



2026 Idea of the Year Competition Categories

1. AI for Continuous Improvement Award: This award recognises the practical application of artificial intelligence to enhance, optimise, and refine existing processes, services, or operations. It celebrates ideas that use AI to drive measurable improvements such as increased efficiency, reduced waste, enhanced safety, improved quality, better decision-making, or cost savings. Effectively this is about using AI to make what already exists work smarter, faster, safer, or more effectively.

2. AI for Disruptive Change Award: This award celebrates bold and transformative uses of artificial intelligence that fundamentally change how an organisation operates, delivers value, or serves its customers. It recognises ideas that create new business models, unlock entirely new capabilities, replace traditional approaches, or redefine customer or workforce experiences. The focus is on breakthrough impact, not simply improving an existing process, but reinventing it.

3. Continuous Improvement Award: This award recognises ideas that deliver ongoing, structured improvements to products, services, or processes. It celebrates initiatives that consistently enhance efficiency, effectiveness, flexibility, or quality, whether through incremental gains over time. Entries should demonstrate how delivery processes are regularly evaluated, refined, and strengthened to increase value for the organisation.

4. Customer Focus Award: This award celebrates ideas that place internal and/or external customers at the heart of decision-making. It recognises proactive approaches that anticipate needs, address concerns, and consistently enhance customer experience and satisfaction. The focus is on creating meaningful value, strengthening relationships, and delivering service excellence internally or externally with consistency and care.

5. Digital & Technology Award: This award recognises ideas that harness digital tools, technical expertise, or innovative engineering solutions to deliver meaningful improvement. It celebrates the effective use of digital technologies (excluding artificial intelligence) to create, store, process, analyse, or present information, or to enhance manufacturing, construction, engineering, or operational performance. This includes computer architecture, networks, web technology, digital media, programming tools and software applications.

6. Innovation Award: This award celebrates the application of better solutions to meet new, emerging, or previously unmet needs. It recognises ideas that introduce more effective products, processes, services, technologies, or business models that deliver tangible value. Entries should demonstrate originality combined with practical impact, delivering solutions that are truly beneficial and provide real-world results to organisations, markets, or wider society.

7. People & Wellbeing Award: This award focuses internally **on your** people, recognising ideas that strengthen organisational culture and enhance the experience, engagement, and wellbeing of people at work. It celebrates initiatives that align teams with organisational vision and values, encourage shared behaviours and language, and foster both psychological and physical safety. The focus is on creating environments where people feel supported, valued, and empowered to perform at their best.

8. Sustainability Award: This award celebrates ideas that contribute to a more sustainable and responsible way of operating. It recognises initiatives that reduce environmental impact, protect natural resources, and promote long-term resilience. The focus is on practical, forward-thinking solutions that not only reduce harm but actively contribute to a healthier, more sustainable future.

Full details of the ideasUK Idea of the Year Competition can be found on the ideasUK website conference page: <https://www.ideasuk.com/conference/> and on the dedicated competition site: www.ideasuk.wazoku.com