Guidance for completing the Stage 1 Project Proposal - Transformation and Innovation Fund bids under £250,000

The Stage 1 Project Proposal is an initial strategic assessment for consideration by the Commercialisation Board. It should provide a clear, evidence-based overview of the proposal, its strategic fit, anticipated benefits, risks, costs and resource requirements.

Before starting the application, please gather the following information.

Basic project information

You will need to provide:

- the **project title**;
- the name of the **project lead**;
- the relevant **department or service**; and
- a short description of the **purpose of the project**.

Case for change

What are we aiming to achieve

Explain the problem or opportunity that has led to the proposal.

Your response should cover:

- the current position;
- the problem, pressure, need or opportunity being addressed;
- why the existing position is no longer sustainable or appropriate;
- what may happen if no action is taken;
- the people, communities or services affected;
- the scale and significance of the issue; and
- the evidence supporting the need for change.

Relevant evidence could include service and financial data, demand information, customer feedback, benchmarking, performance measures, statutory requirements or findings from previous reviews.

Clearly distinguish between verified evidence, estimates and assumptions.

Alignment with Council ambitions and values

Explain how the project supports the Council's ambitions and values.

Applicants should identify how the proposal contributes to:

- the Council's vision for current and future generations;
- relevant Council values;
- the ambition to become a more commercial organisation;
- the Corporate Strategy and relevant well-being objectives;
- the Target Operating Model and the Transformation Strategy;
- financial sustainability; and
- the Commercialisation Strategy.

Explain the specific contribution the project will make to each relevant priority.

Alignment with Council's Strategic Objectives

Explain how the project aligns with the Council's Corporate Strategy and key well-being objectives.

Your response should include:

- how the project aligns with the Council's Target Operating Model and transformation agenda
- how the proposal supports financial sustainability and/or supports the Commercialisation Strategy or helps to mitigate a key corporate risk.

Project objectives

Set out the key objectives of the proposal. These may relate to:

- modernising processes and systems;
- improving outcomes for customers and service users;
- increasing income;
- reducing costs;
- generating efficiency savings;
- improving service quality, speed or efficiency; or
- mitigating a significant corporate risk.

Objectives should be specific and measurable. Where possible, identify:

- the intended result;
- the baseline or current position;
- the target to be achieved;
- how achievement will be measured; and
- the anticipated delivery point.

Benefits and Outcomes

Financial benefits

Provide high-level estimates of the financial benefits expected from the project.

This may include:

- additional income from sources such as advertising, sponsorship or service charges;
- cashable or non-cashable cost savings;
- efficiencies or reductions in demand; and
- an initial estimate of return on investment, where this can be calculated.

Clearly state any assumptions used to produce the estimates. If exact figures are not yet available, provide the best current estimate and explain what further work will be needed to confirm it.

Wider benefits

Identify benefits that may not be directly financial, including:

- social value and local employment;
- community involvement or improved community outcomes;
- environmental benefits, including carbon reduction;
- improved services or customer experience;
- greater resilience;
- opportunities for collaboration; and
- innovation or learning that could be applied elsewhere.

Explain who will benefit and, where possible, how the benefit could be demonstrated or measured.

Benefits Realisation Assessment

If you have you undertaken a Benefits Realisation Assessment and completed the assessment template, you can upload a copy to support your application.

You may need to speak to the Transformation Team to gauge whether it would be beneficial to complete a Benefits Realisation Assessment

Risks & Mitigation

Potential Risks

What are the potential risks associated with implementing the project.

Include, where relevant:

- internal risks such as resource constraints, staff resistance
- impact of delays in delivering the project
- impact of lack of buy-in or input from other services
- potential risk of increasing costs
- potential impact of external risks such as legal or regulatory changes and reputational risk.

Mitigation and Control Measures

Describe governance structures, project board arrangements, contingency planning, stakeholder engagement, and regular monitoring and reporting.

Costs and Funding

Costs

Provide high-level estimates for capital costs, revenue costs, ongoing operational costs, funding sources, and any ongoing revenue implications.

Additional Funding or Investment

Specify if additional funding or investment is required to deliver the project. If additional funding required:

- provide a high-level estimate of the total funding needed.
- state whether funding is required for one year or multiple years
- identify external funding sources or internal budget allocations
- explain whether it will be used as match funding,
- confirm whether some elements could be delivered without additional investment.

Type of Funding

In this section, please specify whether you are applying for:

- Transformation Loan with repayment required
- Transformation Investment Grant

If you are applying for a Transformation Loan, you need to confirm you can replay the amount within a four-year period. You will also need to outline the repayment plan, including expected income or savings, timelines, forecasting assumptions, and any risks or dependencies that could affect repayment.

Delivery Considerations

Capacity and Capability

Consider whether the necessary people, skills and capacity are available to deliver the project.

You should identify:

- which internal teams would be involved;
- whether those teams have sufficient capacity;
- the skills or expertise required;
- any training or development needs; and
- how any gaps they will be addressed, for example through training, recruitment or external support.

Implications for other services

Describe any expected positive or negative impacts on other Council services.

Procurement implications

State whether the delivery of the project is likely to require the procurement of goods, services or works.

Consider:

- what may need to be purchased;
- whether an existing contract or framework is available;
- the likely procurement timetable; and
- whether procurement requirements could affect project costs or delivery dates.

Detailed procurement arrangements may not be available at Stage 1, but any known or likely requirements should be identified.

Other relevant information

Include anything else the Commercialisation Board should know when considering the proposal.

This could include:

- dependencies on other projects, decisions or funding;
- political or community sensitivities;
- opportunities for innovation;
- whether the proposal could initially be tested through a pilot;
- key assumptions or uncertainties;
- legal considerations or strategic timing

Final checks before submitting

Before submitting the application, please ensure that:

- the proposal and case for change are clearly explained;
- statements are supported by evidence where available;
- objectives are specific and measurable;
- financial benefits are distinguished from wider benefits;
- costs include both implementation and ongoing implications;
- significant risks and proposed controls have been identified;
- affected Council services have been consulted where appropriate;
- assumptions and uncertainties are clearly stated; and
- a colleague unfamiliar with the proposal could understand what is being proposed and why.