

## **Barnsley AI Upskilling Fund External Scoring Framework**

### **Overview of Assessment**

#### **Stage 1 – Eligibility and due diligence checks**

Our Government grants administration team will carry out an initial sift of all applications to confirm that:

- Eligibility criteria are met
- Required organisational and financial information has been provided
- Basic due-diligence and counter-fraud checks can be completed

Applications assessed as not meeting the eligibility requirements will not proceed to Stage 2.

#### **Stage 2 – Assessment of eligible applications**

Eligible applications will be assessed by trained grant assessors against the published assessment criteria and scoring framework along with an external steering board. Assessment will focus on:

- Strategic fit with the grant objectives
- Deliverability within the funding period
- Expected impact and value for money

The Department for Science, Information and Technology (DSIT) reserves the right to amend or withdraw this funding opportunity at any point during the competition window and assessment process, including closing the competition early where the fund is significantly oversubscribed.

Responses to each assessment question are subject to the stated maximum word limit. Any text beyond the word limit will not be assessed or scored. Attachments may only be used where explicitly permitted and do not count towards word limits.

Applications will be assessed against the published assessment criteria and scored accordingly. Scores will form an important part of funding decisions. However, final funding decisions will also take account of the overall portfolio of projects selected for support.

In making funding recommendations, DSIT may consider factors such as the balance of projects across the Fund's objectives, target sectors, target cohorts, delivery approaches, organisation types, and the potential contribution of each project to the evidence base and learning objectives of the Fund.

Funding will therefore not necessarily be awarded strictly in score order. A higher-scoring application may not be funded if doing so would reduce the overall strategic balance, diversity, or learning potential of the Fund portfolio.

Supporting documents are available in the supporting information of the advert, such as the Budget Management Tool Template and Delivery Plan Template. Responses must use only the templates

provided in their application response. Use of alternate templates will mean the application is deemed ineligible.

### Stage 1 Objective / Eligibility Questions

Stage 1 checks are used to confirm gateway eligibility, re-confirm baseline eligibility, and complete proportionate due-diligence and counter-fraud checks.

Only applications that meet all Stage 1 requirements will progress to Stage 2.

Stage 1 is assessed on a Pass / Not Met basis and is not scored.

| Question | Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Source Checks                   | Scoring       |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Q1       | Please confirm the name of the lead organisation for this application.<br><br>Each organisation may submit one application as a lead applicant. That application may include multiple related projects or activities where these form a coherent programme linking to the outlined objectives.                                                                                            | Short Answer<br><br>(50 words)  | Pass/ Not Met |
| Q2       | What type of organisation is the lead applicant?<br><br>The lead applicant must be a public sector, not for profit or private sector organisation. Applications may not be submitted by individuals or local authorities.                                                                                                                                                                 | Multiple Choice                 | N/A           |
| Q3       | Basis for designated type of organisation.<br><br>Applicant is required to provide a sound basis for designation in Q2.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Short Answer<br><br>(50 words)  | Pass/ Not Met |
| Q4       | Can you confirm your organisation has been registered and operating in your relevant sector for at least one year at the point of the scheme opening for applications (15th July).<br><br>To be eligible for this scheme, applicants must be registered and be operating in their relevant sectors for at least one year at the point of the scheme opening for applications (15th July). | Multiple Choice                 | Pass/ Not Met |
| Q6       | If you are applying as the Lead Organisation for a Consortium Bid, please provide the following details of all the consortium partners:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Short Answer<br><br>(100 words) | Pass/ Not Met |

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|     | <p>(1) Organisation legal names</p> <p>(2) Organisation types (e.g. only public sector, private company or not for profit)</p> <p>(3) Registered addresses</p> <p>(4) Charity Commission numbers (if applicable)</p> <p>(5) Companies House number (if applicable)</p> <p>(6) Role of consortia member in relation to proposal delivery</p>                                                                                    |                                       |               |
| Q7  | <p>If applying as part of a consortium, please can you confirm the following:</p> <p>1. As the lead organisation you have conducted financial due diligence on all partner organisations</p> <p>2. You have reviewed their financial soundness as part of the application process referring to the section above.</p>                                                                                                          | Multiple choice                       | Pass/ Not Met |
| Q8  | <p>Please confirm the proposal will take place in the Barnsley Metropolitan Borough area</p> <p>Proposals must take place in the Barnsley Metropolitan Borough area. This means that the businesses, organisations or workforce groups that are being targeted by the applicant must be based in / registered / living in the Barnsley Metropolitan Borough. Please refer to postcode schedule to confirm your eligibility</p> | Multiple choice                       | Pass/ Not Met |
| Q9  | <p>What is your project start date?</p> <p>Please note all projects must start between 01/10/2026 and 01/01/2027.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>Short Answer</p> <p>(25 words)</p> | Pass/ Not Met |
| Q10 | <p>What is the expected project duration in months?</p> <p>Please note all projects must start between 01/10/2026 and 01/01/2027. While projects may run for up to 12 months, all activity must conclude by 30/09/2027.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <p>Short Answer</p> <p>(25 words)</p> | Pass/ Not Met |
| Q11 | <p>How much will the proposal cost?</p> <p>You must be applying for funding between £100,000.00 and £350,000.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <p>Short Answer</p> <p>(25 words)</p> | Pass/ Not Met |

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|     | This amount should include the total estimated eligible project costs and any subcontractor costs and why they are critical to the project.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                 |               |
| Q12 | <p>Confirm the application is a true and accurate reflection of your suitability.</p> <p>Where there are grounds to suspect an applicant has used AI to submit a misleading or untruthful application - whether as an intentional act or through a failure to maintain human oversight of AI-generated content – applications will be deemed ineligible.</p>                        | Multiple choice | Pass/ Not Met |
| Q29 | <p>Please confirm that any content generated or assisted by artificial intelligence (AI) has been reviewed, validated and approved by a human within the organisation, who accepts full responsibility for the accuracy of the information provided in this application.</p> <p>Where AI is used in applications, content must be validated and owned by a 'human-in-the-loop'.</p> | Multiple choice | Pass/Not Met  |

## **Stage 2 Assessment of Eligible Applications (Scored)**

This section sets out the assessment framework that will be used to score applications that progress to Stage 2 of the application process.

Only applications that have passed all Stage 1 eligibility and due-diligence checks will be assessed against this framework. The assessment focuses on the quality, deliverability and impactfulness of the proposed activity, in line with the objectives of the Fund as stated in the advert.

Bids will be assessed according to a number of factors including their overall quality, deliverability and likely impact over the short and long term.

All scored responses will be assessed using a 1–5 scoring scale, reflecting the quality, clarity and strength of each response against the published assessment criteria.

Scores are interpreted as follows:

### **Score 1 – Unacceptable**

The response is insufficient, unclear or significantly incomplete. It fails to address key requirements of the question, demonstrates limited understanding, and provides little or no relevant evidence. Major gaps, inconsistencies or omissions prevent confidence in the proposal.

### **Score 2 – Weak**

The response addresses some aspects of the question but contains notable gaps in detail, justification or evidence. Relevant points are identified, however explanations are underdeveloped, poorly evidenced or only partially aligned to the assessment criteria.

### **Score 3 – Adequate**

The response addresses the main requirements of the question and demonstrates a reasonable understanding of the proposal. Relevant information is provided and generally supported, although some areas lack depth, specificity, evidence or full development.

### **Score 4 – Good**

The response is clear, well-developed and addresses all key aspects of the question. It demonstrates a strong understanding of requirements, provides relevant evidence and justification, and presents a credible and deliverable proposal with only minor weaknesses.

### **Score 5 – Excellent**

The response is comprehensive, highly coherent and strongly evidenced throughout. It addresses all aspects of the question with clear rationale, robust supporting evidence and strong alignment to fund objectives.

**Stage 2 Questions and Guidance**

| Question | Assessment Question                                                                                                                                                                                 | Word Count (max) |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Q19      | How will your approach meet the needs of the Fund, by responding to the challenges that DSIT has identified, and aligning to one or more of Barnsley's Inclusive Economic Growth Strategy missions? | 500              |

| Weighting | Scoring dimensions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| 10        | <p>High scoring applicants will provide extensive detail on the following areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension 1: Challenge and Fund Alignment: The extent to which the project has been intentionally designed to test and address one or both DSIT challenge areas.</li> <li>- Dimension 2: Sector and Cohort Justification: The extent to which selected sectors and cohorts are supported by evidence and linked to identified barriers.</li> <li>- Dimension 3: KPI Quality: The extent to which outputs and outcomes are quantified, measurable and supported by collection methods.</li> </ul> |

| Question | Assessment Question                                                                   | Word Count (max) |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Q20      | How is your proposal innovative, and what new knowledge or learning will it generate? | 500              |

| Weighting | Scoring dimensions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| 20        | <p>High scoring applicants will provide extensive detail on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension 1: Novelty and Advancement: The extent to which the proposal introduces a clearly defined improvement, adaptation, or new approach beyond existing AI upskilling provision.</li> <li>- Dimension 2: R&amp;D Uncertainty: The extent to which the proposal tests a genuine and important unanswered question.</li> <li>- Dimension 3: Systematic Testing and Learning: The extent to which the project will generate evidence through a structured and documented process.</li> </ul> |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension 4: Improvement on Existing Approaches: The extent to which the proposal demonstrates awareness of existing innovations and explains how it advances beyond them.</li> <li>- Dimension 5: Transferability and Reproducibility: The extent to which the knowledge generated could reasonably be reused, adapted, replicated, or scaled elsewhere.</li> </ul> |
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| Question | Assessment Question                                                | Word Count (max) |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Q21      | How will you reach relevant businesses or cohorts across Barnsley? | 500              |

| Weighting | Scoring dimensions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| 15        | <p>High scoring applicants will provide extensive detail on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension 1: Definition and Scale of Target Cohorts: The extent to which the applicant clearly identifies, segments, and quantifies the intended businesses or participants.</li> <li>- Dimension 2: Strength of Access Routes, Partnerships and Local Presence: The extent to which the applicant demonstrates existing or credibly planned mechanisms, and collaborations with local partners, to access the target cohort within Barnsley.</li> <li>- Dimension 3: Recruitment and Engagement Approach: The extent to which recruitment methods are specific, tailored, and appropriate to the target cohorts and delivery context.</li> </ul> |

| Question | Assessment Question                                                                                                     | Word Count (max) |
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| Q22      | How will this proposal be beneficial to the long-term future of Barnsley, and will there be any expected wider impacts? | 500              |

| Weighting | Scoring dimensions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| 15        | <p>High scoring applicants will provide extensive detail on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension 1: Long-Term Economic Benefit: The extent to which the proposal provides quantified, time-bound economic benefits that extend beyond the funded period.</li> <li>- Dimension 2: Wider and Regional Impacts: The extent to which indirect, spillover, or regional effects are identified and explained through causal mechanisms.</li> <li>- Dimension 3: Alignment to Government Priorities: The extent to which the proposal demonstrates specific, causal links to named government priorities.</li> <li>- Dimension 4: Social Impacts: The extent to which social outcomes are clearly described, including affected groups, mechanisms, and measurable indicators.</li> <li>- Dimension 5: Risks, Negative Impacts and Mitigation: The extent to which negative effects are identified, explained, and mitigated through specific and actionable measures.</li> </ul> |

| Question | Assessment Question                                                                                                            | Word Count (max) |
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| Q23      | <i>How will you monitor and evaluate your project, to contribute robust data to support the Fund's overarching evaluation?</i> | 500              |

| Weighting | Scoring dimensions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| 15        | <p>High scoring applicants will provide extensive detail on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension 1: Completeness and Quality of KPI Framework: The extent to which the applicant provides all required KPIs, quantified targets, measurement methods and a clear rationale for target levels.</li> </ul> |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension 2: Approach to Mandatory Data Collection: The extent to which the applicant demonstrates a practical and complete process for collecting all mandatory DSIT data requirements.</li> <li>- Dimension 3: Response Rate and Data Quality Management: The extent to which the applicant demonstrates active processes to maximise data completeness and minimise missing data.</li> <li>- Dimension 4: Additional Evaluation Measures: The extent to which additional measures generate evidence beyond the mandatory dataset and improve understanding of project outcomes.</li> <li>- Dimension 5: M&amp;E Risk Identification and Mitigation: The extent to which risks to data quality, completeness and reporting are identified and addressed through specific and deliverable mitigations.</li> </ul> |
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| Question | Assessment Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Word Count (max) |
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| Q24      | Please outline your high-level project management strategy and governance rationale here. Your detailed week-by-week timeline, critical path, and milestone tracking must be uploaded via the mandatory Delivery Plan Template at the end of this form. | 500              |

| Weighting | Scoring dimensions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| 5         | <p>High scoring applicants will provide extensive detail on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension A: Work Package Structure and Ownership: The extent to which project activities are logically structured into work packages with clear ownership, deliverables and cost allocation.</li> <li>- Dimension 2: Project Management and Governance: The extent to which the applicant demonstrates a structured approach to controlling project delivery, decision-making and accountability.</li> <li>- Dimension 3: Project Plan, Milestones and Dependencies: The extent to which the project plan demonstrates how activities will be sequenced and coordinated to achieve successful delivery.</li> <li>- Dimension 4: Risk Management and Critical Inputs: The extent to which delivery risks, dependencies and critical assumptions are identified and actively managed.</li> </ul> |

| Question | Assessment Question | Word Count (max) |
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| Q25 | <i>Please outline your relevant experience</i> | 500 |
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| Weighting | Scoring dimensions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
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| 5         | <p>High scoring applicants will provide extensive detail on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension 1: Relevance of Experience: past experience is directly comparable to the proposed project in terms of activity, target group, and scale, rather than being generic or loosely related.</li> <li>- Dimension 2: Evidence of Delivery Capability and Outcomes: provides concrete, verifiable evidence that they have successfully delivered similar activity, including outputs and outcomes rather than assertions.</li> <li>- Dimension 3: Alignment to Proposed Delivery Model: prior experience reflects the key components of the proposed delivery approach, demonstrating that they have delivered comparable models in practice.</li> <li>- Dimension 4: Application of Learning: drawn clear, specific lessons from previous delivery and applied them to inform the design, targeting, or implementation of the current proposal.</li> <li>- Dimension 5: Credibility and Confidence in Delivery: provides a coherent, complete, and sufficiently evidenced basis to give confidence that the project can be delivered as proposed.</li> </ul> |

| Question | Assessment Question                                                                                                                | Word Count (max) |
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| Q26      | <p>Workforce: Please confirm workforce model.</p> <p>Please describe the workforce model you will use to deliver your project.</p> | 500              |

| Weighting | Scoring dimensions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| 5         | <p>High scoring applicants will provide extensive detail on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension 1: Team Size and Structure: the proposed team includes all required roles and is structured and sized appropriately to deliver the project at the stated scale.</li> <li>- Dimension 2: Roles and Capabilities: the workforce has the necessary skills, experience, and competencies across all roles to deliver the project effectively.</li> </ul> |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension 3: Management and Oversight: there are clear, operational arrangements in place to manage staff, maintain delivery quality, and ensure accountability.</li> <li>- Dimension 4: Workforce Adaptability and Resilience: the workforce model includes practical mechanisms to respond to delivery risks such as changes in demand, staff availability, or timelines.</li> <li>- Dimension 5: Deliverability and Confidence: the workforce model is complete, coherent, and sufficiently robust to provide confidence that the project can be delivered as proposed.</li> </ul> |
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| Question | Assessment Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Word Count (max) |
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| Q27      | <p>Please provide a breakdown of the costs associated with this proposal using the budget template available within the Supporting Documents section of the grant advertisement.</p> <p>Your budget can include but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff salaries and associated employment costs.</li> <li>● Project management and administration directly required for project delivery.</li> <li>● Specialist delivery staff, trainers, facilitators, or technical experts.</li> <li>● Subcontractor and consultancy costs.</li> <li>● Equipment, software licences, and digital tools required for delivery.</li> </ul> <p>The funds may not be used for the following (list not exhaustive):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Any project that is ongoing or available to the public on the date that the grant recipient signs the grant funding agreement or MOU.</li> <li>● To match fund a project which was already receiving government funding, whether in whole or in part.</li> <li>● Staff costs unless required to deliver the proposed project.</li> <li>● Installation of physical digital infrastructure projects e.g. broadband infrastructure, telecommunications, data centres. This does not include devices such as laptops and computers.</li> <li>● Recruitment activity.</li> </ul> | Document Upload  |

Please refer to the supporting documents for further information on eligible and ineligible costs

| Weighting | Scoring dimensions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
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| 5         | <p>High scoring applicants will provide extensive detail on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completeness and Accuracy of the Template: the budget template has been fully completed, is free from material omissions or errors, and enables a complete understanding of total project costs without requiring inference.</li> <li>• Transparency and Clarity of Cost Assumptions: the applicant clearly explains how costs have been calculated, using explicit, consistent, and verifiable assumptions.</li> <li>• Strength of Linkage Between Costs and Delivery: each cost can be clearly traced to a specific activity, role, or output within the proposed delivery model.</li> <li>• Internal Consistency (Within Budget and with Proposal): internally coherent and aligned with the wider application, with no contradictions between cost information and the proposed delivery approach.</li> <li>• Degree of Confidence the Budget Can Be Relied Upon: on whether the budget is robust, credible, and suitable for funding decisions, based on the combined strength of completeness, assumptions, linkage, and consistency.</li> </ul> <p>Please complete and upload the Financial Methodology - Budget Management Tool MS Excel Template to profile expenditure needs. The following instructions should be followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The funding requested on the application should be in line with the total costs in the BMT. NB the grant amount should not exceed the following:</li> <li>• Spending period must not exceed 30 September 2027</li> <li>• Correlation with Delivery Plan</li> <li>• Ratio of staff costs vs non-staff costs with no supporting justification</li> <li>• Allocated funding towards project specific activities, in line with eligible expenditure</li> <li>• Figures recorded in the Budget Tool FM Tab need to include any irrecoverable VAT you incur.</li> <li>• Staff costs should include salary, Employer National Insurance contributions, pension contributions, and any contractual bonuses where applicable.</li> <li>• Administrative costs, overheads, and indirect costs should be shown as separate budget lines and must not be embedded within delivery costs.</li> </ul> |

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● As a general rule - sections of the tables in white need completing and sections in light blue are automated and do not require your input.</li> <li>● Expenditure should be profiled across the funding period and reflect the timing of planned project activities and milestones.</li> <li>● The Financial Methodology - Budget Management Tool should correlate with the key milestones of the proposal.</li> <li>● Explanatory commentary should be provided in the notes section to provide justification to expenditure cost.</li> <li>● The notes section should be used to explain and justify significant costs. Applicants should provide sufficient detail for assessors to understand: a) what each cost relates to; b) how it has been calculated (for example, staff time, day rates, salary costs, unit costs, volumes, or overhead allocation methods); and c) why the cost is necessary for project delivery.</li> <li>● All costs should be clearly attributable to specific project activities, roles, outputs, or work packages.</li> <li>● Applicants should avoid unexplained lump-sum costs. Calculations, assumptions, quantities, rates, and cost drivers should be clearly stated wherever possible.</li> <li>● The budget should be complete, internally consistent, and arithmetically accurate. Cost assumptions should be applied consistently across similar activities and cost categories.</li> </ul> <p>Applicants may be contacted for further information if one of the above checks is not passed.</p> <p>Applicants will not pass this question if they have not uploaded or completed the BMT OR the total amount is in excess of the maximum grant value.</p> |
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| Question | Assessment Question                                                       | Word Count (max) |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Q28      | How does your project represent value for money for you and the taxpayer? | 500              |

| Weighting | Scoring dimensions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
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| 5         | <p>High scoring applicants will provide extensive detail on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dimension 1: Costs and Proportionality: Whether costs are necessary, justified and proportionate to planned delivery.</li> <li>- Dimension 2: Efficiency of Delivery: Whether resources are used in a way that maximises outputs and minimises unnecessary expenditure.</li> <li>- Dimension 3: Expected Benefits and Returns: Whether benefits are measurable and proportionate to investment.</li> <li>- Dimension 4: Benchmarking and Comparators: Whether costs have been compared against relevant market or programme benchmarks.</li> <li>- Dimension 5: Leverage and Additionality: Whether the project generates value beyond grant funding and delivers activity that would not otherwise occur.</li> </ul> |