



Belfast

5G

INNOVATION REGION

5G Funding Competition

Application guidance

June 2025



Belfast
City Council



Ards and
North Down
Borough Council



Belfast
Harbour



Lisburn &
Castlereagh
City Council



Mid & East
Antrim
Borough Council



Newry, Mourne
and Down
District Council



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Ulster
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Funded by:



Department for
Science, Innovation,
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Contents

Section 1: Overview	4
Summary	4
Timetable	5
Section 2: Funding	6
Funding source and amount	6
Timing of spend	7
Eligible expenditure	8
Grant Funding Agreement	9
Section 3: Project Requirements	10
Project Design Requirements	10
Technology	11
Commercial Sustainability Requirements	11
Financial Requirements	12
Project Delivery Requirements	12
Section 4: Eligibility Criteria	13
Applicant Eligibility	13
Project Location Eligibility	14
Financial Viability	14
Section 5: Applicant Support	14
Applicant Support	14
Partner Introduction Webinar (3 July 2025)	15
5G Adoption Toolkit	15
Section 6: Application Process	15
Application Process	15
Application Submission	16
Clarification Questions	17
Section 7: Assessment Process	18
Assessment Stages	18
Scoring Methodology	19
Assessment Questions	20
Section 8: Project Monitoring	25
Delivery and Financial Monitoring	25
Benefits Monitoring	25

Section 9: Policy and Programme Context	27
Policy Context	27
DSIT 5G Innovation Regions Programme Context	28
Belfast 5G Innovation Region Programme Context	28
Section 10: Additional Information.....	31
Security Guidance	31
Notices	31

Section 1: Overview

Summary

Application deadline	11.59pm, Monday 8 September 2025
Project delivery	Technical solution and use case(s) must be operational and in use, and a period of benefits realisation completed, by 31 March 2026.
Total available funding	Up to £550,000 capital funding
Minimum and maximum grant values	£50,000 - £100,000 capital funding
Grant Claims	Grant funded activity must be completed by 31 March 2026.
Match funding	Applicants must provide 30% match funding. Belfast City Council will fund capital expenditure of up to 70% of project costs.
Who can apply	Applicants must be based in the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) area and the project must take place in the BRCD area. The BRCD area is the council areas of Antrim and Newtownabbey, Ards and North Down, Belfast, Lisburn and Castlereagh, Mid and East Antrim, and Newry, Mourne and Down. The competition is open to all industry sectors and to both public and private sector applicants. Awards will be granted to individual businesses or organisations only. They may work with partners, but the Grant Agreement will be with a single lead applicant.
Project scope	Funding is for implementing live technology solutions that enable one or more 5G/advanced wireless use cases to solve real-world issues in a live environment, such as improvements to existing business operations, processes and services. Projects should generate economic, social and/or environmental benefits such as productivity gains, efficiencies, cost savings, welfare improvements etc.

	This competition will not fund testbeds, trials, or the research and development stages of technical solutions.
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The Belfast 5G Innovation Region (Belfast 5GIR), led by Belfast City Council, is one of ten 5G innovation regions across the UK funded by the Department of Science, Innovation Technology as part of its UK 5G Innovation Regions programme.

Advanced wireless networks, such as 5G, are key to driving economic growth and innovation across a range of industry sectors including health, manufacturing, transport and logistics, creative industries, and public services.

5G offers faster speeds, lower latency, higher capacity, increased flexibility, and increased reliability – supporting a range of digital technologies such as automation, IoT, AI, robotics, and immersive applications.

As part of the Belfast 5GIR programme, Belfast City Council is administering a 5G Funding Competition which aims to support local businesses and industries in the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) area to harness the power of 5G and digital technologies to deliver enhanced operations and services. It aligns with the broader goal of creating a more competitive and innovative digital economy in the Belfast region.

This competition will fund the implementation of live solutions that enable 5G and other advanced wireless use cases in real-world settings. The solution and use case(s) must be operational and in use, and a period of benefits realisation completed before 31 March 2026.

Following implementation, the successful applicants will operate the solution for at least two years, continuing to evaluate the impact of the solution. Grant funding covers the implementation stage only; it will not cover the operation stage.

Competition details are available at <https://smartbelfast.city/2025/05/belfast-5g-innovation-funding/>.

More information about the Belfast 5G Innovation Region and 5G use cases delivered to date is available at www.smartbelfast.city/belfast-5g-innovation-region

This document provides key information about the application process and the funding available under the competition.

Timetable

Activity	Date
Competition	
Competition opens	23 June 2025
Competition Briefing Webinar	10.30am, 26 June 2025
Partner Introduction Webinar	11.30am, 3 July 2025
Deadline for request for applicant support	5pm, 11 July 2025
Clarification questions deadline	5pm, 27 August 2025
Application deadline	11.59pm, Monday 8 September 2025

Applicants notified	W/C 22 September 2025
Grant Funding Agreements signed	End of September/beginning of October 2025
Implementation	
Projects mobilised and Grant Funding Period starts	October 2025
Grant claims Applicants can submit up to two grant claims for eligible expenditure in the following time periods	Expenditure October - December 2025 (deadline for first grant claim is 31 January 2026) Expenditure January - March 2026 (deadline for second grant claim is 30 April 2026)
Implementation deadline The solution and use case(s) must be operational and in use, and a period of benefits realisation completed, before 31 March 2026. All grant funded activities must be completed by this deadline.	31 March 2026
Benefits Realisation Checkpoint 1 Case Study	March 2026
Operation	
Solution and use cases continue to be operated in a live environment	From implementation to at least 31 March 2028
Benefits Realisation Checkpoint 2 and 3 Updated Case Study	March 2027 and March 2028
Grant Funding Period ends	31 March 2028

Section 2: Funding

Funding source and amount

Belfast City Council will make available capital grant funding up to the Total Available Funding of up to £550,000* to help businesses and organisations deliver 5G/advanced wireless projects and Use Cases. Individual grant awards will be in the range of £50,000 and £100,000.

Belfast City Council will fund a maximum of 70% of implementation costs. Funding recipients are required to cover the remaining 30%. In-kind contributions such as the cost of labour associated with the project may be used to meet the 30% match funding requirement.

All costs relating to the operation of the use case must be covered by the applicant.

Illustration of match funding requirements

	Belfast City Council capital grant value	Minimum Contribution required from applicant (30%)	Total Project value
Minimum Award	£50,000	£21,429	£71,429
Example Award	£70,000	£30,000	£100,000
Maximum Award	£100,000	£42,857	£142,857

This funding is not given as a subsidy. Therefore, de-minimis regulations do not apply and recipients are not limited by previous cumulative subsidies that they may have received.

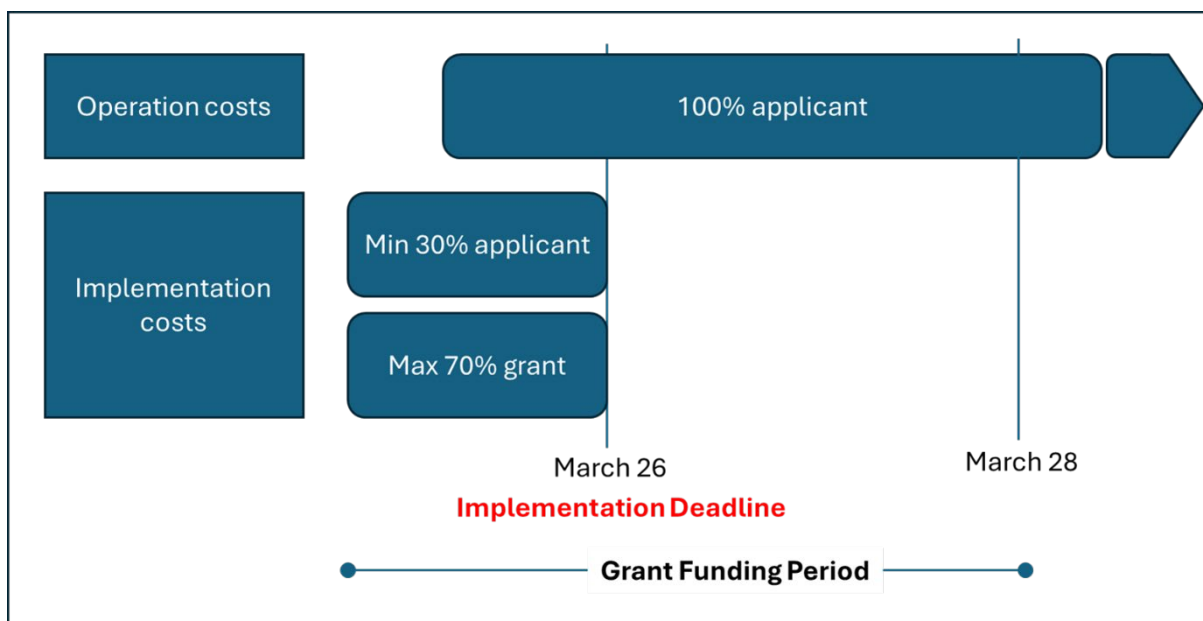
Organisations that are not part of the public sector may not use other public sector grants to meet match funding requirements.

* The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology has provided £300,000 of funding towards this 5G Funding Competition. The Belfast Region City Deal will contribute up to £250,000 of additional funding, subject to final business case approval. The total amount of funding available may increase further if additional budget is identified.

Timing of spend

All grant funded activities must be completed by 31 March 2026. Grant payments will be made quarterly in arrears for Eligible Expenditure. Applicants must have spent their agreed match funding contribution by 31 March 2026.

Implementation must be completed, the solution and use case(s) operational and in use, and a period of benefits realisation completed by 31 March 2026.



Eligible expenditure

Project costs are the costs of implementing the solution, but not the costs of operating the Use Case or the business process that it supports. For example, project costs could include, but are not limited to:

- Equipment: The purchase of new hardware or tools essential for the project
- Software: Perpetual software licences that are categorised as Capital
- Installation: Costs associated with setting up the equipment or infrastructure required for the solution, including resource costs
- Adaptations to existing infrastructure: Modifications or upgrades to current systems to enable the deployment of the new solution
- Staff Training: Costs for educating and training team members to operate or manage the new technology or processes

Project costs do not include expenses related to:

- Operation of the Use Case after implementation
- Operational costs: such as maintenance, utility costs, data charges, recurring software licences and subscriptions
- Staff costs: staff effort of operating the business process

To qualify as eligible expenditure that can be funded by the 5G Funding Competition, costs must:

- be classed as capital under UK GAAP;
- be incurred within the grant funding period;
- be net of VAT recoverable from HM Revenue and Customs and gross of irrecoverable VAT (see the grant Terms and Conditions, clause 6 for full details);
- be directly attributable to the implementation of the solution;
- be capable of being capitalised and/or treated as capital expenditure; and
- be categorised as one of the following:
 - Labour
 - Overheads
 - Materials
 - Contract
 - Travel and Subsistence
 - Other direct project costs

Eligible expenditure may include the following types of cost (this list is not exhaustive):

- costs relating to the implementation of live solutions in a real-world setting;
- network equipment (capital purchase or indefeasible right of use);
- end-user devices (where the user may be a human or a machine);
- software (perpetual licences);
- facilities (offices, labs, venues);
- licences and permits (one-time licences);
- costs of promoting and sharing the project outcomes;
- capitalised staff costs directly associated with delivering the project outcomes within the permitted spending window; and

- contract costs where the work is essential to the success of the project, involve expertise that does not exist within the project team, and involve skills that it is not practical to develop in-house for the project.

The competition will not fund the following costs:

- testbeds or trials;
- costs classed as Revenue under UK GAAP, such as operational staff costs;
- input VAT reclaimable from HMRC;
- liabilities incurred before the issue of this Grant Agreement unless agreed in writing by the Authority;
- products or services provided by High Risk Vendors, as defined by [NCSC advice on high risk vendors in UK telecoms - NCSC.GOV.UK](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/advice-and-guidance/advice-on-high-risk-vendors-in-uk-telecoms);
- entertaining that would be a taxable benefit to the person being entertained, according to current UK tax regulations;
- payments reimbursed or to be reimbursed by other public or private sector grants, or any other source; and
- any procurement, commercial, business development or supply chain activity with any Russian or Belarusian entity in the project's supply chain, including any goods or services originating from a Russian or Belarusian source.

The published template grant agreement provides full details of eligible and ineligible expenditure.

Grant Funding Agreement

The Grant Funding Agreement will be materially the same as the draft agreement provided with this guidance. Applicants must be prepared to sign the agreement without material changes.

Belfast City Council will sign a grant funding agreement with successful applicants. Payments will be made by Belfast City Council to the lead applicant pursuant to Economic Development power – Art 8 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 and Article 79 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

This step confirms the applicant's acceptance of the grant terms and conditions and minimises delays to project delivery following award decisions.

The Council reserves the right to ask clarification questions and may require changes to the submitted version following those clarifications.

Section 3: Project Requirements

Project Design Requirements

Applications should:

- Implement 5G and/or other advanced wireless solutions to solve real-world issues such as delivering improvements to the applicant's existing processes, operations, and services.
- Enable one or more 5G/advanced wireless use cases.
- Clearly describe the proposed 5G/advanced wireless solution and technology to be used.
- Clearly describe the use case(s) to be delivered including the business challenge, proposed solution, and expected benefits and impact.
- Demonstrate how the project will generate positive economic, social and/or environmental benefits. Examples include increased revenue, productivity gains, cost savings, efficiencies, welfare improvements etc.
- Indicate key performance indicators that will be used to monitor the expected benefits.

Belfast City Council will consider proposals for projects that support a larger, long-term initiative, even if the larger project is not yet ready within the same timeline. However, projects funded by this competition are required to demonstrate self-sufficiency.

What is a 5G/advanced wireless use case?

A 5G/advanced wireless use case describes a specific scenario, process, method or transaction that relies on the use of advanced wireless technologies. The key feature of a use case is the use of wireless connectivity to support a business or organisation activity.

For example, a use case might be where a business or organisation automates a complex process using a 5G network together with sensors and intelligent devices, meeting requirements for high levels of security, reliability, flexibility, and control over network coverage while handling high volumes of data at low latency. This use case could deliver efficiency savings and productivity improvements for the business.

Deploying or extending wireless network coverage alone is not a use case. However, the competition may fund connectivity that is essential to deliver use cases.

The competition funding is not intended for developing new products or solutions, or for research activities. The focus is on the practical deployment of existing solutions and technologies enabled by 5G and other advanced wireless connectivity.

Technology

The competition's preference is to fund projects that use 5G or support a roadmap to 5G, though other advanced wireless technologies are acceptable, including hybrid networks combining 5G with other wireless technologies.

Advanced wireless technologies may include:

- **5G Networks:** The fifth generation of mobile networks offering higher speeds, lower latency, and the ability to connect more devices simultaneously compared to previous generations. These may include private 5G and/or slices of public 5G networks, and hybrid networks that bring together 5G with satellite, Low-Power, Wi-Fi 6 and other technologies.
- **Wi-Fi 6 and 7:** The latest standards in Wi-Fi technology, providing faster data rates, increased capacity, and improved performance in dense environments.
- **Low-Power Wide-Area Networks (LPWAN):** Wireless networks designed for long-range communication with low power consumption, ideal for IoT applications.
- **Millimetre Wave (mmWave) Technology:** Higher radio frequency bands that offer faster data rates and more bandwidth.
- **Massive MIMO (Multiple Input, Multiple Output):** Technology that increases the capacity of wireless networks by using multiple antennas at both the transmitter and receiver ends.
- **Edge Computing:** Processing data closer to where it is generated to reduce latency and improve performance in real-time applications.

Commercial Sustainability Requirements

- Projects should be part of the applicant's longer-term roadmap for adopting 5G and other advanced wireless technologies to deliver business benefits. Projects should accelerate the organisation's adoption of those technologies by providing evidence and outputs to inform and support the business case for sustaining the use case after the grant funding period comes to an end and for the wider adoption and investment in 5G and advanced wireless technologies.
- The project's impact on the applicant's operations and future investment decisions regarding 5G and advanced wireless technology adoption should be clearly outlined.
- Applications should explain how the project will inform future decisions to adopt and invest in 5G and advanced wireless technologies. A good response would discuss the key financial and strategic measures that will inform those decisions and provide details of the specific values required to justify adoption and investment. For example, you might describe the expected payback period and how you expect to achieve it. Other commonly used measures include, but are not limited to, Internal Rate of Return, Net Present Value, Return on Investment, Benefit-Cost Ratio and Break-Even Analysis. You are free to describe any measures that are relevant to your decision.

- Project aims should be defined, such as reducing operational costs, generating revenue, increasing productivity, or other outcomes relevant to future decisions to invest in 5G and advanced wireless solutions.
- Projects should support the adoption of 5G and advanced wireless technologies by wider industry through dissemination of lessons learned and other mechanisms such as industry events.

Financial Requirements

- In the Project Finances Excel spreadsheet, applicants must provide details of all capital and revenue costs that make up the total project costs over its lifetime and enter the value of capital grant funding that is requested.
- Applications should describe why grant funding is required for the project to proceed. The competition is intended to provide funding to support adoption of advanced wireless solutions where a financial barrier exists. Financial barriers could include high costs of new technologies over older generation solutions, or resource constraints that would otherwise delay implementation, or uncertainty affecting the expected return on investment.
- The response to this question should complement the response given to commercial sustainability. For example, if you have discussed a specific financial measure (e.g. internal rate of return), this response could set out how the grant would improve that measure.

Project Delivery Requirements

- Applicants should describe how the Technical solution and use case(s) will be operational and in use, and a period of benefits realisation completed, by 31 March 2026.
- Applications should describe how the project will be implemented and operated over its lifetime and how it will complete implementation and use all grant funding by the Implementation Deadline.
- Project delivery should be managed according to good practice; for example, in accordance with Prince2 or a similar methodology. A project manager with appropriate executive support should manage the project using recognised management tools including a detailed project plan and risk management process.
- Projects should have a clear understanding of the key delivery activities and their purpose. They should be clear about key decision points and the human resources and bought-in goods and services required for successful delivery.
- Applications should describe the business change activities that will embed the new solution into the organisation's processes.
- There will be opportunities for projects to engage in dissemination events and communication activities with wider industry – successful applicants will be required to participate.

Below are the project stages:

Project stage	Description
Implementation	Implement technology solution to enable 5G and/or advanced wireless use cases in a real-world setting. The solution and use cases must be operational and in use, and a period of benefits realisation completed, before 31 March 2026. Grant funding can cover a maximum of 70% of the costs and must be spent by 31 March 2026. Match funding must cover a minimum of 30% and must be spent by 31 March 2026.
Operation	The continued operation of the use cases in a real-world setting from implementation until at least the end of the Grant Funding Period. All costs of the operation stage must be covered by the applicant.

Section 4: Eligibility Criteria

Applicant Eligibility

- Applicants must have a business address and operations in the BRCD area. The BRCD area is the following council areas: Antrim and Newtownabbey, Ards and North Down, Belfast, Lisburn and Castlereagh, Mid and East Antrim, and Newry, Mourne and Down.
- The competition is open to businesses and organisations in the private sector, public sector, academia, RTO, non-profit and charitable sectors. It is open to all industry sectors.
- Awards will be granted to individual businesses or organisations only. They may work with partners, but the Grant Agreement will be with a single lead applicant.
- The lead applicant must be the use case owner. Applications must be made by businesses or organisations that propose to commercially adopt 5G or other advanced wireless technologies. The proposal should clearly demonstrate how the project will impact the applicant's operations and inform their future investment decisions. The competition will not consider applications from suppliers seeking to develop a wireless solution to sell to others.
- An organisation may submit more than one application for different projects. Each application will be assessed on its own merits, and each must include its own match funding. Each application must demonstrate a use case. Applications must be viable as standalone projects; they cannot be dependent on the success of other applications.

Project Location Eligibility

- Projects must be delivered in the BRCD area. This means that the project's implementation and execution activities should take place within the geographical boundaries of the BRCD area. Equipment that is purchased should be deployed and operated within the BRCD area.
- Grant funding may not be used to fund work carried out by non-UK organisations. However, any such costs may be included in total project costs and may count towards the 30% match funding requirement. Equipment and software may be from non-UK suppliers.

Financial Viability

Applicants must be financially viable:

- The organisation's Current Ratio (Current Assets/Current Liabilities) is more than 0.5.
- More than half of the organisation's capital has not disappeared because of accumulated losses.
- The organisation is not subject to collective insolvency proceedings and does not fulfil the criteria under UK law for being placed in collective insolvency proceedings at the request of its creditors.
- The organisation has not received rescue aid where it has not yet reimbursed the loan or terminated the guarantee.
- The organisation has not received restructuring aid where it is still subject to a restructuring plan.

A NewCo (new company) that does not meet the requirements above can apply for funding. A guarantor, being at least one organisation creating the NewCo organisation, will be required for delivery of the project and responsibility for the spend, including match funding. This will be reflected in any legal agreement for funding between the funder and a successful applicant. In addition, the accounts for at least one organisation creating the NewCo will be required to be assessed as part of the application, and this should satisfy the financial viability criteria set out above.

Belfast City Council will conduct financial due diligence to ensure successful applicants meet the financial viability requirements.

Section 5: Applicant Support

Applicant Support

A fixed number of free consultancy days are available to support applicants.

Each eligible applicant will receive up to three days of applicant support. The amount of time allocated to each applicant may be less than three days if a high number of requests for support is received.

This optional service is independent and confidential. It will work with applicants as a critical friend, offering practical advice and challenge. It is not a bid writing service.

It aims to help applicants to:

- Develop 5G/advanced wireless projects
- Identify delivery partners to resolve capability and capacity gaps
- Improve the clarity and credibility of applications, aligned to the competition's guidance

Applicants who wish to take advantage of the offer of Applicant Support should email innovationfunding@belfastcity.gov.uk to register their interest by the Deadline for request for Applicant Support set out in the timetable in Section 1.

Applicants who register after the deadline will be added to a reserve list. Applicant support may become available if another applicant discontinues their application.

Partner Introduction Webinar (3 July 2025)

Belfast City Council is hosting a webinar on 3 July 2025 to help potential applicants, partners and suppliers to connect with each other to explore challenges, solutions and opportunities, learn about 5G/advanced wireless use cases from elsewhere, and to form partnerships.

Applicants and suppliers who wish to make a short 3-minute pitch to describe the challenge they want to address with advanced wireless, or the wireless solutions that they can offer, should email innovationfunding@belfastcity.gov.uk.

You can register for the webinar at <https://smartbelfast.city/2025/05/belfast-5g-innovation-funding/>.

5G Adoption Toolkit

As part of the Belfast 5G Innovation Region programme, a NI 5G Adoption Toolkit was developed to provide practical information on adopting 5G, example 5G use cases, and information on the local advanced wireless ecosystem. Download the toolkit at <https://smartbelfast.city/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/NI-5G-Adoption-Toolkit.pdf>

Section 6: Application Process

Application Process

Applications must only use the Application Form and templates provided. The Application Form contains specific guidance on information to be provided.

Applicants must complete an application form in Word document file format, comprised of seven pass/fail eligibility questions and four assessed questions, within the required word limit. Applicants must also complete:

- REQUIRED – Completed Project Finances Excel spreadsheet that covers the cost model, expenditure forecast and requested grant value; and
- OPTIONAL – To support your response to question 1, you may attach a PDF containing a schematic illustration of the proposed solution or service. (PDF Project Description)
- REQUIRED - To support your response to question 2, you MUST provide a project plan as a PDF attachment. (PDF Project Plan)

- REQUIRED - To support your response to question 2, you MUST provide a risk register as a PDF attachment. (PDF Risk Register)
 - o Note that each individual PDF may be a maximum of 5Mb and no more than 3 sides of A4 each, in a font size that is readable at 100% zoom.

The Application Form and templates must not be altered, converted or submitted as a different file type.

The Application form and additional documentation must use the following naming criteria:

Application Form Word document: [Company Name] Belfast 5GIR Application Form

Project Finances Excel spreadsheet: [Company Name] Belfast 5GIR Project Finances

Additional Information PDFs: [Company Name] Belfast 5GIR [Project Description / Project Plan / Risk Register]

In evaluating responses, we value brevity. Do not exceed the maximum word limit, but please give sufficient evidence to support your application. Tables will not be included in this word limit but should only be used where necessary. Additional diagrams and annexes should not be provided unless requested. Hyperlinks referencing further information may be included to inform more detailed understanding post-selection but will be disregarded during the assessment of applications. Do not include commercial sales messages about products or services being proposed.

Your response should provide sufficient evidence to support any assertions made and state any underlying principles or assumptions.

Where you think that part of an answer to one question is already answered in your response to another question, then please cross reference your answers.

Applications must be submitted by the Application Deadline. Any bids submitted after that time will be discarded without assessment.

Public Description (200 word limit)

To comply with government practice on openness and transparency of public funded activities, Belfast City Council will publish information relating to funded projects. Applicants must provide a short description of their proposal in a way that will be understood by the general public. The public description should not include any commercially confidential information, e.g. intellectual property or patent details. The public description may be used in marketing and communication activity by Belfast City Council, UKTIN and DSIT. Belfast City Council may publish the details of any relevant suppliers involved in proposals and the public description of the project.

Application Submission

Applications should be sent to innovationfunding@belfastcity.gov.uk. You will receive an email acknowledgement of your submission. We strongly advise familiarising yourself with the submission process well in advance of the deadline to avoid the risk that IT issues prevent you submitting your final response by the Application Deadline. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Clarification Questions

Questions may be sent to innovationfunding@belfastcity.gov.uk, no later than the Clarifications Deadline set out in the Timetable. Responses to questions will be published on the competition page, with the removal of any sensitive or identifiable information.

Section 7: Assessment Process

Assessment Stages

The 5G Funding Competition is designed to be fair, transparent and objective. Applications for the competition will be assessed through the following stages:

1. **Eligibility:** The eligibility assessor will assess the initial eligibility check using pass/fail questions to ensure the organisation and project meet basic criteria. If an application passes the Eligibility Stage, it will progress to evaluation. If an application does not pass the Eligibility Stage, the application will not be assessed. We will notify the applicant with an explanation as to why.
2. **Triage:** Belfast City Council may triage applications if it receives a high volume of applications. If it decides to triage, the assessment panel members will each individually review and score the assessment triage questions for applications passing the Eligibility stage. The panel will meet in a moderation session to agree a single panel score for each triage question for each application. Any application scoring fewer than 3 marks against any of the triage questions will be eliminated from the competition and the rest of the application will not be assessed. The qualifying applications will proceed to Application Assessment.
3. **Application Assessment:** The assessment panel members will each individually review and score the remaining assessment questions for each application that passed the Triage stage. They will meet in a moderation session to agree a single panel score for each question for each application.

The score for each question will be multiplied by the question weighting and by 20 to provide the weighted score for each question. The sum of the weighted scores will be the Total Weighted Score out of 100.

Applications scoring less than the minimum score required on any question after moderation will be eliminated from the competition.

4. **Outcome:** The qualifying applications will be ranked in descending order of Total Weighted Score. Grant funding will be offered to the qualifying applications with the highest Total Weighted Scores until the Available Funding is used up.

Where there is a dead heat in Total Weighted Score, the highest ranking will be determined in the following order: highest score for question 1, question 4, question 3, question 2, applicant contribution percentage, total project value, Current Ratio (Current Assets/Current Liabilities), Dun and Bradstreet Rating Classification or equivalent.

Funding will be awarded based on the highest scoring applications until all funding has been allocated. For example, if the top three highest scoring applications use up the whole fund, then only those three projects will be funded.

If, for example, the top three scoring applications combined exceed the total available funding, a discussion will take place with the third placed applicant(s) to see if their project can be amended to come within the budget. If no suitable amendment is possible, the next highest scoring application will be considered, and this process will continue until all funds are allocated.

5. **Feedback for applicants:** The outcome of the competition will be shared with all applicants. Feedback showing the applicant's evaluated scores and the rationale for each score will be provided to all applicants.

Belfast City Council reserves the right to request additional clarifications and corrections following the submission deadline. Additional information submitted at the request of Belfast City Council must meet any timing, format and length requirements we may specify at the time.

If the total funding requested by bids that meet the required standard exceeds the Total Available Funding, some bids may be placed on a reserve list. Should additional funding later become available to increase the Total Available Funding further grants will be offered to the applications with the next highest Total Weighted Scores in the same way.

Scoring Methodology

Responses to Questions 1-4 will be assessed using the following scoring methodology:

Score	Description
5 Excellent	The bid meets all of the requirements to an exceptional standard. It gives full confidence that the applicant understands the requirements and that the project will achieve the objectives of the competition. The bid uses 5G technologies.
4 Good	The bid meets all or almost all the requirements and excels in some parts of its response. It gives a good level of confidence that the applicant understands the requirements and that the project will achieve the objectives of the competition. The bid clearly describes a roadmap towards 5G adoption.
3 Satisfactory	The bid meets most of the requirements but with minor reservations in one or more areas. It gives a satisfactory level of confidence that the applicant understands the requirements and that the project will achieve the objectives and conditions of the competition. The response lacks detail in some areas.
2 Poor	The bid fails to meet many of the requirements. It gives low confidence that the applicant understands the requirements and that the project will achieve the objectives and conditions of the competition. It lacks substantial detail.
1 Inadequate	The bid fails to meet almost all of the requirements. It does not give confidence that the applicant understands the requirements and that the project will achieve the objectives of the competition. It provides very limited detail
0 Unacceptable/ No Response	The bid fails to address any of the requirements. The response does not provide sufficient detail to be marked.

The Applicant Contribution Percentage will be assessed in Question 5 using the following scoring methodology.

For applicant contribution percentages between 30% and 80%, marks at a rate of one mark for every ten percentage points. All applicant percentages of 80% and above will score 5 marks.

For example:

30% applicant contribution percentage: 0 marks ($30-30 \times 1/10$)
 37% applicant contribution percentage: 0.7 marks ($37-30 \times 1/10$)
 54% applicant contribution percentage: 2.4 marks ($54-30 \times 1/10$)
 76% applicant contribution percentage: 4.6 marks ($76-30 \times 1/10$)
 etc.

Assessment Questions

Question	Type	Max word Count	% weighting
ELIGIBILITY			
What is the address and postcode of the applicant organisation? To be eligible, the applicant organisation must have a business address and operations in the BRCD area.	Pass/fail	n/a	Not scored
What is the address and postcode of the location that the activity will primarily take place? To be eligible, the project's implementation and execution activity must take place in the BRCD area.	Pass/fail	n/a	Not scored
Please confirm that your application conforms to the HMG High Risk Vendor (HRV) policy outlined in guidance. To be eligible, applications must conform to the HRV policy.	Pass/fail	n/a	Not scored
Please confirm that the grant amount requested does not include recoverable VAT. To be eligible, the grant amount must not include VAT that is recoverable from HMRC.	Pass/fail	n/a	Not scored
Please confirm that you have read, understood and will accept the terms and conditions in the draft Grant Agreement provided. The terms and conditions set out in the draft Grant Agreement are non-negotiable. Applicants must review the draft with appropriate legal advisors and raise any queries with Belfast City Council before	Pass/fail	n/a	Not scored

submitting an application. To be eligible, the applicant organisation must accept the terms of the draft Grant Agreement.			
Please confirm that your organisation meets all of the financial viability criteria: - the organisation's Current Ratio (Current Assets/Current Liabilities) is more than 0.5 - more than half of the organisation's capital has not disappeared because of accumulated losses - the organisation is not subject to insolvency proceedings, and does not fulfil the criteria under law for being placed in collective insolvency proceedings at the request of its creditors - the organisation has not received rescue aid where it has not yet reimbursed the loan or terminated the guarantee - the organisation has not received restructuring aid where it is still subject to a restructuring plan. To be eligible, the applicant organisation must meet the financial viability criteria.	Pass/fail	n/a	Not scored
ASSESSMENT			
1. PROJECT DESIGN Describe how the project will meet the Project Design requirements. Describe the use case(s) that the project will deliver. Describe the specific challenge, scenario, process, method or transaction within the applicant organisation that relies on or is improved using 5G and/or other advanced wireless technologies. Describe the proposed technical solution. Provide a clear description of the technology and demonstrate that the project is not a product development, trial or testbed activity. The competition's preference is to fund projects that use 5G or support a roadmap to 5G. Describe the expected outcomes and explain how you will measure the impacts and benefits. Describe the economic, social and/or environmental benefits that the project will deliver. Provide key performance indicators that will be used to monitor the expected benefits.	Triage & Assessment	1000	25%

You MAY support your response with images in a single PDF attachment. Applications that score less than 3 marks for this response will be eliminated from the competition.			
2. COMMERCIAL SUSTAINABILITY Describe how the project will meet the Commercial Sustainability requirements. Describe the primary aims of this project. For instance, is it focused on reducing operational costs, generating revenue, increasing productivity, or achieving other outcomes that will inform future investment decisions in 5G and advanced wireless solutions? Describe how grant funding will help accelerate your organisation's adoption of 5G and other advanced wireless technologies. Specify the financial metrics (e.g. such as Internal Rate of Return (IRR), Net Present Value (NPV), Benefit-Cost Ratio, or payback period) that will guide your assessment of the project's impact on your adoption and investment strategies. With respect to these metrics, identify the outcomes you would need to achieve to: • Continue with the ongoing use of the solution implemented through this project after the Grant Funding Period. • Justify further investment in adopting 5G and advanced wireless technology Applications that score less than 3 marks for this response will be eliminated from the competition.	Triage & Assessment	800	15%

3. FINANCIAL Applicants must complete the Project Finances Excel spreadsheet and a written response in the Application Form. In the Project Finances Excel spreadsheet you must provide details of all capital and revenue costs, including your match funding, and enter the value of capital grant funding that you are requesting. Please include all relevant costs, even if doing so means your contribution exceeds the 30% match funding threshold. It is important to reflect the full value of your contribution. Please refer to the Applicant Guidance section on Eligible Expenditure, and the grant Terms and Conditions, for details on costs that may be included. In the written response in the Application Form you must describe how the project will meet the financial requirements set out in the Belfast 5GIR 5G Funding Competition Guidance. Please Explain: - How you will meet the 30% match funding requirement by the Implementation Deadline. - How you will ensure you spend the grant funding by March 2026. - How you will cover any costs during operation. - Why grant funding is essential for this project by referencing the financial metrics your organisation relies on for investment decisions. For example, discuss how grant funding would impact achieving your target Internal Rate of Return (IRR) or help shorten the payback period. Applications that score less than 2 marks for this response will be eliminated from the competition.	Assessment	500	15%
4. PROJECT DELIVERY Describe how the project will meet the Project Delivery requirements set out in the Belfast 5GIR 5G Funding Competition Guidance document. Describe how the project will be managed and how it will meet the Implementation Deadline. For the implementation stage the response should: - describe how the Technical solution and use case(s) will be operational and in use, and a period	Assessment	1000	20%

of benefits realisation completed, by 31 March 2026. - describe how the project will be managed; - outline the key activities and their purpose; - highlight key decision points; - identify milestones, including grant payment milestones (grant payments will be made quarterly in arrears); - detail your sourcing approach for key products and services; - set out what key human resources are required for the project and which of those resources are already in place; and - how you will acquire any required human resources in the time available For the operation stage the response should: - Describe the specific business change activities you will undertake to embed the operation of the new solution within your organisation's processes. You MUST support your response with a project plan in a PDF attachment. Your project plan must align with the dates for Implementation and Operation specified in the guidance. You MUST provide a Risk Log as a PDF attachment. The Risk Log must describe the risks and their impacts, a measure of the probability and impact, and mitigation steps that will be taken. As a minimum, it must address the risks related to delivery dependencies on other and to elements of the project such as legal agreements etc. that have not yet been put in place. Applications that score less than 2 marks for this response will be eliminated from the competition.			
5. APPLICANT CONTRIBUTION PERCENTAGE The minimum applicant contribution percentage to implementation costs is 30%. Higher applicant contributions are assigned higher scores. There is no minimum score for this question.	Assessment		25%

Section 8: Project Monitoring

The timeline in section 1 sets out the dates relevant to the activities and deliverables described below.

Delivery and Financial Monitoring

Belfast City Council will monitor project finance and delivery performance quarterly to ensure appropriate oversight and accountability. It will conduct more frequent check-ins to address any challenges and support the project's success and adherence to the planned timeline.

Successful applicants must make a reasonable time and information available for these reviews.

Benefits Monitoring

Belfast City Council is required to provide project status and benefits realisation reporting on the Belfast 5GIR programme to DSIT on a quarterly basis and more regular updates on a bi-weekly basis.

The Grant recipient and Belfast City Council will agree project-specific benefit KPIs applicable to their project and use cases e.g. economic benefits (such as productivity gains, cost savings etc), efficiencies, welfare improvements (safety improvements etc), security benefits etc. and the schedule for reporting against the KPIs.

The Grant Recipient will also be expected to contribute to sharing knowledge, generated from their project, with the 5G ecosystem and provide Belfast City Council with any relevant data to support the quarterly reporting to DSIT including:

- number and type of use cases deployed
- number of new private wireless networks deployed as part of the project and if they continue operation at the end of the project
- number and type of companies/organisations engaged in the project
- any alternative funding generated by the project
- any new jobs created through the project
- number of staff trained
- knowledge dissemination activities (such as workshops and events)
- any other communication activities e.g. PR

Lessons learned tracker

The Grant Recipient will contribute to a lessons learned log which will record the lessons that emerge from the Belfast 5G Innovation Region programme and projects.

This includes lessons specifically for your project as well as those that may be relevant to the broader ecosystem, Belfast City Council or DSIT.

Lessons captured will help to inform future iterations of project work, share learnings across the industry and inform policy decisions within Belfast City Council or DSIT.

Case study

Grant recipients must develop a project case study which can be published by Belfast City Council, DSIT and UKTIN to share learnings and insights on use cases with the wider industry.

A case study template will be provided by Belfast City Council.

The case study will include:

- Project summary
- Objectives
The business challenge addressed
- Solution
The technical solution and how it was implemented
Assessment of technical and operational viability
- Commercial arrangements
Governance process
Outline business case
- Outcomes
Actual costs and benefits and difference from forecast
Benefits
Lessons learned
- Extensibility
Risks and mitigations
Extensibility and replicability of use case, including obstacles to further development.

Section 9: Policy and Programme Context

Policy Context

The following is an edited version of DSIT's [5G Innovation Regions Competition Application Guidance](#).

DSIT's mission is to deliver stronger growth, better jobs and bold discoveries, including through innovation and investment in advanced technologies; these priorities can only be delivered with world-class digital infrastructure.

The UK's telecoms networks provide the infrastructure that underpins our economy, from the way we do business and access public services, to enjoying entertainment and staying in touch. By building world-class, secure digital infrastructure, we can create a competitive and innovative digital economy and boost investment in infrastructure, research and development. We want places and communities across the UK to share in the benefits of good connectivity, enriching lives and driving local growth.

Advanced wireless technologies will be key harness digital transformation to build a more inclusive, competitive and innovative digital economy. 5G in particular has the potential to unlock significant economic and social benefits for all of the UK. As a foundational technology for other technologies, including augmented and virtual reality, AI and machine learning, 5G will be key in helping sectors across the economy maintain their international competitiveness.

Future telecommunications is one of the five critical technologies identified in the [Science and Technology Framework](#). The advancement and development of 5G networks and technologies will be a crucial element of strengthening and achieving strategic advantage in this prioritised area of science and technology application.

DSIT published [the UK Wireless Infrastructure Strategy](#) in April 2023, which sets out the strategic framework for the development, deployment and adoption of 5G and future networks. It articulates a clear vision for how advanced wireless infrastructure can become an integral part of the fabric of the UK's economy and society by 2030, and how we want people, business and public services across the UK to realise the full benefits of 5G and other advanced wireless connectivity.

5G Innovation Regions will receive funding to lead on delivering the Government's vision for communities across the UK to take full advantage of the transformative effect that advanced wireless connectivity and digital technologies can provide.

5G Innovation Regions will:

- *Drive economic growth in places by supporting places in adopting wireless connectivity for services based around local opportunities for growth.*
- *Accelerate commercial investment in 5G and other advanced wireless technologies by aggregating and demonstrating demand.*
- *Foster the emergent 5G ecosystem by enabling "learning by doing".*

5G Innovation Regions are part of DSIT's work leading the Government's approach to driving telecoms innovation, ensuring more secure and resilient networks and a more diverse and competitive supply chain. (Further detail is given in Programme Context).

DSIT 5G Innovation Regions Programme Context

The following is reproduced from the DSIT's [5G Innovation Regions Competition Application Guidance](#).

The adoption of 'smart' 5G connectivity and services in places will provide huge economic benefits, with substantial productivity gains. Many of the economic and societal benefits of advanced wireless connectivity will be realised at the local level.

Local and regional authorities can play a crucial role in facilitating the deployment of 5G and leading adoption and innovation in public services, as well as creating the right conditions for new investment and growing local businesses.

Through the Wireless Infrastructure Strategy [DSIT] are investing £40 million to establish 5G Innovation Regions across the UK. Funding will enable communities and businesses throughout the UK to unlock opportunities across the digital economy utilising advanced wireless connectivity.

Tailoring their approach to local needs and existing strengths, 5G Innovation Regions will promote the use of services enabled by the development and scaled adoption of 5G and other advanced wireless technologies in businesses and in the delivery of public services, to generate value and growth at the local level.

5G Innovation Regions should target key sectors with high potential for local economic growth and productivity gains. These will vary by area but should include: public services (including "smart communities" applications); rural industries (including agri-tech and food production); transport and logistics; advanced manufacturing; and creative industries. 5G Innovation Regions are not designed to increase wireless coverage, but rather to bring together, at scale, multiple use cases within a 5G Innovation Region. The outcome of this is to demonstrate the benefits of accelerated 5G adoption.

Supported by the Wireless Infrastructure Strategy, 5G Innovation Regions will build on the learnings of the [5G Testbeds and Trials \(5GTT\) Programme](#) to drive innovative applications powered by 5G and other advanced wireless connectivity from proof of concept to widespread adoption. It is our ambition that projects will demonstrate the scalability, replicability, and sustainability of 5G use cases across key sectors of the economy, creating 5G Innovation Regions across the UK.

Belfast 5G Innovation Region Programme Context

Belfast City Council secured £5.1 million funding grant from DSIT to establish a Belfast 5G Innovation Region (5GIR).

The Belfast 5GIR programme is working with businesses, academia, and the public sector to support the adoption of 5G and other advanced wireless networks across the Belfast Region.

The programme is delivering three key strands:

- Five 5G anchor projects with Queen's University, Ulster University, Belfast Harbour, Translink, and Belfast City Council
- 5G funding competition to drive 5G adoption
- 5G Enablement Programme to foster NI's advanced wireless ecosystem including the development of a [5G Adoption Toolkit](#).

5G projects funded to date

The Belfast 5GIR programme has, to date, funded eight 5G projects. Three private 5G networks have been deployed by Belfast Harbour, Queen's University Belfast's Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre, and Studio Ulster to support use cases. An additional private 5G network is being deployed at Belfast City Council's city centre offices in summer 2025. Applicants may wish to consider opportunities to collaborate with these existing projects, or to propose entirely new projects.

- 5G Port**
 Belfast Harbour deployed a private 5G network and is using digital technologies including IoT devices, sensors, and infrared and 3D cameras to accelerate the digitalisation of port operations including automatic bulk freight handling, safety improvements, air quality monitoring, and in-car connectivity for Belfast Harbour Police and port staff.
- 5G Film Anywhere**
 Ulster University's Studio Ulster and Advanced Wireless Technologies Lab have deployed 5G-powered remote virtual production to connect film, television, and screen production teams, filming in remote locations, to the Studio Ulster virtual production studio in real-time to accelerate screen production processes in the industry.
- 5G Construction**
 Queen's University is harnessing 5G, Building Information Modelling (BIM), Digital Twin technology and AR (Augmented Reality) to support the design and construction of a £100 million, state-of-the-art Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre at Global Point Business Park in Newtownabbey.
- 5G Transport**
 NI's public transport provider, Translink is exploiting advanced wireless connectivity to enable enhanced operations and network planning along its Glider bus routes. This will further improve services, maximise and optimise resources and ensure continued development of high quality, sustainable and attractive Glider services.
- 5G Public Services**
 Belfast City Council is delivering a 5G-powered project to support the management of its office buildings including dynamic occupancy and energy management, decarbonisation and environmental management.
- 5G Smart Logistics Hub**
 Logistics company Manfreight is using Belfast Harbour's private 5G network and digital technologies including connected cameras, machine learning, and scanning and Push-to-Talk technology, to enhance its chilled distribution hub operations at Belfast Harbour by optimising the movement and storage of trailers and product across its warehouse facility.
- 5G Smart Trailer Yard**
 Stena Line is using Belfast Harbour's private 5G network and digital technologies including connected cameras, Push-to-Talk and advanced tracking technologies to deliver more efficient

operations at its freight trailer yard.

- **5G Virtual Reality**

Immersive tech studio Retinize is harnessing 5G to enhance its Animotive virtual reality platform, bringing advanced motion capture technology to educational institutions and production companies.

For more information on the use cases and wider programme, visit www.smartbelfast.city/belfast-5g-innovation-region

Section 10: Additional Information

Security Guidance

Applicants should be aware of requirements of the Telecommunications (Security) Act 2021 which introduced duties on providers of public electronic communications networks and services to identify and reduce the risk of security compromises and prepare for the possibility of their occurrence.

The Act also places duties on providers to prevent, remedy or mitigate any adverse effects of security compromises. These overarching security duties are intended to provide an effective and enduring basis for protecting networks and services.

Applicants should consider the cyber security of any new assets deployed. Applicants are therefore encouraged to read and implement the relevant Secure Connected Places guidance at [Secure connected places playbook - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/secure-connected-places-playbook) which provides advice to set a strong cyber security foundation. The Playbook is complementary to existing NCSC cyber security guidance such as the Connected Places Cyber Security Principles at [Connected Places Cyber Security Principles - NCSC.GOV.UK](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/connected-places-cyber-security-principles), a further source of technical guidance which applicants are also encouraged to read and implement.

Notices

This document is issued in text format to organisations wishing to make an application to the competition. Should you require access to this document in another format (e.g. Braille, large font or audio) please contact us at innovationfunding@belfastcity.gov.uk or in writing to:

City Innovation Office
Belfast City Council
Belfast City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS

We reserve the right to undertake a detailed financial and technical appraisal of each applicant and their proposal and for this process to continue up to the award of any grant funding. Any such appraisal will be conducted in line with government policy at the time of assessment. Further appraisal may continue if required through the duration of the grant funding period.

No representation, warranty or undertaking, express or implied, is or will be given by Belfast City Council or any of its agents or advisers with respect to the information contained in the competition material, including with respect to its accuracy or completeness.

Information provided in response to this document, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

If you want the information that you provide to be treated confidentially, please be aware that, in accordance with FOIA, public sector organisations are required to comply with a statutory code of practice which deals, among other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you wish that information to be treated confidentially. If we receive a request for disclosure of that information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot

give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. Any such requests should be sent to innovationfunding@belfastcity.gov.uk

Belfast City Council will process your personal data in accordance with DPA and GDPR and, in most circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

All applicants are solely responsible for all their costs and expenses incurred in connection with this selection process at all stages. Under no circumstances will Belfast City Council be liable for any costs or expenses borne by or on behalf of the applicant or any party associated with this selection process.

We reserve the right to cancel the competition at any point. We will accept no liability for any losses caused by any cancellation of this competition nor any decision not to award funding as a result of the competition.

At any time prior to the deadline for receipt of proposals, we reserve the right to amend, add to or withdraw all or any part of the competition material at any time during the competition. Any such amendments, additions, or removals will be identified in the documentation on the competition web page.

Answers must be in English. Applicants should note that where any supplementary documents are not published in English, certified translations into English must be provided with the proposal (if applicable).

Proposals should remain valid for a period of 120 days from the competition closing date. A proposal valid for a shorter period may be rejected.

We reserve the right to discuss, for the purpose of clarification, any aspect of a proposal with the relevant applicant prior to the award of grant funding.