# Scotland launches £1m AI support scheme for SMEs



The Scottish Government has unveiled a new £1 million initiative to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) adopt artificial intelligence, marking a significant step in the country’s drive to lead in responsible AI innovation.

The programme provides tailored consultancy and grant funding to support businesses either implementing AI for the first time or scaling up existing use. Delivered in partnership with Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise, The Data Lab and the Scottish AI Alliance, it forms the first major rollout under the AI Scotland transformation programme.

Business Minister Richard Lochhead launched the scheme during a visit to Edinburgh Trams’ Gogarburn depot, where a pilot project is using AI-powered wearable technology to monitor driver fatigue. The collaboration with Integrated Human Factors illustrates how AI can improve safety and operational efficiency in real-world settings.

Complementary efforts are under way across Scotland. In Aberdeen, CodeBase and Aberdeen City Council have introduced ‘AI Navigator’—a free support programme for local SMEs exploring productivity and cost-saving gains from AI.

The newly launched scheme also aligns with the National AI Adoption Programme, fully funded through March 2026. This offers further support including AI courses, rural roadshows and consultancy services—ensuring businesses across all regions can access AI expertise and guidance.

Industry experts have welcomed the integrated approach as a model for driving innovation while safeguarding responsible adoption. By combining public funding with expert support, Scotland is building a strong foundation for an inclusive, AI-enabled economy.

The coordinated investment signals Scotland’s ambition to lead not only in AI deployment, but in setting high standards for ethical and impactful technological growth.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://talkingupscotlandtwo.com/2025/09/30/scottish-government-backs-new-ai-programme-and-bbc-scotland-business-make-intelligent-move-to-ignore-it-for-the-union/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.hie.co.uk/latest-news/2025/september/23/support-to-help-businesses-harness-artificial-intelligence/> - Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) has launched a new programme to assist Scottish companies in adopting artificial intelligence (AI). Supported by nearly £1 million of Scottish Government funding, the initiative offers small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) tailored consultancy services and grants to integrate AI, aiming to foster innovation, market growth, and investment. The programme is delivered by Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise, The Data Lab, and the Scottish AI Alliance, marking the first initiative under AI Scotland, a broader transformation programme designed to accelerate AI adoption across the country.
3. <https://www.gov.scot/news/embracing-the-economic-potential-of-ai/> - The Scottish Government has launched a new programme to help Scottish companies harness the benefits of artificial intelligence (AI). Supported by nearly £1 million of funding, the initiative offers small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) a range of support, including tailored consultancy services and grants, to introduce or expand the use of AI in order to develop new products and services, grow market share, and attract new investment. The programme is delivered by enterprise agencies—Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and South of Scotland Enterprise—together with The Data Lab, Scotland's innovation centre for data and artificial intelligence, and the Scottish AI Alliance. It is the first initiative to be delivered as part of AI Scotland, a transformation programme designed to support the adoption of AI.
4. <https://siliconscotland.news/aberdeen-council-partnership-to-offer-ai-programme-for-local-smes/> - Aberdeen City Council has partnered with CodeBase to offer an artificial intelligence (AI) programme for local SMEs. The 'AI Navigator' programme, run by technology ecosystem specialist CodeBase, is designed to help SME and small business leaders use AI to improve productivity, reduce costs, and make data-driven decisions. The Aberdeen programme, which is free for participating companies, takes place between January and March 2025, with applications closing at the end of November. The programme is jointly funded by Aberdeen City Council and the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
5. <https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot/service/programmes/national-ai-adoption-programme> - The National AI Adoption Programme, funded by the Scottish Government, supports small and medium-sized businesses and social enterprises in Scotland interested in adopting artificial intelligence (AI) technologies. The programme offers support such as access to AI-related courses, grant support for AI projects, networking opportunities through rural AI roadshows across Scotland, and specialist consultancy advice to help businesses identify and implement AI project opportunities. The programme is delivered by Scottish Enterprise, The Data Lab, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and South of Scotland Enterprise, and is fully funded until 31 March 2026.
6. <https://www.southofscotlandenterprise.com/driving-change/digital/ai-adoption-programme> - The Scottish Government-funded National AI Adoption Programme supports small and medium-sized organisations (SMEs) interested in adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI). It offers tailored interventions, including access to AI-related courses, grant support for AI projects, networking opportunities through rural AI roadshows across Scotland, and specialist consultancy advice to help businesses identify and implement AI project opportunities. The programme is a partnership between Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise, and The Data Lab, and is fully funded until 31 March 2026.
7. <https://www.scottishai.com/news/embracing-the-economic-potential-of-ai-in-scotland> - A new programme helping Scottish companies seize the benefits of artificial intelligence (AI) has been launched. Supported by nearly £1 million of Scottish Government funding, it will offer small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) a range of support—including tailored consultancy services and grants—to introduce or expand the use of AI in order to develop new products and services, grow market share, and attract new investment. The programme will be delivered by enterprise agencies—Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and South of Scotland Enterprise—together with The Data Lab, Scotland's innovation centre for data and artificial intelligence, and the Scottish AI Alliance. It is the first initiative to be delivered as part of AI Scotland, a transformation programme designed to support the adoption of AI.