

OurTech Challenge

Challenge Handbook

OurTech Challenge

The OurTech Challenge focuses on supporting research teams to address the challenge of enhancing the connections between government, communities, and people. OurTech refers to co-created technology-based innovations that empower citizens and communities to connect and engage with local and national government to address societal challenges.

Why Apply?

The OurTech Challenge provides academic researchers an opportunity to work with societal stakeholders to address some of the most pressing issues related to how connections are made, valued and sustained in a digital society. It focuses on addressing the challenge of enhancing the connections between government, communities and people.

Following successful review of applications, teams will receive funding of up to €200k and training to accelerate development of their idea. A number of teams will then be selected as finalists and receive up to €500k to further develop their idea before an overall winner is selected for the €1M Prize Award. In addition to funding, teams are provided with training and mentoring to support acceleration of an idea and to demonstrate how it can solve real-world problems. Participation has the potential to create significant career development and collaborative opportunities.

Who Can Apply?

Postdoctoral, early career or established researchers may lead teams in the OurTech Challenge. Teams will consist of a minimum of two academic researchers with complementary skillsets. At the application or during the first phase of the award, teams must also include a third member who will bring specific knowledge or experience of the societal challenge the team will address.



How To Apply?

Complete a short 6-page form that asks you to describe your team, the specific challenge or problem you will address, the solution you propose and how it will create impact. Register and upload your application to SFI's grant management system before the deadline.

Teams should note that they will also be required to upload their CVs and other supporting documentation described in the call document.

What Are We Looking For?

The OurTech Challenge focuses on supporting research teams to address the challenge of enhancing the connections between government, communities, and people. The challenge provides researchers with the opportunity to explore how digital technologies could enhance government processes and functions and enable new ways to strengthen the connections between people, their communities and with government (both local and national). The OurTech Challenge will support several national strategies relating to public service innovation and digital transformation and, by demonstration of impact potential, inform national strategies and policies on how our society can be more resilient.

Find out more about the varied and diverse teams we have funded under other challenges on the SFI website: www.sfi.ie/challenges



Key Dates



November 7th, 2022 – Call opens for applications



February 10th, 2023 (13:00 Dublin Local Time) – Application Deadline



April 2023 – Successful teams notified

More About the OurTech Challenge

The OurTech Challenge will support several national strategies (e.g., Making Innovation Real, Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy, Our Public Service 2020, AI - Here for Good, Connecting Government 2030 and Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework) relating to digital transformation in, for example, the public service, and more broadly around the application of AI for societal good. It is envisaged that the challenge will, by demonstration of impact potential, inform national strategies and policies on how our society can be more resilient.

Areas of Interest

Applications are encouraged to focus on the challenge of strengthening the connections between people, communities, and government based on principles of trust, privacy and security. Under this challenge, areas of interest include (along with illustrative examples of high-level research questions):

- ▲ **Knowledge, Learning & Skills** – How can access to scientific knowledge and data be made more accessible and equitable? How can remote learning opportunities be made more accessible and impactful?
- ▲ **Trust, Privacy and Security** – How can digital technologies build trust between people? Can the effects of misinformation be prevented? How can digital technologies ensure privacy while sharing more data? How can cyber-physical systems be made more robust and secure?
- ▲ **Health Systems and Health Care** – How can digital technologies enhance the efficiency of delivery and effectiveness of health care? How can digital technologies allow for more holistic approaches to managing physical and mental wellbeing?

- ▲ **Data-Driven Public Policy** – How can digital technologies be used to develop and promote inclusive, sustainable and ambitious national policies? Can digital technologies use data to assist in the design of more efficient and cohesive public policy?
- ▲ **Government Processes and Public Services** – How can digital technologies transform the delivery of government processes and services? How can public services be co-created with and realise new value for citizens?
- ▲ **Civic Engagement and Social Connections** – How can we strengthen engagement between citizens, communities and governments for societal good? How can digital technologies be used to increase the quality of social connections between people and communities?

Digital Responsibility

Leveraging data and digital technologies has transformative impact potential to address some of the most pressing societal challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainability. However, the ubiquity and power of digital technologies requires that creators and users act responsibly to ensure they are utilised in an ethical way that reflects values such as safety, fairness and inclusion, transparency, and privacy. In this context, digital responsibility requires that ethics issues be considered, monitored and managed across the full life cycle of a digital asset or system.

Applications submitted to the Our Tech Challenge should consider the ethical issues associated with digital assets or systems proposed and ensure that appropriate measures are in place to identify, monitor and manage risks across the full life cycle of the digital asset or system.



Challenge research is an approach to research funding that provides participants with an opportunity to accelerate progress toward delivering tangible impact from research. In addition to funding, researchers participating in the National Challenge Fund will be provided with significant training and mentoring to support them in this process.

Further Information

For all information on the OurTech Challenge, please visit the website: sfi.ie/funding/funding-calls/ourtech-challenge/. Applicants are advised that they should consult the call document for all details and eligibility criteria for the call in advance of preparing an application. For any further queries, please contact the SFI Challenge Team at challenges@sfi.ie