Education Endowment Foundation

October 2026

Product team to develop the Alpha and Beta of the EEF's Digital Public Service and support the incubation of an agile product culture

Request for Proposals

Introduction

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is an independent charity dedicated to breaking the link between family income and educational achievement. We support schools, colleges and early years settings to use evidence to improve teaching and learning and transform outcomes for economically disadvantaged children and young people.

To deliver our mission, **we need to do more than publish evidence. We need to support teachers and leaders to combine research with professional judgement to make decisions that improve outcomes in their settings.** This is at the heart of our new 10-year strategy.

We are building a Digital Public Service to turn that ambition into a reality. This is much more than a technology refresh. Our ambition is to use the new platform to drive active engagement among our target users and support measurable changes in behaviour.

Products will be designed to create a continuous feedback loop: learning from how people use them, testing what works and improving the service over time. This commission is the first critical step in that wider transformation of our technology, engagement model and ways of working.

This commission should deliver two things:

1. A working, user-centered digital product that helps educators find, understand and apply evidence when they need it.
2. The capabilities and product culture to deliver an effective service that the EEF can own, sustain and improve.

We are looking for proposals from agencies, collectives, partnerships and consortia who are well positioned to do this by providing an embedded multidisciplinary product team.

Supporting the transition

We are seeking an established, agile, multidisciplinary product team to work alongside us throughout 2027. The task: build, test and develop the Digital Public Service, while helping us establish the capabilities to take it forward.

Building on our initial discovery work, we plan to develop an Alpha early in 2027 and test it rapidly with real users. This will test the end-to-end user experience and the technology, operating model and content creation workflow needed to support it. What we learn will shape the next stage of development.

We then plan to develop the Alpha into a Beta, alongside recruiting the in-house team that will own and run the service. Our goal is to migrate our entire audience to the new service by the start of the next school year and complete the transition by the end of November 2027.

We are using the language of Digital Public Service as well as Discovery, Alpha and Beta to describe the approach we expect to take. However, it's worth noting that we whilst we expect to take inspiration from the Government Digital Service's Service Design Manual, we are an independent charity and not part of the Department for Education and so are not constrained by the more rigid obligations of a government department.

What we are looking for

We want to bring in a lean, multidisciplinary product team that can work collaboratively with our in-house teams.

The embedded product team

Our expectation is that the embedded team would include individuals with the following skillsets:

- Frontend and backend product engineering
- UX/UI, design and user research
- DevOps, database management and basic cloud infrastructure
- AI skills including:
    - Use of engineering tooling like Claude Code and Cursor
    - Prototyping using tools such as Lovable and Figma Make
    - The expertise to build AI infrastructure such as MCP servers, skills, plugins, knowledge graphs, moderation services and LLM-as-a-judge
    - Evaluation/Evals, ensuring accuracy and minimising overclaims and hallucinations

The team is likely to be small to begin with e.g. around three people joining the existing EEF team. For the Beta, we anticipate expanding the product team as the direction becomes clearer and we move to scaling the approach and iterating base on feedback. This is likely to be through a combination of direct EEF hires and additional engineering resource from the supplier. We welcome proposals for managing the transition from discovery to delivery while building internal team capacity, including how the provider might be able to provide additional team members if necessary.

The assumption is that much of the product management expertise is in place, but it will be supported by a largely self-organising embedded team that embodies a product mindset.

The collaborators

We have engaged a Senior Product Advisor, Matt Walton, an experienced product leader who specialises in education and learning. He will support the embedded product team in a fractional role.

The EEF's Senior Product Advisor will provide strategic direction and support the organisation to adopt a new way of working. The existing Senior Digital Product Manager will support the team day to day and help it integrate seamlessly into the existing business.

There are also several people from across the organisation we expect to work closely with the team and provide the interface with relevant parts of the organisation. Key collaborators in our internal team include:

- Adil Morrison, Senior Digital Product Manager
- Hilary Cornwell, Head of Communications
- Chris Paterson, Director of Impact

Alongside these people, we will involve other key individuals that can support the embedded team's work and help them integrate effectively into the organisation. We will keep the list of immediate collaborators small to make ownership clear and not overwhelm the new team whilst it is nascent.

The tech stack

The existing website, managed by the agency Engage, is built using Craft CMS and utilises Algolia for search. The EEF also currently uses MailChimp for newsletters and GA4 for analytics. Salesforce is our CRM but is not currently integrated into our website.

Our assumption is that the team building the Alpha and Beta would select and recommend the appropriate technologies upon which to build the new digital service. Technologies used to run and maintain the digital service would be owned and paid for by the EEF.

The technologies must be appropriate for a small future internal team to support and maintain in the long term. They should be mainstream and well supported, with a significant talent pool available to support them. The supplier should be technology-agnostic and make recommendations based on the specific needs we uncover.

It's possible that continuing with Craft CMS is an option for the new service, but we're also open to exploring other technologies that might be better suited to our future ambitions and undertaking the necessary migration e.g. a headless CMS designed with structured data and AI in mind, such as Sanity.

We are looking for suppliers that can help us to understand the trade-offs and pick the right technology choice for the long term and have the expertise to understand with our current stack and integrate existing elements that are still a good fit.

See the appendix for an illustration of existing systems and working assumptions about potential tech stack and future in-house team.

The non-functional requirements

There are a range of non-functional requirements that the delivery team will need to demonstrate they understand and can propose appropriate approaches to. These are included in the appendices.

During the Alpha and Beta phases, the commissioned product team will be responsible for ensuring uptime, dealing with incidents, security patches etc. for the new service.

Once the EEF has recruited its own team, ownership will then transfer to them to maintain the live service. Our existing agency will continue to maintain the existing website until the service switch.

Open-source

In line with our aspirations to offer a Digital Public Service, and as a charity with grant funding from the Department for Education, wherever possible, we plan to make our code freely available on an Open Government license, allowing others to use part or all of it to build or improve their own products.

Whilst open-source technology is our aspiration, we will take a pragmatic approach and are open to use proprietary SaaS where required to keep the costs down and ensure that the product is maintainable by a small in-house team.

How the team will work

We want a delivery partner that will help the EEF build an effective product team and establish ways of working that can continue beyond the partnership. The agile principles below set out our expectations, while leaving partners flexibility to propose the practices they think will work best.

Focus on problems and outcomes

The team should focus on solving clearly defined problems for users and achieving measurable outcomes, rather than simply delivering a set number of features or outputs. The EEF and the delivery partner will agree priorities, review progress and use evidence from users to decide what to do next.

To do this well, the team must work closely with EEF staff, drawing on their expertise and understanding of the organisation and wider evidence base, its users, and its mission.

Work collaboratively across disciplines

The team should bring together the skills needed to research, design, build and improve the product. Team members should work towards shared goals, rather than treating each discipline as a separate stage in the process.

We expect the team to work remotely for much of the time, with regular opportunities to meet in person at EEF's Millbank office. As a starting point, we propose co-located working in London at least once every two-week work cycle.

The team should also involve relevant EEF colleagues and other partners in its work, so that decisions reflect their expertise and the wider organisation stays informed and involved.

Work in sprints

The team should work in regular cycles, likely lasting two weeks. At the start of each cycle, the team and relevant EEF colleagues will agree priorities and goals, informed by progress, user feedback and what the team has learned. At the end, the team will review what has been achieved and use this to plan the next sprint.

We expect the following activities to support this process and make the work and decisions visible:

- **Daily check-ins:** Team members share progress, explain what they are working on next and raise any problems where they need help.
- **Planning:** The team and relevant EEF colleagues agree the goals and priorities for the next two weeks.
- **Demonstrations and reviews:** The team shows its work, including working software and designs, and gathers feedback from EEF colleagues and other relevant contributors.
- **Regular reflection:** The team reviews what is working well, what needs to change and how it can work more effectively with EEF.

These activities should help EEF colleagues understand the team's progress, contribute to decisions and raise issues early.

As we move from Alpha to Beta we also anticipate reviewing the team size and skillset on a similar cadence.

Test ideas and improve the product continuously

The team should spend time both developing the product and investigating what to build next. This includes speaking to users, testing ideas, trying out potential solutions and using the findings to decide what to develop, change or stop.

The team should share its findings with EEF colleagues so that decisions are based on evidence, and so that EEF staff develop the skills and understanding to support this way of working in the longer term.

The delivery partner will propose how best to put these principles into practice. As well as building and improving the product, they will help EEF establish the skills, behaviours and working practices needed to sustain this approach beyond the partnership.

Knowledge transfer

The team will build a product that, long term, will continue to be developed and maintained by a small in-house team that EEF will begin hiring at the end of the Alpha phase.

This means that we expect:

- All code and repos to be held within EEF accounts
- Code and technical decisions to be fully documented in best-practice ways that are easily accessible to an incoming team
- Alpha/Beta team engineers will work side-by-side with new EEF hires and take part in activities such as pairing

The team will also support the transition to live and provide a full handover before exit.

Supporting the shift in operating model

Delivering the Digital Public Service will require changes to how the EEF operates. We may issue requests for proposals to support these additional areas of organisational transformation, which sit outside the direct development of the digital product. Some providers responding to this RFP may also be well placed to support aspects of our broader organisational transformation. We welcome suggestions on how you could approach this alongside the work described in this RFP.

While these sit outside the product team's direct responsibility, the embedded team will help define requirements, inform the changes needed and ensure they align with the emerging service.

For example, moving from static content and PDFs to structured, machine-readable data may require developing an ontology and repackaging existing content into formats such as knowledge graphs, allowing the EEF's evidence and guidance to be surfaced dynamically.

The Alpha will establish requirements for a subset of content, informing wider changes to workflows for producing new content and migrating legacy content at scale. EEF teams will lead this work, supported by the embedded team who can ensure the appropriate tooling and support is in place to enable us to rapidly scale up the service once the direction is clear.

Emergent product strategy

We have carried out a range of discovery work, including a significant amount of research on how the existing website is used and understanding the broader needs and a Design Sprint and user testing to explore and make tangible a Digital Public Service.

Based on this work, we have developed a product strategy. At this stage it is very much 'emergent': it will continue to be developed further over the coming weeks and is likely to further evolve and to be informed by the input of the commissioned team and by the development of the Alpha and Beta as we learn-by-doing.

We have included the full emergent strategy, including our diagnosis, in the appendices.

We will focus on three core pillars:

1. **Enable quick discovery** of relevant EEF evidence and guidance by users with very different roles, contexts and levels of prior knowledge, presented in a way that meets their immediate need.
2. **Provide more than just evidence** and present guidance in useful, engaging and practical ways that support learning and professional development.
3. **Support diagnosis and implementation**, helping schools and settings identify their priorities and put evidence-based approaches into practice, by enabling collaboration, combining EEF evidence with their own data and insights, and supporting professional judgement.

Supported by two distribution strategies:

A. Via **EEF's own domain**, providing a trusted collaborative space
B. Via **plugins, skills, connectors**, **APIs and other mechanisms** that enable us to scaffold professional judgement and provided better guidance in the tools teachers are already using.

For the core pillars, we will provide increasing levels of focus on specific users:

1. For quick discovery, we will support the broad range of EEF stakeholders from early years to 16-19, and including teachers, training providers and policy professionals.
2. For more than evidence, we will focus on teachers and leaders in primary and secondary settings.
3. For diagnosis and implementation, we will focus on senior leaders that are tasked with leading school improvement in primary and secondary.

Please see the appendix for expanded product strategy, Jobs To Be Done, typical school leader journey and some of the artefacts we have created as part of discovery.

Other context

Incumbent website agency

The EEF's current website is developed, maintained and hosted by Engage. Engage are aware of the shift in our strategy and are expected to continue to develop and maintain the existing website until end November 2027, including our programme of 'business as usual' activity and improvements to the existing site.

Our expectation is that they will support the EEF and the winning supplier around any necessary content migration, redirects and decommissioning work.

Other digital projects

There are two other projects underway that are separate but relevant to the work on the Digital Public Service.

1. Google.org has provided a grant for a three-year project that will use GenAI to improve the accessibility of education research. The EEF is creating an open-source tool for teachers with guidance on the most effective ways to use technology and AI, based on evidence from global trials and evaluations. This tool is being built by Engage and will be integrated into the existing website and then new Digital Public Service, which should be in-scope.
2. EEF has been running a pilot with Scenario Space, a new tool that provides scenario-based learning for schools and teachers to support them to run training sessions that foster group discussion and reflective practice. The current portfolio includes five training sessions in inclusive teaching. This product shows promise and is an example of the emergent strategy for the Digital Public Service in practice. We are likely to want to explore potentially integrating this and/or other products into the new service.

Procurement process

Contract approach

In line with the suggested ways of working above, we anticipate that the contract will be designed around providers supplying a team of an agreed make up over a specified time period, with objectives agreed and delivered on a sprint-by-sprint basis rather than specific deliverables.

Contract term

The contract will be broken into two halves:

- **Alpha** lasting approximately 12-16 weeks
- **Beta** lasting approximately 30-36 weeks

There will be a 'break clause' at the end of Alpha to enable us to reassess based on the outcomes of the Alpha and pivot our approach if necessary. Our goal is for there not to be any break in development and to make this judgement at least 30 days prior to agreeing to continue or serve notice.

We will judge the success of the Alpha on:

1. Early indications of product-market fit and the Digital Public Service potential to meet the needs of our core beneficiaries and EEF's strategic goals
2. Integration of the product team into the wider organisation and visible progress on incubating the desired culture
3. An analysis of the ability and readiness for the wider organisation to support the emergent Digital Public Service
4. An assessment of if we are on track to deliver on the ambition within the desired timeline and budget

The Alpha review should also include a proposed team plan for the Beta.

Our ambition is to have some users using some elements of the new service by Easter, to transition to the new service by the new school year in September and to decommission our existing website by the end of November.

Contract value

We estimate the value of the core product team for Alpha and Beta is up to **£730,000 ex VAT** and we are seeking competitive proposals.

If a provider wishes to propose anything outside of this budget, please include this as a separately costed extension for consideration. This includes options for how we might expand the team with additional resource during the beta, should it be required to meet the ambitions suggested by the Alpha or where EEF's hiring is slower than anticipated and applicable rate card.

We welcome bidders who can offer charity discounts. Note, that we expect the supplier to cover any travel costs.

We anticipate that the budget is likely to break down as approximately up to £220,000 for Alpha (30%) and up to £510,000 for Beta (70%), based on the envisaged division of time and the anticipated increase in team size.

Our estimates informing this budget have been based on a blended day rate x team size x number of weeks.

Any costs for technologies that power the Digital Public Service, will be agreed and be paid for by EEF outside the scope of this contract (for example, CMS, cloud hosting, analytics and monitoring, AI tokens). EEF will also provide an appropriate number of seats on collaboration tools, messaging platforms and project management

tools (such as Slack, Google Drive, Notion, Figma). Any additional software that individuals need to complete their work will be at the expense of the supplier.

Timeline

This procurement will follow a clear, structured, and transparent process to ensure a fair and level playing field is maintained at all times, and that all providers are treated equally.

The key dates for this procurement are anticipated to be as follows:

Milestone	Date
Procurement	
Submissions open	Fri 30 Oct
Supplier briefing session	Thurs 5 Nov (2:30pm GMT)
Deadline for clarification questions	Wed 11 Nov
Answers to clarifications published to all	Wed 18 Nov
Submissions close	Mon 30 November (5pm GMT)
Interviews	Mon 7 and Tues 8 Dec
Preferred supplier notified	Wed 9 Dec
Due diligence checks and contracting	W/b Mon 14 Dec
Unsuccessful suppliers notified	W/b Mon 14 Dec
Project	
Alpha team starts	Mon 4 Jan 2027
Alpha launch and review	April 2027

Milestone	Date
Beta development begins	May 2027
Transition to live service	Sept 2027
Existing website decommissioned	End Nov 2027

There will be a ‘standstill’ period of eight days between informing bidders of the outcome and signing the contract.

Contract award

The EEF may award the contract on the basis of a proposal submitted in accordance with the instructions below.

Contract award is subject to the formal approval process of the EEF. Until all necessary approvals are obtained and the standstill period completed, no contract will be entered into.

Once the EEF has reached a decision in respect of a contract award, it will notify all bidders of that decision and provide for a standstill period before entering into any contract.

Tender completion information

All documents comprising the proposal must be completed and sent to procurement@eefoundation.org.uk by 30 November, 5pm GMT using reference “EEF proposal for Digital Public Service Alpha and Beta - Nov 2026”.

The following requirements should be followed when submitting Tenders:

The pages of the proposal documents must be numbered sequentially as "Page [x] of [xx]" and include the date and title of the document on each page of the main body.

- Any additional pre-existing material which is necessary to support the proposal should be included as schedules with cross-references to this material in the main body of the proposal. Cross-references to this RFP should also be included in the proposal whenever this is relevant.
- Where documents are embedded within other documents, providers must upload separate copies of the embedded documents.
- The proposal must be in English and drafted in accordance with the drafting guidance set out in this RFP.
- Each proposal must be uniquely named or referenced.
- A table of contents must be provided.
- A list of supporting material must be supplied.

The proposal must be clear, concise and complete. The EEF reserves the right to mark a provider down or exclude them from the procurement if its proposal contains any ambiguities, caveats or lacks clarity. Providers should submit only such information as is necessary to respond effectively to this RFP. Tenders will be evaluated on the basis of information submitted by the deadline.

Submission of proposals

Each provider must submit one proposal. The proposal must meet the EEF's minimum requirements, operate as a standalone bid and not be dependent on any other bid or any other factors external to the proposal itself. That is, the proposal must be capable of being accepted by the EEF in its own right.

Supplier briefing session

We will be holding a briefing session for all suppliers on Thursday 5 November. **You can sign up here.**

Clarifications about the services or the proposal

Any clarifications relating to this RFP must be submitted to procurement@eefoundation.org.uk. The EEF will respond to all reasonable queries as soon as possible. All queries and responses will be dealt with by email only. If a provider wishes the EEF to treat a clarification as confidential and not issue the response to all providers, it must state this when submitting the clarification. If, in the opinion of the EEF, the clarification is not confidential, the EEF will inform the provider and it will have an opportunity to withdraw it. If the clarification is not withdrawn, the response will be issued to all providers.

- The deadline for receipt of clarifications relating to the services or this RFP is set out above.
- Providers are advised not to rely on communications from the EEF in respect of the services or RFP unless they are made in accordance with these instructions.

What to include in the proposal

We're looking for an overview of how you would provide us with an embedded team with the expertise to realise our vision of a digital service by building Alpha and Beta versions of the service. We would also like to understand how by doing so, how you would help us to incubate an agile, product culture. We'd also like to understand why you want to work with us, how you'll work with us, as well as examples of your previous work.

Please begin your proposal with a one-page executive summary before the main body. Please include case studies as appendices.

The main document should include the following:

- The proposed team:
    - What relevant products have the team delivered?
    - What is the makeup of the team, including the balance of skills and perspectives?
    - Who are the people and what experience do they bring? Please include CVs of the key personnel that will work in the team, their relevant domain knowledge and the projects they've worked on.
    - Which team members will remain constant throughout, and how you might flex the team as we move from Alpha to Beta.
    - How do they work together? Please include previous examples.
- The costs:
    - How would you charge for this team? e.g. by sprint, invoice frequency etc.
    - How do the costs breakdown? Please help us compare e.g. day rates, run rates etc.
    - How does this align with what we have described Alpha and Beta?
    - How would you handle providing a core team and the potential to add additional resource where required (for example as we transition from Alpha to Beta)
    - A rate card for any additional resources outside of the core team, broken down based on experience level.
- The approach you would take to delivering the service:
    - How would you approach product discovery?
    - How would you approach building a service on our own domain?
    - How would you approach creating the infrastructure to support teachers in third party tools?

- How would you go about technology selection?
  - How would you approach the NFRs?
  - How would you anticipate using AI to support development?
- The approach you would take to collaboration and incubating a product culture:
  - How would you approach running the project?
  - How would you collaborate effectively with the proposed collaborators?
  - How would you foster a product culture and give it the best chance to continue at the end of the beta, including knowledge transfer?
  - How would you approach the first sprints to establish ways-of-work?
- The potential risks and challenges
  - Where do you anticipate problems to emerge?
  - How would you suggest mitigating them?
- Case studies/relevant examples
  - Please share with us details of projects that you've worked on that helps illustrate your relevant experience, particularly where you have provided embedded support to an organisation. Please also include any relevant experience and use of AI.
- References
  - Please share references of people we can speak to at the organisations included as relevant case studies. We will only contact them during the interview/contracting stage.

The interview

We will score the proposals using the criteria set out below and invite the highest scoring providers to interview.

The interview is designed to help us understand your proposal in more detail and get to know potential suppliers better. We will offer a range of slots on 7 and 8 December, with the option to either take part online, or come in person to our offices on Millbank.

The interview panel is likely to include senior representatives from the EEF and an external specialist.

Following the interviews, the panel will moderate and finalise scores against the same scoring criteria. We may also wish to follow up with clarifications early the following week before we select our preferred provider.

How we'll award the contract

Any contract awarded as a result of this procurement will be awarded on the basis of the offer that best aligns with our needs (80%), whilst also being economically advantageous to the EEF (20%).

The Award Criteria are:

1) Demonstrable skills and experience of delivering high-quality digital products in an agile and iterative way - 40%
2) Incubate an agile, product development culture and model our desired ways of working - 20%
3) Clear understanding of our vision, mission and relevant domain expertise - 20%
4) Cost and value for money 20%

Scores are arrived at following the application of the Evaluation Criteria set out below to the providers proposal. Providers are required to submit a proposal strictly in accordance with the requirements set out in this RfP, to ensure the EEF has the correct information to make the evaluation.

Evasive, unclear or hedged proposals may be discounted in evaluation and may, at the EEF's discretion, be taken as a rejection by the EEF of the terms set out in this RFP.

The Proposal Evaluation Model showing the Evaluation Criteria and the maximum scores attributable to them is set out below.

The method of scoring the quality evaluation questions will be in accordance with the following 0-5 scale. The evaluation panel will use this to assign a score to each evaluation question response, which, following the group consensus marking, will then be multiplied by the respective question weighting to produce a weighted score for each evaluation question. Once the weighting to individual question responses have been applied the weighted scores will be added together to determine a final score out of 100.

In general terms, scores will be awarded that correspond with the descriptor for the relevant score, quality evaluation responses will score higher where they answer the question in full, address all the criteria within the question and are supported by contextual evidence to demonstrate knowledge, experience, capability, and/or capacity relevant to the award criteria. Lower scores will be given where the question has not been answered in full, all the criteria have not been satisfactorily addressed, and/or there is not relevant evidence to support the response leading the evaluation panel to identify omissions or concerns that could represent a risk to the delivery of the requirement as specified.

Scoring criteria

Criteria	Weighting
1. Demonstrable skills and experience of delivering relevant high-quality digital products Your proposal shows: • Proven experience of building similar products including those leveraging generative AI • The ability to provide an embedded team with the outlined skills and experience, including AI • An understanding of the appropriate tech stack and engineering approach to suit our needs including security, stability and maintainability and other NFRs	**Scored out of 5** Weighting 8 (40%) Maximum score - 40
2. Incubate agile, product development culture and model our desired way of working Your proposal shows: • A deep understanding of effective agile product development including effective product discovery • Demonstrable experience of incubating and building a collaborative working culture with internal collaborators • Experience of creating products that can be owned and maintained by an in-house team, including knowledge transfer	**Scored out of 5** Weighting 4 (20%) Maximum score - 20
3. Clear understanding of our vision, mission and relevant domain expertise Your proposal shows: • You understand the potential of an EEF Digital Public Service • An understanding of our mission to use evidence to improve educational outcomes, particularly for socio-economically disadvantaged children and young people	**Scored out of 5** Weighting 4 (20%) Maximum score - 20

Criteria	Weighting
• Have experience of working in similar domains e.g. education, public sector	
4. Cost and value for money Your proposal shows: • Where the budget goes, with an emphasis on experienced and skilled team members vs project overheads • Competitive comparative day-rate for the skills and experience you're offering • The agility to flex and reprioritise within the scope of the agreement as new requirements emerge	**Scored out of 5** Weighting 4 (20%) Maximum score - 20

Scoring scale

Assessment	Marks	Criteria
Excellent	5	The proposal responds to the needs in full, successfully meets all the criteria, and presents proposals that exceed or enhance the EEF's requirements. Full and relevant evidence is provided to enhance the response. Demonstrates a comprehensive level of knowledge, experience, capability, or capacity and demonstrates that the Potential Providers can meet the requirement in full and to a high standard.
Good	4	The proposal responds to the needs in full and successfully meets all the criteria. Full and relevant evidence is provided to support the response. Demonstrates a good level of knowledge, experience, capability, or capacity and no concerns or omissions are identified.

Assessment	Marks	Criteria
Satisfactory	3	The proposal responds to the needs and meets the criteria to a satisfactory standard but may lack some clarity or detail in how the proposed solutions will be achieved. Relevant evidence is provided to support the response. Lack of clarity and any missing evidence or detail is only minor. Demonstrates a satisfactory level of knowledge, experience, capability, or capacity and any concerns or omissions are not considered to represent a risk or could be reasonably resolved.
Poor	2	The proposal does not respond to the needs in full and either satisfies only some of the criteria or exhibits omissions regarding meeting the criteria. Some evidence is provided to support the response but is lacking in sufficient detail in one or more areas. Demonstrates a lack of knowledge, experience, capability, or capacity and presents concerns or omissions that are considered to represent a risk or would have an impact on service delivery that would require significant external intervention to manage or resolve.
Very poor	1	The proposal does not respond to the needs and either fails to meet a number of criteria or exhibits clear and significant omissions with regard to meeting the criteria. Inadequate or no supporting evidence has been provided to support the response. Demonstrates a lack of knowledge, experience, capability, or capacity and presents significant concerns or omissions that are considered to represent an unacceptable level of risk and/or would have a detrimental impact on service delivery.
Unacceptable	0	The response is absent or incomplete and/or the proposals are not relevant to the EEF's requirements. The response does not meet the EEF's requirements.

Mandatory criteria (pass/fail)

- Able to provide a team with the required skills that can start work in January 2027
- Able to regularly collaborate, at least once a fortnight, in person at our offices in London
- Able to provide a multidisciplinary team, where core members have established working relationships and practices rather than assembled freelancers who have not worked together before

Terms and conditions

Contract terms

We would expect the winning bidder to enter into a contract with the following key

terms:

- Obligations of the winning bidder: The winning bidder shall provide the services and shall deliver the deliverables in accordance with the terms and conditions of the contract, which will include agile development principles to be agreed.
- At the end of the Beta phase, the provider will facilitate a handover to EEF's in-house technology team and provide any necessary documentation, training and knowledge sharing required for them to continue to develop and maintain the product.
- Intellectual property: All Intellectual Property Rights developed or created by the winning bidder in the provision of the digital services, shall be owned by the EEF and made available under an Open Government License. Where any pre-existing background IP and open-source libraries exist, we will agree the appropriate carve out with EEF being granted a perpetual, royalty-free licence. Please indicate if this is likely to be the case.
- Data Protection: The provider shall implement appropriate technical and organisational measures in such a manner that processing will meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act and GDPR and ensure the protection of the rights of the data subject.
- Confidentiality: Neither party shall at any time during the period of the contract disclose to any other person or use for any purpose except as provided by this Agreement, any confidential information belonging to another Party, unless expressly agreed in writing between the Parties.
- Termination: The contract may be terminated by the EEF by giving 30 days' written notice to the supplier of its intention to terminate.

Clarifications about the contents of a proposal

The EEF reserves the right (but is not obliged) to seek clarification of any aspect of a provider's proposal during the evaluation phase where necessary for the purposes of carrying out a fair evaluation. Providers are asked to respond to such requests promptly. Vague or ambiguous answers are likely to score poorly or render the proposal non-compliant.

Disclaimer

While the information contained in this RFP is believed to be correct at the time of issue, neither the EEF, its advisors, nor any other awarding authorities will accept any liability for its accuracy, adequacy or completeness, nor will any express or implied warranty be given. This exclusion extends to liability in relation to any statement, opinion or conclusion contained in or any omission from this RFP (including its appendices) and in respect of any other written or oral communication transmitted (or otherwise made available) to any provider. This exclusion does not extend to any fraudulent misrepresentation made by or on behalf of the EEF.

If a provider proposes to enter into a contract with the EEF, it must rely on its own enquiries and on the terms and conditions set out in the contract (as and when finally executed), subject to the limitations and restrictions specified in it.

Neither the issue of this RFP, nor any of the information presented in it, should be regarded as a commitment or representation on the part of the EEF (or any other person) to enter into a contractual arrangement.

Although it is intended that the remainder of this process will take place in accordance with the timetable set out in this document, the EEF reserves the right to terminate, amend or vary the procurement process at any time.

Confidentiality

All information supplied by the EEF to providers (including this RFP and all other documents relating to the procurement), whether in writing or orally, is supplied on condition that it (including the fact that the provider has received this RFP) be kept confidential by the provider; it must not be copied, reproduced, distributed or passed to any other person at any time (except to professional advisors, consortium members or subcontractors for the sole purpose of enabling the provider to submit a proposal) unless the information is already in the public domain.

Provider conduct and conflicts of interest

Any attempt by providers or their advisors to influence the contract award process in any way may result in the Provider being disqualified. Specifically, providers shall not directly or indirectly at any time:

- Devise or amend the content of their proposal in accordance with any agreement or arrangement with any other person, other than in good faith with a person who is a proposed partner, supplier, consortium member or provider of finance.
- Enter into any agreement or arrangement with any other person as to the form or content of any other proposal or offer to pay any sum of money or valuable consideration to any person to effect changes to the form or content of any other proposal.
- Enter into any agreement or arrangement with any other person that has the effect of prohibiting or excluding that person from submitting a proposal.
- Canvass the EEF or any employees or agents of the EEF in relation to this procurement.
- Offer, promise or give any person working for or engaged by the EEF a financial or other advantage as an inducement or reward for any improper performance of a function or activity relating to this procurement.
- Attempt to obtain information from any of the employees or agents of the EEF or their advisors concerning another provider or proposal.

Providers are responsible for ensuring that no direct or indirect conflicts of interest exist (whether personal, financial or otherwise) between the provider, its employees and advisors, and the EEF, its employees and advisors. Providers must prevent, identify and remedy any conflicts of interest within their group structures and within consortium or subcontracting arrangements which may result in any distortion of competition. Any provider who fails to comply with these requirements may be disqualified from the procurement at the discretion of the EEF.

EEF's rights

The EEF reserves the right to:

- Waive or change the requirements of this RFP from time to time without prior (or any) notice being given by the EEF.
- Seek clarification in respect of any part of a provider's submission.
- Request providers to submit, supplement, clarify or complete relevant information or documentation where it appears to be incomplete, erroneous or missing.
- Disqualify any provider that does not submit a compliant proposal in accordance with the instructions in this RFP.
- Disqualify any provider that is guilty of serious misrepresentation or of negligently providing misleading information in relation to its proposal, expression of interest, the SQ or the proposal process.
- Reject a proposal that is abnormally low.
- Not award a contract to the provider submitting the most economically advantageous proposal where it has been established that the proposal does not comply with applicable obligations in the fields of environmental, social and labour law established by national law.

- Withdraw this RFP at any time, or to re-invite tenders on the same or any alternative basis.
- Choose not to award any contract as a result of the current procurement process or to abandon that process.
- Make whatever changes it sees fit to the timetable, structure or content of the procurement process, depending on approvals processes or for any other reason.

Bid costs

The EEF will not be liable for any bid costs, expenditure, work or effort incurred by a provider in proceeding with or participating in this procurement, including if the procurement process is terminated or amended by the EEF.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Emergent product strategy

Our diagnosis

EEF is already used by a large percentage of school leaders: 48% of teachers and 73% of school leaders regularly use EEF and its brand carries very high levels of trust.

School leaders are facing increasing complexity and tighter budgets resulting in chronic time poverty. They need to be able to quickly address immediate problems but recognise that robust professional judgement is required. They don't want to be given answers, they want the scaffolding to think through the problem, quickly understand the evidence and then use their professional judgement to decide what is right for their setting

There is a huge appetite for more practical guidance. To make an impact, we need to offer more than evidence alone and more practical examples of how to put our guidance into practice. We also need to support a broad range of needs and depth of engagement from enabling quick checks of direction to driving longer term strategic implementation.

Implementation is hard, is where people get stuck and to be effective, needs to be collaborative. Individuals can rarely make change on their own. Our current advice on implementation is delivered in a separate document that needs to be downloaded and used in conjunction with guidance on specific topics.

Time-poor leaders often focus on the symptoms and need more support diagnosing the underlying root cause. This often means being able to connect data and other qualitative insights to the research evidence. There is interest in being able to quickly benchmark against similar institutions to understand where to focus.

School leaders are increasingly using generic AI tools that provide fast answers which can quickly adapt to their context (according to Teacher Tapp, 58% of teachers are using AI every week). Currently, this is mainly using personal accounts and general consumer products such as ChatGPT.

However, as AI becomes more part of school technology ecosystems, Google and Microsoft are likely to dominate, with the potential for other AI providers like Anthropic to gain some traction through ventures like Claude for Teachers. Education-specific AI tools are currently relatively niche and low-awareness, possibly due to limited budgets.

Despite growing acceptance and adoption of AI as a way to reduce workload, teachers are conflicted, and worried about how use of these tools might lead to deskilling, alongside broader worries about the impact on children, society and the environment. They are looking for a critical friend that sharpens their thinking and draws on robust evidence, rather than providing generic results, done in a safe and ethical way.

EEF has the most potential to impact those that lack support and experience, including, new leaders building their practice, people working outside of their expertise, those with limited peer support and those that do not have the budget for in-person training and support. Digital offers the opportunity to scale our current high-touch mobilisation efforts to support a much greater range of institutions.

Our guiding policy

To meet these needs, our proposed approach has three distinct elements:

1. **Enable quick discovery** of relevant evidence and guidance that meets the immediate need and context
2. **Provide more than just evidence** and present guidance in useful, engaging and practical ways that support learning and professional development
3. **Support diagnosis and implementation** by enabling collaboration and supporting professional judgement

Supported by two distribution strategies:

A. Via **EEF's own domain**, providing a trusted collaborative space
B. Via **plugins for AI tools**, to meet school leaders where they are

1. Enable quick discovery

We will support the full range of EEF stakeholders to quickly get answers by expressing problems in their own words. The service will present them with snippets relevant to the context and enable them to dig deeper and find the right level of resource to meet their immediate need.

2. Provide more than just evidence

To make our guidance immediately useful, we will provide more case studies and practical examples of what this looks like in the classroom for our core audience of primary and secondary schools. Alongside our robust evidence, we will find ways to present examples from the community that illustrate ways it could be brought to life, in ways that preserves our rigor and 'kitemark' status.

3. Support diagnosis and implementation

Alongside a free-to-access service for all, we will provide additional support to those responsible for leading change by turning our implementation guidance into a scaffolded process that supports collaboration. This will include exploring the problem, planning the intervention, delivering it and then monitoring and sustaining the change.

This third aspect of the service will target senior leaders, tasked with making school improvements in primary and secondary initially. Early Years are much earlier in the adoption cycle and 16-19 requires the service to be tailored to feel 'for me' to be accepted.

A. Provide a trusted, collaborative platform on our own domain

We believe there is an appetite from the education community for EEF to offer its own service on our own domain to support these needs. We are already a destination that educational practitioners trust and turn to and we are well placed to sensitively respond to their desire for AI to be used thoughtfully.

To engage school leaders more deeply, we will design our services around the school calendar and moments of acute need and statutory pressures rather than general improvements: obligations such as Pupil Premium planning, Ofsted inspections, INSET days, growing SEND demand and workforce planning.

Using these as the catalyst, we will encourage them to diagnose the root cause rather than simply treating symptoms. We will take a coaching approach that supports the development of professional judgement, rather than providing generic quick answers, whilst helping them quickly get beyond the blank page.

Based on the assumption that it is hard for school leaders to deliver change on their own and our advice to unite teams around change, we will design a collaborative space. This collaboration also builds a helpful growth loop into the service through recommendation by influential teachers.

This might also allow them to connect publicly available data and their own insights, to help them benchmark and explore the areas for greatest improvement connected to our evidence.

The process of implementing and monitoring change also will provide us with a valuable feedback loop of practical examples, micro trials and insights into the challenges schools are tackling.

B. Meet teachers where they are via partnerships and AI plugins

As well as providing support on our own domain, there is the opportunity for EEF to influence the responses school leaders get as they increasingly engage with generic AI tools.

One aspect to this is better structuring our data and evidence so that it is found, interpreted and cited in the best possible way. This is 'GEO' (Generative Engine Optimisation), the AI equivalent of SEO (Search Engine Optimisation).

There is, however, a bigger opportunity to do this through partnerships and by offering APIs, plugins and connectors, (the equivalent of an App Store for AI). Emerging standards that all the major platforms are backing (MCP and Skills) enable individual teachers or school IT administrators to add EEF's connector to their AI tool of choice.

This would mean that instead of drawing on general data in the underlying model or pulled from the web, the tool would specifically draw on EEF's evidence (via an MCP server, similar to an API). This is 'the what'. Skills bundled with the connector would allow EEF to codify 'the how', for example our Implementation Guide or how to fill out a Pupil Premium Plan.

This would allow EEF to provide greater guardrails and higher quality, UK-specific, evidence within these platforms, as well as within our own destination.

By providing evidence and guidance as 'digital infrastructure' and enabling other providers to easily integrate this into their services, EEF can extend its impact through partnerships beyond what it is able to do as one organisation.

High-level user needs and Jobs To Be Done

Areas where support is being sought:

1) Delivering engaging and inclusive teach and managing classroom dynamics
    a) Formative assessment and real-time engagement
    b) Differentiated instruction and SEND/alternative support
    c) Establishing classroom routines, environments, behaviour
2) Designing curriculum schemes and sourcing/adapting instructional materials
    a) Curriculum planning and alignment
    b) Sourcing, buying and customising resources
3) Designing and delivering Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
    a) Personalised learning
    b) Peer modelling, observation and feedback
    c) Low-burden/bite-sized professional learning
4) Translating pedagogical research, policy writing and strategy justification
    a) Ongoing scanning, interrogating and saving research
    b) Translating cognitive science into policy and frameworks
    c) Justifying decisions and creating buy-in with evidence
5) Integrating digital technology and generative AI
    a) Using AI for admin support, content generation and supporting learning
    b) Verifying AI output and plagiarism management
6) Strategic school improvement, quality assurance and resource optimisation
    a) Quality assurance, progress monitoring and deep dives
    b) Budget, resource allocation, workload prioritisation
    c) Strategic competitive positioning and admissions
7) Managing transitions, early interventions and family partnerships
    a) Proactive learner support, family engagement and intervention
    b) Student transition and development

The typical school leader journey:

1. **Trigger and Inspiration:** A school leader hits a catalyst: an approaching Ofsted inspection, a curriculum change, a worrying data pattern, or an inspiring email, post, or search result. Urgency or curiosity kicks in.
2. **Diagnosis:** They look at different sources of information, benchmark against other similar schools, and look for different ways they can understand the cause of problems and the potential solutions
3. **Evidence Seeking and Interpretation:** They hunt for credible guidance, usually EEF first because it is trusted, free, and unpaywalled. They skim multiple sources, judging trustworthiness, relevance to their context, and clarity. They layer in insights about their context and their professional judgement.
4. **Decide and Design:** They translate the combination of research and judgement into usable, implementable formats - policies, practical guides, meeting slides, worksheets... including things bought in from third parties
5. **Disseminate and Collaborate:** They work with colleagues in a variety of formats: annual CPD, whole-staff meetings, INSET days, 5-10 minute bite-size sessions, individual coaching or action-research cycles. Goal: share the approach, build understanding, motivate change.
6. **Delivery in practice:** Purchasing programmes or external support, rolling out and communicating about changes, supporting with on-the-ground delivery (e.g. lesson planning). Ongoing monitoring such as learning walks, nudging & support / coaching for teachers.
7. **Reflection and Iteration:** Well-resourced leaders check if the change stuck: learning walks, pupil surveys, exercise book reviews, staff talks. Reinforce, adjust, or move on.

Draft roadmap

Here are our current working assumptions about which opportunities we will tackle and how we will prioritise them. This is very work in progress and will be regularly reviewed.

Now (Alpha)

The Alpha is designed to provide 'a slice' that will enable us to build confidence in the direction, understand the user experience, technology approach and impact on the wider organisation. It should inform the priorities for the beta. It should be usable by a small, controlled audience that we can cocreate with.

- Provide guidance and evidence in a way that is easy to browse search and navigate for a specific subset e.g. maths and/or inclusive teaching
    - The goal is to define the underlying data model that will enable evidence and guidance to be surfaced in multiple ways that is helpful to both humans and agents.
- Support primary and secondary teachers and leaders to describe challenges in their own words and be presented with relevant guidance at the appropriate level of granularity for the subset
    - The goal is to understand how to surface guidance and evidence in ways that best meet the immediate user needs for a subset of users.
- Enable primary and secondary teachers and leaders to explore examples of how guidance is put into practice in relevant settings for a subset of guidance
    - The goal is to explore ways to meet the need for more practical support and exemplification that is likely to support practice.
- Support school leaders to go deeper and diagnose the root cause for a subset of challenges
    - Explore how to encourage leaders to explore further and from an initial starting point explore a wider set of possible interventions.
- Enable users to save pieces of evidence and guidance and share them with others in their school/MAT
    - The goal is to understand more about the desire and potential for collaboration across institutions and understand more about sign in, accounts and shared spaces.
- Enable users to see their school data alongside relevant benchmarks and evidence to support diagnosis (stretch/experiment)

- The goal is to explore the potential for data and insights to help contextualise evidence from a desirability and feasibility perspective.
- Provide an AI plugin (MCP server and skills) to enable teachers and senior leaders to be able to explore challenges in ChatGPT and Claude, anchored by EEF guidance and evidence, for the same subset
  - Goal is to understand the desire and use of EEF guidance and evidence in third party spaces and the technology approach required to support it

Note, alongside the Alpha, the google.org project will enable us to understand more about a specific implementation journey (use of edtech) which will also feed into our understanding and priorities for the beta.

Next (Beta)

Based on the findings of the Alpha, we anticipate we the beta is likely to build on what is outlined above meet the following opportunities with the goal to ultimately enable us to switch the new service to being the primary digital presence:

- Expand the range of evidence and guidance to support the full range of use cases indicated by the user needs above, including providing scalable ways to manage the knowledge base
- Greater support for diagnosis, implementation and monitoring, including potential integration and expansion of the google.org funded tool
- Providing alternatives for other important use cases the current website supports e.g. networks, projects, about us, news/newsletters

Later (Live)

Once the service is live, we expect to continue to develop and iterate the product, including expanding the provision for Early Years and 16-19.

Existing discovery

We have produced two artefacts that help illustrate the potential for a Digital Service and bring to life some potential use cases and approach. These are both provided as an appendix.

1. The **storyboard** shows a user journey of a primary head teacher looking for more support on TA deployment and how we might support collaborative implementation. This is included as a separate document.
2. The **prototype** demonstrates how you could support implementation and professional judgement through a dynamic coaching tool that helps school leaders get from a blank page to a session to run with their team. This is a prototype in Lovable. See instructions in Appendix and a short video of the highlights of one user test here.

Please note, that these are just examples of the direction we could take and we are expecting the embedded product team to build on this exploration and bring new insights and ideas to develop the Alpha.

We are continuing discovery work to maintain momentum, refine the emergent strategy, develop a clearer scope for the Alpha and now/next/later roadmap and build internal readiness to support the Alpha/Beta team's work.

We are conscious that this work is positioned such that it should give the team the inputs for a flying start, not pre-empt decisions that are better for them to make and bring their experience to.

We will also be exploring the implications of delivering the Digital Public Service on the wider organisation. For example, the shift from producing static content to structured, machine-readable data and its impact on team workflows.

We will share any new relevant work that is created with any bidders by the question clarification publication (18 Nov).

Prototype

You can find the prototype we built as part of our Design Sprint here.

It was built in a day using Lovable and Claude to demonstrate how a conversational approach could be applied to supporting school leaders with diagnosis and implementation.

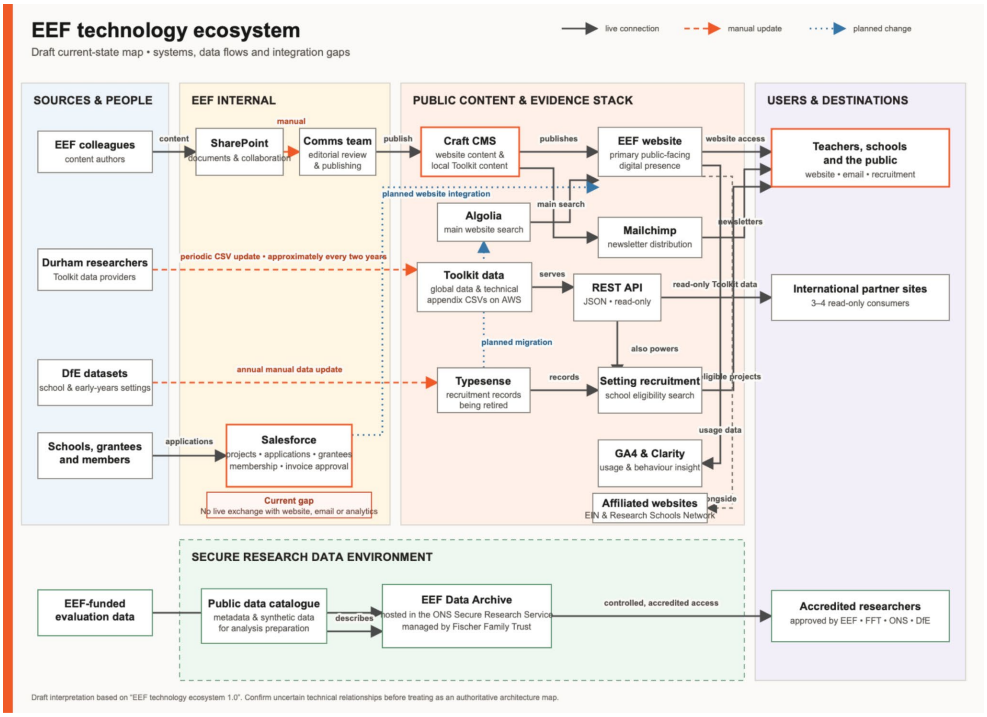
If you'd like to try it out, where prompted, add your name and enter the password: eef-implementation-2026

Imagine that you are thinking about how to improve how you deploy teaching assistants.

You can see a short video of the highlights of one of our testers using the prototype here.

Appendix 2: Current tech ecosystem

We have identified and mapped a high-level view of EEF's current technology ecosystem which you can see here.



This includes a set of technologies that EEF are already using and are likely to wish to continue to use that will be essential to integrate - such as Mailchimp. There are some technologies, like Salesforce, where it might be worth considering integration as part of the project.

Appendix 3: Working assumption about future tech stack and costs

For transparency, here are our working assumptions about a potential future tech stack. We are budgeting around £100k/year. This is outside of the RFP budget.

Component	*Assumption*	*Indicative annual*
Headless CMS	Could be Craft CMS or a product like Sanity that might be better suited to structured data ambitions	£15–40k
Frontend hosting / CDN	E.g. Vercel/Netlify Pro + usage for a Next.js + headless build; Enterprise tier for a high-traffic public site with SLA/security	£5–25k
Search	E.g. Algolia or similar	£3–15k
Design / PM / code tooling	e.g. Figma (~£30–45/editor/mo), Linear or Jira, GitHub Team/Enterprise	£6–15k
Product analytics	GA4 (free) plus a product-analytics tool (e.g. PostHog/Mixpanel)	£1–10k
AI tooling	E.g. Cursor, Claude Code, Lovable + API usage	£3–15k
Security / observability etc.	Error monitoring, uptime, accessibility testing, backups, password manager	£2–8k
TOTAL		**£35k - £128k**

Appendix 4: Working assumption about future product team

We are currently assuming that we will hire a team that looks like the below. The Alpha phase is designed to provide the opportunity to test these assumptions before we commit to hiring during the beta phase.

- Product designer (UX/research/Figma + light frontend)
- Senior product engineer
- Junior/mid product engineer
- Data engineer/scientist hybrid (ML/DS + data architecture)

Appendix 5: Non-functional requirements

There are a range of non-functional requirements that the delivery team will need to demonstrate they understand and can propose appropriate approaches to. These are:

- Data protection & GDPR
  - Comply with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, acting as a data processor under a data processing agreement with EEF
  - Collect only the personal data needed, with retention and deletion in line with EEF policy.
- Information security & data sovereignty
  - Host all data in Europe
  - Commission independent penetration testing before public Beta, and resolve critical issues before launch
  - Encrypt data in transit and at rest, and use multi-factor authentication for admin access
- Integration & interoperability
  - Use open standards and documented APIs
  - Allow data to be exported in open formats
- Performance & stability
  - Achieve 99.9% uptime from public Beta, excluding planned maintenance
  - Have backups, disaster recovery, monitoring and an incident response process in place
- Usability & accessibility
  - Meet WCAG 2.2 AA as a minimum, confirmed by an accessibility audit before public Beta, with a published accessibility statement
  - Carry out regular usability testing, including with users with access needs
  - Work on mobile devices and on browsers and devices commonly used by teachers and other education professionals
- Deployment & maintainability
  - Use continuous integration and deployment with automated testing
  - Store all code in an EEF-owned repository from day one
  - Use well-supported, mainstream technologies that EEF can recruit for
  - Provide documentation that an in-house team can maintain
- Alignment with established branding
  - Follow EEF brand guidelines and templates, including accessible colour contrast and existing design system