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## APPLICATION GUIDANCE FOR DIGITALCITY ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

Before applying for a place on the Accelerator Programme, please ensure that you meet all of the essential criteria by referring to the checklist below. All applications are scored and the level of grant offered based on how well you meet the criteria and the nature of the support required during the shortlisting and interview processes. Please ensure that you answer all questions fully as one-word answers or unclear responses will not score highly.

We would also encourage you to read the FAQ section which provides further information around eligibility and the grant funding element of the Programme.

We are happy to discuss your potential application with you prior to submission if you are uncertain of anything.

### Eligibility Checklist:

#### Essential

Tees Valley-based digital or tech business

Registered as a Ltd company or as a CIC with Companies House

Actively trading up to 18 months

Has a business bank account

Has a company website

Looking to grow the business (not a sole trader)

#### Desirable

Using digital technology in an innovative way and/or creating solutions to wider sector problems digitally

Office/business premises

Has an established customer base and is invoicing for work on a regular basis

Has a marketing strategy and clearly defined route to market

Has firm plans in place to employ new staff in the next 18 - 24 months

*(Please note that we will not accept applications from individuals or businesses that have been through one of our similar Accelerator Programmes in the last five years)*

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### GENERAL FAQ'S:

**1) Am I eligible for a place on the DigitalCity Accelerator Programme?**

The Accelerator Programme is aimed at Tees Valley-based digital/tech SMES who have been actively trading up to 18 months. If you don't meet these criteria you will not be eligible for a place on this Programme. Tees Valley-based SMEs trading longer than 18 months may be eligible for other support from DigitalCity, though not grant funding. Please call us for details.

**2) Would I meet the eligibility requirements if I was to relocate to the Tees Valley?**

If your registered company address is currently outside of the Tees Valley region but you are going to relocate then you might be considered for a place on the Programme. However, you would need to convince the Interview Panel that you were fully committed to establishing your business in the Tees Valley. Should you be offered a place on the Programme and a grant, it would be subject to you demonstrating that you had relocated the business.

**3) My home address is in North Yorkshire but my Company is Tees Valley. Am I eligible?** Yes. It is the company that has to be registered within the Tees Valley.

**4) Can you define what you mean by a 'digital/tech' company?**

Typically the businesses we support have digital technology at the heart of what they do. There is normally an element of digital innovation in their service or product. If applying for a place on this Programme, ask yourself this: does the service or product you are offering your customers provide a digital or tech solution to wider sector problems? For example, does it make anything work better, faster or cheaper? The most successful businesses we have supported since 2004 have been working at the forefront of digital technology, launching exciting new products or introducing new ways of working. Is what you're doing primarily digital and does it have the 'wow factor'? If so, we would be interested in receiving an application from you.

**5) What type of companies aren't eligible?**

The businesses we support on this Programme must be offering a commercial B2B (business to business) service or product that is digital in nature. We are not able to work with exclusively business to consumer companies such as retailers. Typically this Programme does not support creative industries or arts-based businesses such as digital artists or performers who draw the majority of their income from funding. Businesses supported must be a commercial entity and the service offered should be primarily a digital or tech one.

**6) Can I work part-time and attend the Accelerator Programme?**

No. The Programme is aimed at Business Owner/Directors who are working full time in their company and want to grow their business with our support. We expect 100% commitment from those on the Programme, including attending all of the

workshops. We would be happy to signpost you to other support services if you are at an earlier stage of your business journey.

**7) I am a student can I apply to attend this Programme?**

No. As in point 6, the Programme is aimed at Business Owner/Directors who are working full time in their business. We expect 100% commitment from those on the Programme, including attending all of the workshops. If you are a Teesside University student in the early stages of your business, we would encourage you to speak to our colleagues in Launchpad: <https://startupteesside.startupinfohub.co.uk/> You would be very welcome to apply for a place on our Programme once you have completed your studies.

**8) I'm not a Teesside University graduate. Will this affect my application?**

You don't have to be a graduate of Teesside University to be eligible, however you are asked this on the Application Form for internal purposes only. You are welcome to apply (as a graduate or non-graduate) if your business is a registered digital/tech SME trading up to 18 months and based in the Tees Valley.

**9) I've been on a DigitalCity Accelerator Programme before. Can I apply again?**

Not if it was within the last five years. In certain circumstances we may consider applications from successful serial entrepreneurs. If this applies to you, you would need to demonstrate the value that this programme could offer your new business.

**10) Can I set up a business to apply to attend the Accelerator Programme?**

We will consider applications from newly created companies, though you must already be trading (evidence of this will be required) to be offered a place on the Programme. Applications to the Programme are highly competitive. It is quite likely that your application would score low compared to those businesses that have been trading up to 18 months.

**11) I don't have a business bank account. Is this a problem?**

We are unable to accept applications from companies that don't have a business bank account. The reasons for this are twofold: 1) The Programme is specifically designed for early stage businesses that are already trading. 2) We cannot pay the grant in to a personal bank account.

**12) I've been trading for over 18 months. Can I apply to join the Programme and access the grant?**

No. You must be trading up to 18 months to meet the eligibility criteria for this Programme. There is other support available from DigitalCity for you, but not grant funding. Please contact us for more information.

**13) Will I be given feedback if my application is unsuccessful? Can I apply again if it is?**

All unsuccessful applicants are given written feedback outlining the reasons for the decisions made by the Shortlisting or Interview Panels. In most cases applications are

unsuccessful because they do not demonstrate that they meet the eligibility criteria or because the business was not quite ready to receive funding. Applicants are welcome to meet the Programme Manager to receive further feedback. This feedback could involve signposting you to further support agencies or offering you some coaching or mentoring with a view to you re-submitting on another occasion.

**14) Who would own the IP on anything I created during my time on the Accelerator Programme?**

You would own any Intellectual Property on any product, process or service created by you on the Programme.

**15) I really need help to set my company up. Is this the right Programme for me?**

No. We don't work with businesses who are at the pre start-up stage. If you are a current student, member of staff or graduate of Teesside University and wish to start-up, we would advise you to contact Launchpad [www.startupteesside.co](http://www.startupteesside.co) who are situated in the Victoria Building. They provide an excellent support service for all Teesside University-based start-ups.

## **FAQS RELATING TO THE GRANT:**

**1) I meet all of the eligibility requirements. What amount of grant would I qualify for?**

Applications are scored during both the shortlisting and interview processes. The level of grant offered will depend on how strong your business proposal is and how closely you meet the essential and desirable criteria. The maximum grant offered is £5,000. If applying for a grant, we expect you to clearly itemise and justify all of your business costs so that we can decide on the grant amount we offer you. The panel will take into account how the grant will be spent to ensure it relates to the plans and needs of the business. For example, we will not award grants for general marketing costs if the business is in need of technical support first.

**2) If I am awarded a grant what will I be able to spend it on?**

The grant is provided solely for business related expenses which we will specify and agree with you at the start of the Programme. This will not include living expenses or salary. All expenditure must be evidenced by receipts and bank statements and be spent within the agreed timescale. Any money not evidenced in the correct manner must be returned to DigitalCity.

**3) If I am awarded a grant, will I be able to buy equipment with it?**

Yes. The grant is awarded for business related expenses which includes equipment. However, we will expect you to justify why you require equipment in your application. All purchases must be evidenced by three value for money quotations and evidence must be detailed on your bank statement. You must demonstrate how the grant has been used for the agreed purpose and that any assets purchased are retained for their economic lifetime, which should be a minimum of three years.

**4) Can I access the grant without attending the workshops?**

Unfortunately not. If your motivation for applying to the Accelerator Programme is solely to access grant funding, then this is not the right project for you. We expect 100% commitment from the businesses on the Programme which means attending all of the workshop and mentoring sessions. We are happy to advise you of sources of funding offered by other providers.