

Introduction

Funding is often one of the biggest hurdles an organisation faces to getting a digital inclusion project off the ground and also to keeping one going. In this guide you'll find advice and tips to help you apply for funding. There are lots of organisations that offer free support and resources, and we have listed these in the links at the end of this guide.



Defining your digital inclusion project

Digital inclusion projects can take many different forms, from small informal sessions in a community space with a handful of volunteers, to larger multisite projects across regions.

To secure funding, you should plan your project so that it:

- Meets an identified need, this could be a particular group of people you want to help, or a skill you want learners to develop.
- Is realistic for your organisation's experience and scale.
- Offers something different to other services. Many funders are looking for a new service, not something that is already being provided.

If you're not sure what to include in your digital inclusion project, we have [case studies](http://www.digitalunite.com/case-studies) (www.digitalunite.com/case-studies) on our website that may provide inspiration. This guide from the Local Government Association is also be useful: www.local.gov.uk/our-support/cyber-digital-and-technology/four-essential-steps-digital-inclusion. See our guide to Creating a budget for guidance on how to cost up your digital Inclusion project.

Searching for funders

The priorities and timetables for funders vary considerably which makes it hard for us to recommend any specific funders. One of the best ways to find out about funding opportunities is by keeping abreast of where other organisations have been successful, keep abreast through word-of-mouth, local community networks and social media.

Websites such as [My Funding Central](http://www.myfundingcentral.co.uk) (www.myfundingcentral.co.uk) or [Grantnav](https://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org) (https://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org) have searchable databases of funding opportunities. Some local Voluntary and Community Sectors (VCS) organisations may also have their own local funding databases. These databases have search tools to help you find funding opportunities. To find suitable funders use keywords such as 'digital', 'technology', 'digital inclusion', 'digital transformation' and 'digital skills'.

Read the eligibility criteria or application guidelines for each funder. They will outline the kinds of activities and organisations they fund, and the kinds of benefits they want a project to achieve. It is not usually worth your time applying to funds that aren't relevant to your project.

Regular funding opportunities

Although these are liable to change, there are several funders who are known to have funds that can support digital projects, such as:

- [Catalyst](http://www.thecatalyst.org.uk) (www.thecatalyst.org.uk) Aims to radically improve how digital is used in charities.
- [Google](http://www.google.org/intl/en_uk/opportunities) (www.google.org/intl/en_uk/opportunities) Occasionally provides grants to non-profits focused on using technology to solve significant social issues.
- [The National Lottery Community Fund](http://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding) (www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding). May have funding rounds suitable for digital inclusion projects.
- [Social Tech Trust](https://socialtechtrust.org) (https://socialtechtrust.org) Runs funding programmes focused on digital solutions to specific issues.
- [Vodafone Foundation](http://www.vodafone.com/vodafone-foundation) (www.vodafone.com/vodafone-foundation) Supports projects that use technology to address societal challenges, including digital inclusion.

Writing a funding application

Funders want very specific information about why you've applied, how the money will be spent, and what this will achieve (see links below for more detailed guidance on writing a funding application).

Here are some top tips to consider:

- Use plain English - avoid jargon or overly formal language.
- Be specific about what you plan to do. For example, who are the sessions for? Where will they take place? Who will organise and run them?
- Focus your application on the funder's priorities, aims and objectives.
- Provide evidence that your work is needed, have you carried out research to make sure you understand what the people you work with really need?
- Double check you have included all required information and documents. Missing something out might mean your application gets rejected automatically. Finally, don't forget to proofread what you have written before sending it.

If the funder doesn't have a standard application form, you might need to write a letter or email. It is recommended that this should be addressed personally to the named contact for the funding body and be no longer than two sides of A4. Some key points to include:

- A summary of the project, and how much money you are applying for.
- An introduction to your organisation, including your aims, key relevant achievements/experience to date, and support from other bodies.
- A clear description of the project or activities you are planning.
- Why the project is important and how it will benefit its users.
- A summary of how you will monitor and evaluate the project.

Collaboration and Partnerships

To increase the reach and reduce the cost of your project, it may be good to partner with other organisations. They might offer, for example, free digital services, information, or complimentary resources. One organisation may have space but no volunteers, whilst another have volunteers but nowhere to hold sessions. Partnership working requires flexibility, accountability and patience. So, although partnership can be very effective, it can affect the speed of getting a project going, so you'll need to build in some extra time. There are many specialist organisations with a wealth of experience in digital inclusion who actively welcome a collaborative approach, so do some research and reach out on social media or through local networks. We have case studies on our website with a focus on working in [partnership](#) (www.digitalunite.com/top-tips-public-private-partnerships).

Links and further resources

Planning a project and case studies

- Digital Inclusion Toolkit advice for councils <https://digitalinclusionkit.org/category/starting-a-digital-inclusion-programme/investment-and-finance/>
- Four essential steps to digital inclusion, Local Government Association www.local.gov.uk/our-support/cyber-digital-and-technology/four-essential-steps-digital-inclusion
- Mapping Digital Inclusion Toolkit, LOTI <https://loti.london/resources/mapping-digital-exclusion-toolkit/>
- NHS Digital – an overview of organisations working in digital inclusion <https://digital.nhs.uk/about-nhs-digital/corporate-information-and-documents/digital-inclusion/who-to-work-with>

Writing a funding bid

- Digital funding guidance, NCVO (the National Council for Voluntary Organisations) www.ncvo.org.uk/help-and-guidance/digital-technology/#/
- Planning a funding application, Resource Centre www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/planning-a-funding-application/
- Writing successful fundraising bids, Charity Commission www.charitycomms.org.uk/ten-top-tips-for-writing-successful-funding-bids

Funders or advice on funding sources

- Digital Candle (Free digital advice for small charities) www.digitalcandle.org.uk/

- Good Things Foundation www.goodthingsfoundation.org/
- Grantnav (<https://grantnav.threesixtygiving.org>)
- How to build a fundraising strategy, Charity Digital
<https://charitydigital.org.uk/topics/how-to-build-a-fundraising-strategy-10863>
- My Funding Central (www.myfundingcentral.co.uk)