automation Cloud software on trial as part of the Alpha phase. All partners are already investing in the MS PowerPlatform which will aid transferability and repeatability without further investment by partners. The UiPath tools will work alongside MS PowerAutomate if functionality requires and this will be built into the evaluation of sharing outputs with other organisations. Suppliers will continue to work with the partners for the Beta phase.

The MS LRG Champions network will also be used as a wider community relating to use of the M365 suite of tools.

**4.6 How will the project budget be used?**

**Round 6 Fund application - Beta project : Entry # 8052**

| Item (e.g. backfill staff time, buy in user researcher, software, hardware and others) | Time/quantity | Total cost/value £ | Where will the funding come from? (e.g. Local Digital funding or a particular project partner) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Software Developer | 260 Days | £143,000 | Local Digital funding |
| Business Analyst | 255 days | £102,000 | Local Digital funding |
| Automation Software Tools | | £70,000 | Local Digital funding |
| Consultancy from Software suppliers | 30 Days | £30,000 | Local Digital funding |
| Logistics – Travel to other partner sites | | £5000 | Local Digital funding |
| Business Subject Mater Experts | 27 days | £6200 | Southampton City Council |
| Project Manager | 68 days | £17,600 | Southampton City Council |
| Data Protection Officer | 6 days | £1,400 | Southampton City Council |
| Although not an explicit cost each partner has significantly invested in the MS technology stack and using the Power Platform will ensure that this investment is maximised in the automation field. | 1 per Organisation member | Covered by Corporate MS licenses | Partner Organisations |

**4.7 Tell us about your delivery plan.**

**Round 6 Fund application - Beta project : Entry #
8052**

11 pilot automations have been created using the MS PowerPlatform & UIPath automation tools - the main technology stacks used in alpha project.

The automations covered a range of technical scenarios from the management and reading of documents, interaction with legacy systems via the UI, management of files for retention and GDPR & interaction with systems via webservices or API.

An agile approach using sprints will build towards end-to-end process refinement. The final sprints will deploy the automations in partner LAs to test and prove the reusability & repeatability and develop any additional high-value automations that have been identified in the project.

The project can start in Q1 2023 and assumes initial activity starts in Feb 23. 4 week sprints enable completion within 7 months.

Tasks and durations are:

Feb - Start-up activities: Establish security, roles, responsibilities and environments for dev, test and live automations. Confirm best practice with vendors and assign roles.

Sprints:

- March - Starters & Movers processes
- April - Leavers process
- May - Establish end to end Starters, Movers and Leavers automation interlinking the constituent elements
- June - Development & Deployment of automations in partner authority environments
- July – Develop High value automations identified during project
- August – Implement Process in all Organisations

Some business process analysis has been completed already and this will be refined in the initial start up stage of the project.

No external suppliers will be engaged to develop aspect of the Project only supply software if required.

The data for the main processes will be employee and job role data. Data will remain secure and managed within the organisation and automations will only transfer necessary data specific to that part of the process.

Support will be managed via standard ITSM processes and solutions with additional hands-on early life support for users of any new automations.

**4.8 Describe how your project team will have the skills and time available to deliver the project in an iterative, agile and user-centred way.**

## Round 6 Fund application - Beta project : Entry # 8052

Across the core project team there is experience of agile projects and iterative development practices. In particular web and digital forms projects have run with a sprint based approach for some time. Where team members have less experience in agile projects they will be paired with more experienced staff to provide support where necessary. The beta project will give an opportunity to build on our Agile experience and skills.

All partners on the application have run agile projects and there will be sessions between partners to share experiences and lessons learnt to ensure a successful project.

The project team will be a mix of programme and project team staff, business analysts, application developers, software developers, test team and citizen developers. Where automations or processes that have not been covered in the discovery and alpha phases support will be sought from suppliers if required.

Due to the successful work to date on the range of processes that would benefit from automation on-going work in this area will be prioritised ensuring that resource is available to focus on the project.

Through existing agreements with Microsoft Southampton City Council have a Support Technology Advisor focussed on the Power Platform aligned to the organisation for the period of the proposed beta project.

Suppliers will be used for advice and guidance if automations are proposed against systems or technologies that have not been encountered before.

### 4.9 Define the governance structure of your project.

We will use Agile methodology which relies on end user interaction and feedback to rapidly develop user relevant systems through early deployment. We will use the standard Agile Governance process.

To support the effective governance, we will hold monthly Boards (supported with highlight reporting) to monitor progress against the plan, including members from all of the partner organisations as well as the core project team which will be planned to coincide with the completion of each sprint.

We envisage a mixture of in person and remote working which will utilise existing platforms to support collaboration. This will ensure smooth running and timely decision making where team members are geographically dispersed.

Where face to face meeting would facilitate beneficial delivery of the project, these can be arranged as all partner organisations are in the same region. Shared areas are available at all partner locations.

Shared team sites have already been created to support the partners working on the bid and will continue to be used as part of the Beta phase.

During our bid a wider group of LAs have been collaborating using the MS Teams site. As well as the project utilising this space wider conversations will continue with all organisations on the same platform to aid on-going engagement.

Operationally we will use standard agile processes for the day to day running of the project.

### 4.10 Outline the risks to project success.

**Round 6 Fund application - Beta project : Entry # 8052**

Key risk areas are:

- Scope – The identified processes can be large and complex. It will be important to ensure the scope remains with the parts of the process that are causing most pain to users. **Mitigation**-regular project governance meetings, priority of user stories and focus on the biggest impact to end users of the services.
- Benefits realisation – individual automations can be quite granular giving individuals and users benefits on small parts of manual transactions. There is a risk that the benefits on specific parts of transactions do not get realised as they are not making a significant enough impact on an individual basis. **Mitigation** - important metrics for overall efficiencies and savings will be noted, aggregated and volumes recorded so that the overall benefits can be realised whether that be through direct savings or through ensuring staff can spend more time on high-value tasks.
- Transferability – Although the identified processes are a common problem across authorities they could be constrained by policy and practice as well as technologies in use. This could present a risk to how simple it is to apply automations across different partners and then wider organisations whilst still ensuring delivery of benefits. **Mitigation** - close involvement of all partners, testing hypothesis and use cases against each organisation and ensuring any developments are as technology agnostic as possible.

**4.11 Describe how project monitoring and evaluation will happen.**

There is some monitoring of individual parts of the Starters, Movers and Leavers processes such as internal audit and external security reviews looking at the time to process leavers IT account locking and deletion after notification of a leaver being received. Within HR there is monitoring of the time to process new starters and create contracts however there is limited if any monitoring of the end-to-end process. This is not unexpected as currently the processes are silo'd and only linked through manual activity.

As-Is process maps are defined and To-Be have been started and will be further developed with the automation opportunities in mind. Metrics will be confirmed against both sets of process maps so that efficiency gains can be measured and confirmed.

Another key benefit is a better user experience with people managers not having to complete multiple forms and interact with various departments. The process will also provide updates on progress removing the need to obtain updates. We will also include continuous improvement as part of the process.

Each partner has historical information in their respective ERP solution and it will be possible to create reports to compare factors such as retention, time from application to appointment and any overpayments to compare previous, current and on-going performance metrics in these areas.

Tools such as the MS Centre of Excellence or UIPath automation hub have the ability to capture metrics as part of the automation design process which will then automatically generate efficiency reports as those automations are run in real time. PowerBI will also be used for reporting as this is a common tool used at all partners.

The opportunities already identified by automation include:

- Reduction in cost of in excess of 100K in unnecessary license costs when staff move role leave
- Improved security as access will be removed more promptly when staff move between posts or leave

**4.12 Describe the benefits and savings your project is likely to deliver.**

## Round 6 Fund application - Beta project : Entry # 8052

The potential benefits specifically related to the target processes include:

- Reduced time to hire new staff
- Staff productive from day 1 of employment with the right equipment and access
- Simpler processes for recruiting managers and back-office teams
- Greater security when staff leave or move positions through account closures and access removal
- Reduced risk of overpayments to employees that are no longer working
- Reduced risk of non-return of assets and licenses when staff leave
- Better experience for new starters when the being working which could lead to better staff retention

Specific metrics will be measured through as-is and to-be process mapping with timings and volumes identified giving data to show efficiencies.

Feedback surveys from users before and after the automation and subsequent process change will be used to gather qualitative feedback from users.

Retention information may not be possible during the Beta project due to timescales but can be monitored as an on-going metric.

Access to systems and retrieval of licenses will be measured by auditing leavers dates against dates of removal of access and return of equipment.

Automation and robotics also deliver benefits in a number of categories including:

- Efficiencies – automating manual tasks frees up staff to work on higher value processes or to be able to reduce the staff required giving a direct saving
- Data quality – automating processes will reduce the risk of data quality errors by automating movement of data between systems
- Improved user experience – by improving the business process, speeding up processing times through automation the end user should receive a better outcome to their request or activity improving the user experience

A wider benefit of the Automation:

- Increased income – processes that rely on manual process to collect income could be automated increasing the level of income which contribute to LA budgets and supporting financially sustainable councils.

## 5. Agreement with DLUHC

### 5.1 Please confirm that you commit to delivering the project outputs listed below. Please tick the box to agree.

- I agree

### 5.2 Agreements with DLUHC

**Please tick the box to agree.**

- I agree