

Round 6 Fund application - Discovery project : Entry # 8072

2. Project contact details

2.1 Lead authority name

South Ribble Borough Council

2.2 Details of the person leading this application

Katrina Sykes

Role

Customer and Digital Transformation Lead

Email address

katrina.sykes@southribble.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
Chorley Council				
Preston City Council				

3. Your project proposal

Round 6 Fund application - Discovery project : Entry # 8072

3.1 Project title

Exploring the barriers of online engagement with local council services

3.2 Project description

Utilising research and user groups the project will explore the requirements of signing onto supporting services business applications versus understanding what information can be provided universally.

The benefits of this project include:

- More accessible services for residents
- Encourages more residents to sign up for My Account services
- Drives online engagement
- Reduces contact into the council due to increased online interaction
- Supports the transition to secure cloud-based solutions

3.3 How much funding are you applying for?

35175

4. Project assessment

4.1 Describe the problem that your discovery project seeks to investigate.

This project seeks to investigate a common issue across all Local Authorities and other government organisations by investigating the barriers that are preventing users from accessing services online.

All councils face the challenge of encouraging users to transact online, however, this is a prominent issue in areas that require levelling up, where there is more digital exclusion. Therefore, the partner councils in this project are situated well to complete the discovery project.

Users of the service are residents and businesses. The aim of the project is to encourage more users of council services to transact online, by simplifying access to services provided by councils.

This will be achieved by understanding which transactions require residents to login to access services versus services and information which can be accessed without a login requirement, then exploring how can unified accessible services be delivered which are safe, secure and easy to navigate for all users of differing dynamics.

Both councils and residents will benefit from this project as an increase in the number of online transactions will reduce the number of face-to-face, telephone and email interactions.

The more residents and businesses who access council services online, the more time is created within services for officers to focus face-to-face and telephone resources on those who are more vulnerable or have more complex needs.

Furthermore, successful transition to online interaction, improves digital inclusivity.

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

Round 6 Fund application - Discovery project : Entry # 8072

The learnings of this project include:

- Understanding which services can be accessed without the need to create or log into an online account/portal.
- From those remaining, how can unified accessible services be delivered which are safe, secure and easy to navigate for all users of differing dynamics.

The documents that will be made available as a result of the project will include:

- A business case which will outline estimated cost and cost effectiveness, a risk register and anticipated benefits.
- A user research report that will consider the current and proposed customer experience, whilst understanding what the user's needs.
- A report of market research completed to define which tasks can be done without logging in whilst maintaining safe and secure standards.

The three authorities will work closely together throughout the discovery project coordinated by the lead consultant to contribute to the project outputs. The workings will be specific to services that are delivered by Local Authorities and will be available to access throughout the wider Local Authority network.

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.

The project aims to make local government services safer and cheaper to run.

Safer:

Residents expect to log into the council's website and access all services, without being redirected and having to further log in, creating multiple accounts on different business applications. By working to reduce the number of times a resident need to log in will increase their trust in the product, enabling them to feel safer completing tasks online.

Cheaper:

Converting more requests to online will reduce the number of face to face and telephone interactions, which are cheaper to service online.

SOCITM have qualified the cost per transaction as follows:

Online transactions - £0.09

Telephony - £2.59

Face-to-face - £8.21

Moving a transaction from face-to-face to online would save £8.12 per transaction and from telephone to online would save £2.50 per transaction. As such potential far reaching scope of the project results in a significant saving across local government collectively.

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

Round 6 Fund application - Discovery project : Entry # 8072

Those people and organisations who are essential to our project's success

- Residents of South Ribble, Chorley and Preston Councils.
- Officers from the different service areas within each council.
- The Digital Agency partner who will compile the user research and produce the reports and business case.
- Other Local Authorities will benefit from the research findings.

The team will share progress and learnings with the stakeholders and other local authorities by publishing the reports on our website and we will make those available via the project findings published on the DLUHC website.

Officers will be engaged throughout the project, as it essential that they are on board with the project's success and aware of how any changes may impact access to their services.

On completion of future projects, we will create a communications programme to promote changes to residents.

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

During the project discovery phase, we will engage with the Information Commissioner's Office to ensure that any recommendations surrounding what tasks residents can complete without being required to log into their account ensures that data is protected.

At this stage, there is not an established relationship between the project team and the Information Commissioner's Office.

4.6 How will the project budget be used?

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)
Backfill staff time to cover the project manager	40 days	£5175	Local Digital funding
Digital agency consultancy	1	£30000	Local Digital funding

4.7 Tell us about your delivery plan.

Round 6 Fund application - Discovery project : Entry # 8072

Procure digital agency consultant - 25 working days

A digital agency consultant will be procured using the Digital Marketplace Outcomes and Specialists opportunities framework, with the skills to:

- Work with the partner councils to complete the user research.
- Bring together the user research report.
- Assist in the completion of the business case.

Complete user research - 15 working days

We will develop on Chorley Council's established programme of digital inclusivity and South Ribble Council's community hubs as the forum that we can use to understand the barriers of online engagement. This will allow us to tap into a range of user dynamics, representative of all 3 boroughs to complete user research through face-to-face sessions.

Complete research for the requirements of logging on - 20 working days

We will engage with services to understand which services users will need to login to access and follow up with the Information Commissioner's Office to ensure compliance.

Document findings in a research report - 5 working days

Create business case - 10 working days

Create conclusion report - 10 working days

Research milestones can be completed simultaneously to allow a constant pace throughout the project timeline.

A communication plan will be created to keep stakeholders engaged throughout the process.

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.

We will appoint a project manager from the lead authority to coordinate the project and ensure that we fully engage with stakeholders. We will backfill staff time for this individual to allow them to be fully engaged on the project.

Preston Council were a partner council on a past funding round and will bring their experience of working collaboratively using agile project management.

A digital agency will be procured to bring the project together and provide support in delivering user research and their reports.

The project team uses a combination of ICT and customer experience knowledge to ensure that it is completely user-centred, with the user experience being at the forefront of the project.

4.9 Define the governance structure of your project.

Round 6 Fund application - Discovery project : Entry # 8072

All three councils have existing project management framework which are designed to ensure maximum project success. The project will follow the governance structure which are outline in South Ribble Council's framework as the lead authority.

This requires project roles to be assigned including Project Manager / Lead, Senior Responsible Officer, Senior Management Team (Programme Board)/ Department Management Team. Allocating these roles will ensure engagement across the different project stakeholders and partners.

The partner councils are all local authorities in Central Lancashire and are neighbouring councils which will allow for positive collaboration. This also means that we can have several face-to-face user groups across the three authorities which will encourage greater participation.

4.10 Outline the risks to project success.

The three risks that would most likely impact our ability to successfully deliver this project include:

1. Unable to get service areas onboard

Service areas hold the most knowledge surrounding their own area to be able to provide advice, therefore getting buy-in from service areas is key to the project's success. Often people can be reluctant to change, which can make discussing and implementing changes more challenging.

To mitigate this, it is important to engage services early in the process and keep services engaged through effective communication.

2. Unreliable external partner

This project relies on securing a reliable external partner to assist in project delivery, therefore an unreliable external part could impact success on delivering the project.

Using the procurement framework to procure the partner helps to mitigate this, as well as creating clear expectations for delivery.

3. Unable to secure a range of dynamics to participate in the study.

As the council's service individuals from all backgrounds, it is important to ensure that we secure a wide range of participants from different dynamics to ensure that all potential service users are represented.

To mitigate this, we are going to tap into Chorley Council's existing digital inclusion programme and South Ribble Council's community hubs, who have access to those hard to reach dynamic groups.

4.11 Describe how project monitoring and evaluation will happen.

Round 6 Fund application - Discovery project : Entry # 8072

The existing project management framework have robust Performance Management processes in place.

Key data already available to all three councils is:

- total number of online interactions
- percentage of total customer interactions completed online
- total number of online 'my account' created
- cost to service customer, based on the SOCITM cost per transaction data

It is also possible to see data surrounding total clicks per page for each page on each council's website to see where the greatest efficiency gains are possible.

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

The project will produce both financial benefits and savings as well as non-financial benefits.

- More accessible services for residents
- Encourages more residents to sign up for My Account services
- Promotes digital inclusivity
- Drives online engagement
- Reduces contact into the council due to increased online interaction
- Creates financial savings due to online interactions being the cheapest type of transaction to service
- Supports the transition to secure cloud-based solutions

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