

# South of Scotland Artificial Intelligence (AI) Exploration Voucher Criteria

## 1. AI Exploration Voucher overview

A revenue grant fund of between **£1000- £1,500** per project, to enable businesses and social enterprises in the South of Scotland to explore and/or adopt the use of AI for organisational improvement.

## 2. AI Exploration Voucher Detail

- Minimum grant of **£1000** and maximum of **£1,500**
- Grant awards will be net of VAT where this is recoverable by the enterprise.

## 3. Fund Project Criteria

- Revenue grants for projects that explore and/or adopt the use of AI for organisational improvement.
- Deliver one or more of [SOSE's aims](#) and align with [National Strategy for Economic Transformation](#) and the [Regional Economic Strategy](#)
- Viable projects identified and able to be delivered in 2025/26 financial year.
- Activity that the funding is being requested for has not yet started.
- All eligible expenditure must be spent by 28<sup>th</sup> February 2026.

## 4. Eligibility

Businesses and social enterprises wishing to access the fund must meet the following eligibility:

- Be an established small or medium sized enterprise, sole trader or constituted/registered, community-led organisation or social enterprise.
- Where an enterprise employs staff, it should be paying the Real Living Wage to all staff aged 16 and over, including apprentices and will need to provide evidence of effective voice for staff and a Fair Work action plan.
- Only one application can be submitted per enterprise and where individuals are connected to multiple enterprises, only one will be eligible.
- Sole traders must be registered with HMRC and be able to provide their Unique Tax Reference number.
- Operate and be based within the South of Scotland Enterprise area (Dumfries & Galloway or Scottish Borders).
- Must not be in financial difficulty or at risk of immediate liquidation.
- Enterprises working in the gambling or adult entertainment sector are not eligible.

## 5. Eligible Expenditure

While not exhaustive, the AI Exploration voucher could be used:

- to access expert guidance (in addition to the mentoring support available through existing programmes), conduct feasibility studies and test AI solutions.
- for AI integration, including advice, data review, proof-of-concept projects and digital roadmaps.
- to explore the ethical, trustworthy and inclusive use of AI within the organisation.

## 6. Ineligible Expenditure

- Projects where the grant recipient is a third party.
- Projects delivered outwith the South of Scotland area.
- Costs that do not meet the AI Exploration Voucher criteria.
- Capital expenditure of any kind, including acquisition, construction, or enhancement of fixed or intangible assets, and any costs that will be capitalised on the balance sheet.

## 7. Fund process

- Read the full criteria and eligibility to make sure you and your project fits requirements.
- Express an interest through our website by telling us a little bit about you and what you are proposing. Please include a quick outline of the project idea, and how it links to Artificial Intelligence exploration or adoption to enhance your business
- If your expression of interest meets the initial criteria, and funds are still available, SOSE will then send you an application form.
- Applications will be treated on a **first-come-first-served** basis and once indications show the fund limit is reached, expressions of interest will be paused until initial applicants have gone through the formal application and appraisal stage.
- Submitting an expression of interest does not guarantee that your application will be successful. If you are not successful in your application, we will arrange a call with you to let you know why you have been unsuccessful and point you in the direction of other possible sources of funding.
- Demand is expected to be high and therefore not all projects will be able to proceed as the fund amount is limited.
- **SOSE grant funds are discretionary. SOSE decision will be final.**