

## News release

### *Strong interest in Legal Access Challenge as collaboration group takes off*

08 July 2019

With just over one month to go to the application deadline on 11 August, the Legal Access Challenge has confirmed that it has already received more than 85 expressions of interests in applying for funding, including from entrepreneurs, legal professionals, technologists, law schools and charities.

A core part of the eighteen-month programme is to bring people together to help build new networks and opportunities for collaboration. The aim is to build a growing community of innovators seeking to use technology to widen access to legal services and to identify any barriers to their success.

A 'Legal Access Challenge Slack group' has been set up which is already supporting 80 members, from a range of backgrounds, to connect and collaborate online. More than 500 people have attended events in London, Birmingham and Leeds promoting the Challenge, and offering people the chance to get involved.

The challenge, which sees us working in partnership with Nesta Challenges, is also providing £250,000 funding to accelerate the most promising new ideas that use technology to help more people access legal services when they need them. The expert judging panel for the Challenge has also been announced. It will be made up of:

- Anna Bradley, SRA Chair (judging panel Chair)
- Juliet Oliver, SRA General Counsel and Executive Director Case Direction
- Karl Chapman - Strategic Advisor, EY Riverview Law and Non-Executive Director, Kim Technologies
- Julie Bishop – Director, Law Centres Network
- Sidonie Kingsmill – Customer Director, HM Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS)
- Roger Smith – Solicitor, academic and writer on legal technology
- Matthew Briggs – founder and former Chief Executive of the Law Superstore

**Anna Bradley, SRA Chair**, said: "We want the Challenge to move things on and open up legal services. This is about much more than simply offering funding to those with good ideas. We know that innovators need



support and networks to turn their ideas into reality, so we are creating those networks for them. It's all part of building the momentum that will further encourage innovation in legal services.

"Whether you're a charity with a good idea or a tech firm looking to partner with a legal expert, I'd encourage you to get involved."

**Chris Gorst, Head of Better Markets, Nesta Challenges**, commented:

"From the interest we've already seen in the Legal Access Challenge, it's clear just how much appetite there is to bring innovation to legal services for consumers and small businesses. The UK has every opportunity to lead the way here, just as it has with fintech innovation over the past decade. The innovation ecosystem for consumer legal services is still at an early stage and we want the challenge to help kickstart its development. We encourage those with ideas to join the community that is building around the challenge."

## *Note to editors*

Nesta is a global innovation foundation with a mission to spark and shape new ideas to improve how the world works for everyone. Within Nesta, Nesta Challenges uses challenge prizes to stimulate innovative solutions to some of the biggest challenges we face.

Challenge prizes are a simple but powerful idea. A problem or opportunity is identified, the challenge is publicised and rewards are offered to those who can deliver the best solutions. Nesta Challenges' Better Markets team works with regulators, policymakers and innovative enterprises to make markets more competitive and open. We advise regulators and policymakers how regulatory reforms and targeted public investment programmes can work together to achieve greater impact.

The Challenge has three aims:

1. accelerating the development of products, services and platforms that will help individuals and SMEs understand and resolve their legal problems with greater ease;
2. developing a community of people and organisations with a shared interest in implementing the use of technology to improve access to legal support who will share knowledge and ideas to improve customer outcomes in the legal services market;
3. and learning whether there are regulatory barriers to the development and adoption of mass market legal technology solutions and, if so, what adaptations to our approach might reduce these barriers.

The Challenge has been made possible by a grant from the £10m Regulators' Pioneer Fund launched by The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and administered by Innovate UK. The fund enables UK regulators to develop innovation-enabling approaches to emerging technologies and unlock the long-term economic opportunities identified in the government's modern Industrial Strategy.