[Press release: £18.5 million to boost diversity in AI tech roles and innovation in online training for adults](#)

- Up to £13.5 million new funding for an extra 2500 artificial intelligence and data science conversion degrees, with 1000 scholarships for people from underrepresented groups
- £5 million government fund to drive innovation in adult online learning
- This is part of government's commitment to boost gender diversity in the tech sector and harness new technologies to upskill and retrain adults
- Tech Nation today opens applications for the first ever applied AI growth programme to benefit start-ups

The technology sector is set to benefit from a £18.5 million cash injection to drive up skills in AI and data science and support more adults to upskill and retrain to progress in their careers or find new employment.

Up to 2,500 people will have the opportunity to retrain and become experts in data science and artificial intelligence (AI), thanks to a £13.5 million investment to fund new degree and Masters conversion courses and scholarships at UK academic institutions over the next three years.

£5 million is also being invested to encourage technology companies to develop cutting-edge solutions, utilising AI and automation, to improve the quality of online learning for adults. The ground-breaking Adult Learning Technology Innovation Fund, which will be launched in partnership with innovation foundation [Nesta](#), will provide funding and expertise to incentivise tech firms to harness new technologies to develop bespoke, flexible, inclusive, and engaging online training opportunities to support more people into skilled employment.

Companies across the tech sector already employ more than 2.1 million people, contribute £184 billion to the economy every year and inward investment to the UK AI sector stood at £1 billion for 2018, which is more than Germany, France, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland combined.

To further strengthen the sector, Government is investing in data-driven technologies, such as artificial intelligence, through the modern Industrial Strategy, so tech businesses and people with the drive and talent can succeed.

Speaking ahead of his speech at CogX, the Digital Secretary Jeremy Wright said:

> The UK has a long standing reputation for innovation, world-leading academic institutions and a business friendly environment and

everyone, regardless of their background, should have the opportunity to build a successful career in our world-leading tech sector.

Through these new AI and Data Conversion courses and our modern Industrial Strategy, we are committed to working with the tech sector and academia to develop and maintain the best AI workforce in the world.

Business Secretary Greg Clark said:

UK firms continue to build on our heritage as the home of Artificial Intelligence, and through our modern Industrial Strategy we're investing in that strength to ensure we remain world-leaders in the field and at the very forefront of the latest technologies.

These new retraining opportunities and scholarships will ensure people from all backgrounds have the opportunity to move into new and exciting careers, and to shape this innovative industry for years to come.

On the launch of the new Adult Learning Technology Innovation Fund, Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

Artificial Intelligence and other new technologies are transforming the way we live and work and have the potential to radically improve online learning and training, so more people can get the skills they need.

We all have busy lives, juggling work and family commitments so online courses are a great way for more people to retrain or upskill and secure a rewarding career. Investing in cutting edge technologies such as AI will mean we can future proof the online learning experience and ensure it better meets students' needs.

This is an exceptional opportunity for technology firms to work with Government to put their ideas into action to help develop pioneering online training opportunities for adults.

Potential applicants to the AI and Data Conversion courses will hold a degree in other disciplines and scholarships will be made available to support

applications from diverse backgrounds. This could include people returning to work after a career break and looking to retrain in a new profession, under-represented groups in the AI and digital workforce, including women and people from minority ethnic backgrounds, or lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Tech Nation statistics published in 2018 revealed only 19 per cent of our tech workforce are women.

Creating a more diverse future workforce will help with the design of new technology, including the fair and accurate development of algorithms, and tackle some of the greatest social challenges of our time – from protecting our environment, to transforming the way we live and work, and saving lives through diagnosing diseases earlier.

The news follows the recently announced multimillion skills package which saw the creation of industry-funded AI Masters, prestigious Alan Turing Institute AI research fellowships, and 16 dedicated Centres at universities across the country to train 1000 extra AI PhDs.

Confirmation of the new funding comes as Tech Nation opens applications for the first ever Applied AI growth programme. This will give AI startups across the UK the opportunity to benefit from meeting with industry leaders and investors in the sector and meet with their peers to develop impactful technology.

Technologies developed under the Adult Learning Technology Innovation Fun will help inform the Government's National Retraining Scheme. The National Retraining Scheme aims to upskill individuals in the UK most at risk of redundancy with the knowledge they need to progress in work, secure better employment, and redirect their careers.

The new fund builds on the work already underway through the [Government's Education Technology Strategy](#), published in April, which includes £10 million investment to support innovation and raise the bar in schools, colleges and universities across England.

Vicki Sellick, Executive Director of Programmes at Nesta said:

> In the face of automation, technology in the workplace is often portrayed as a threat. Yet Nesta's own research shows technology could be used to inform workers about the skills they will need in a rapidly changing job market, and deliver flexible, personalised training.

> Technology, such as AI, has huge potential to provide insights on local labour markets and give workers appropriate advice, guidance and learning opportunities. We're delighted to be adding resources from our own endowment to partner with DfE to ensure technology is being used to support workers to upskill and re-skill for the jobs of the future.

Sue Daley, Associate Director, Tech UK, said:

> AI technologies, such as chatbots, offer the opportunity for adult learners to access increasingly personalised information, advice and guidance that fits around their everyday normal life. techUK sees AI as a power for good in helping adults to keep their skills and knowledge up-to-date.

> The funding announced today is a great step forward in making the UK a leader in the creation of innovative AI-enabled learning products and services. We look forward to working with government and Nesta to explore together how innovative AI-driven solutions can be designed, developed and adopted to support adult learners.

The Office for Artificial Intelligence and Government Digital Service have published guidance on the use of [AI in the public sector](#), to help organisations across the civil service understand AI and how it can be used to solve problems within their departments. The guide features a section on AI ethics and safety, informed by detailed guidance produced by The Alan Turing Institute, and meets government's ambitions to develop and use AI responsibly and safely.

To help the UK build a world-class data economy, Government has launched a consultation to help shape the National Data Strategy to make sure the future use of data is ethical and benefits business and wider society. The strategy will aim to unlock the power of data across government and the wider economy, while building peoples' trust in its use.