

## REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2547

### Title: Digital Transformation 4 Regions project

#### Executive summary:

In June 2021, the GLA Smart Cities team was part of a successful joint EU funding bid to participate in the Digital Transformation for Regions project. The project aims to develop a challenge-based innovation platform to enable artificial intelligence (AI) and big data solutions for the public sector and public services. The GLA will: help design and develop the platform, so that it addresses known use cases in London; and benefit from peer-to-peer learning on the use of AI and big data.

The total expenditure by the GLA is expected to be up to €66,661 (~£56,781). The GLA can claim for 75 per cent of its eligible costs, which means up to €49,995.75 (~£42,851) in direct funding from the EU will be available. The GLA is required to provide an in-kind contribution (GLA person hours) of up to €16,665.25 (~£14,193).

#### Decision:

That the Executive Director of Strategy and Communication approves the GLA's:

- acceptance of €49,995.75 (~£42,851) of EU grant funding as a contribution for the GLA's cost of participating in the Digital Transformation for Regions project
- expenditure of up to €49,995.75 (~£42,851) on staff time and associated costs of participating in the required events and workshops
- use of up to the equivalent of €16,665.25 (~£14,193) in GLA person hours to meet the requirement to provide a 25 per cent in-kind contribution.

#### AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

**Name:** Niran Mothada

**Position:** Executive Director – Strategy and Communications

**Signature:**



**Date:**

16 August 2021

## PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

### Decision required – supporting report

#### 1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The GLA Smart Cities team was part of a successful joint EU funding bid led by Regione Emilia-Romagna (Italy) concerning the Digital Transformation for Regions project. The GLA was approached to join the consortium in May of 2020.
- 1.2. The project aims to: develop a challenge-based innovation platform enabling AI and big data solutions for the public sector and public services; and facilitate knowledge-sharing and capacity-building among partners in the use of big data and AI. The project is led by Regione Emilia-Romagna, with 14 private and public-sector partners (six regional administrations, two European networks, two regional research and service centres, and two private companies). The project will be based on the real-world needs of this network of regions and will be supported by the technical partners.
- 1.3. The project will be organised into seven work packages. The GLA will not be responsible for the coordination of any of these packages but will be involved in their delivery. The GLA will provide advice and local knowledge to inform the design of the platform service; and contribute specific city ‘challenges’ that can be shared on the platform. The GLA will also contribute to peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing, and benefit from dedicated capacity-building around the use of AI and big data in public administration. The work packages the GLA will be specifically involved with are:
  - **WP2: co-design of the platform and its services**, including a landscape analysis of big data and AI solutions, models, and data; and the co-design (with stakeholders) of the platform and services
  - **WP4: mutual learning and capacity-building** to develop a knowledge base and offer mutual learning and training activities
  - **WP5: delivering innovative solutions** to share knowledge among stakeholders, and to carry out the development of innovative solutions through hackathons
  - **WP6: evaluation, exploitation and sustainability** to evaluate the take-up and satisfaction of the project platform and services by stakeholders; and to develop a sustainability plan, as well as policy recommendations and lessons learned for the scalability and transferability of project outcomes
  - **WP7: communication and dissemination** to spread information on the aims, features, activities and the results of the project.
- 1.4. The consortium of partners has secured a total of €1,133,333 (~£965,247) (including €850,000 (~£723,897) of direct EU funds) to deliver this project. The total expenditure by the GLA is expected to be up to €66,661 (~£56,781), of which the GLA is permitted to claim 75 per cent of its costs (€49,995.75 (~£42,851) in direct funding from the EU). An in-kind contribution (in GLA person hours) to the value of up to €16,665.25 (~£14,193) is required as a condition of the funding.
- 1.5. The award of this funding is timely as it supports London’s next steps in developing smart and digital technology by a systematic, international exploration of the use of AI in the public sector. The project will help our work to foster public trust in emerging technologies through the Emerging Technology Charter, support the increased use of green technologies that are needed to achieve Net Zero, and support open calls for the tech sector to meet the challenges that London and other cities face. It allows the GLA to build connections and learn with and from other cities exploring similar issues regarding AI and new technologies.

- 1.6. A kick-off meeting is planned for the end of September, where further details about the tasks required to participate in the project will be shared with the GLA.

## **2. Objectives and expected outcomes**

2.1 The specific objectives of the project are to:

- raise awareness and knowledge about AI and big data applications for public services
- stimulate peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing among regions
- increase and enlarge policy discussions on topics of specific public interest
- serve as a hub for a wide variety of data-related topics, such as open data, smart cities, digital skills
- foster innovation through practical exercises, including two hackathons, based on the concrete needs of public administrations and citizens.

2.2 The wider outcomes from this project are: a better understanding of how AI and big data can be harnessed and used ethically and securely in the delivery of public-sector services; and fostering relationships with key European regions.

## **3. Equality comments**

- 3.1. The project aims to address exclusion and equality issues arising from the use of AI and big data – for instance, the perpetuation of inherent racial biases in some large data sets. Involvement in the Digital Transformation for Regions project will enable skill-sharing and collaboration with six EU regions to ensure that the public-sector use of AI and big data meets the requirements of the public sector equality duty. In addition, GLA involvement with the project will be guided by the requirements set out in the Mayor's Emerging Technology Charter.
- 3.2. The project will focus on needs, not on technologies – taking a user-centred approach to design and development, with concrete-use cases that address problems identified in the community.

## **4. Other considerations**

- 4.1 The project directly contributes to the delivery of the Mayor's key strategic objectives of the Smarter London Roadmap. This aims to solve London's challenges by bringing together people, technology and data.
- 4.2 No personal data will be collected or used as part of this project.
- 4.3 There are no conflicts of interest in the drafting of this form, nor any others that may undermine the award of this work.

## **5. Financial comments**

- 5.1 Approval is sought for receipt and expenditure of income of up to €49,995 of grant funding for the GLA's participation in the Digital Transformation for Regions project (and staff time in kind).
- 5.2 Approval is sought for a GLA permanent staff member's hours, up to the value of €16,665, to be contributed in kind as a condition of the funding.

- 5.3 The expenditure and income will be funded from the Smart Cities team 2021-22 budget held within the City Intelligence Unit. Funding for future years' expenditure will be subject to the annual budget-setting process and cannot be guaranteed.

## 6. Legal comments

- 6.1 The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions requested of the Director concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further or which are facilitative of, conducive or incidental to the promotion of economic development and wealth creation in Greater London; and in formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers have complied with the GLA's related statutory duties to:

- pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
- consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom
- consult with appropriate bodies.

- 6.2 In taking the decisions requested, the Director must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty – namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment) and persons who do not share it (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Director should have particular regard to section 3 of this report.

- 6.3 Should the Director be minded to make the decisions sought, officers must ensure that:

- no reliance is placed upon the funding until the lead body and coordinator, Regione Emilia-Romagna and the EU Commission (as applicable), are under a legally binding obligation to provide the funding, the GLA having entered into and executed such agreements as are required in this regard
- to the extent that proposed expenditure concerns the:
  - award of grant funding, such funding is awarded on a fair and transparent basis in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code; and appropriate funding agreements are entered into and executed by the GLA and counterparties before commencement of the same
  - purchase of works, services or supplies, those works, services or supplies must be procured by Transport for London Procurement in accordance with the GLA's Contracts and Funding Code; and appropriate contracts must be entered into and executed by the GLA and counterparties before commencement of the same
- they follow all applicable GLA HR procedures and protocols in respect of the staffing elements of the proposals.

## 7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. The GLA will be involved in meetings, webinars and learning events as scheduled by the project lead.

Activity	Timeline
Signing of grant agreement	September 2021
Delivery start date	September 2021
Project closure	February 2023

**Appendices and supporting papers:**

None

## Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

## Part 1 - Deferral

**Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO**

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

## Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

**Is there a part 2 form – NO**

## ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to  
confirm the  
following (✓)

### Drafting officer:

Julia Thomson has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

### Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Jeremy Skinner has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

### Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

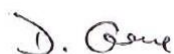
### Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on 16 August 2021.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

**Signature**



**Date**

16 August 2021