Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund
Competition guidance

Introduction

1. The purpose of this guidance is to provide applicants in England with the information needed to submit an application to the Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund ('DIIF'). Successful candidates must utilise grant funding by **31 March 2026**.

2. This guidance sets out the priorities for the Fund. It then explains the application and assessment processes, and provides an indicative timetable.

3. The assessment framework can be found in Annex A and the application form can be found in Annex B. The core terms for successful applicants can be found in Annex C.

Overview

4. Digital inclusion is a priority for this government. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) published the *Digital Inclusion Action Plan – First Steps* in February 2025. It highlights the need for locally delivered, highly tailored and targeted interventions that meet the needs of digitally excluded people. It commits to building on the strength of existing local support to put the focus back where it is needed: in our communities.

5. The Action Plan also highlights that while the evidence base on digital inclusion in the UK is significant, it is also fragmented. Existing evidence is instrumental in understanding the scale of the challenge. However, the complex nature of digital exclusion, and the diverse barriers that people face, means that understanding the underlying drivers of digital exclusion and designing effective interventions remains a challenge.

6. One of the first five actions from the Digital Inclusion Action Plan that will be delivered is the £9.5mn Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund. £7.242mn will support digital inclusion projects in England, with proportionate funding going to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The objectives of the Fund are to support innovative interventions to produce new knowledge on 'what works', building the evidence base on effective digital inclusion interventions. It is also designed to support best practice with the ambition to scale and replicate successful activities across England to increase digital participation. Ultimately, this will help shape the Government's evolving digital inclusion strategy.

7. DSIT is eager to support stakeholders across England, providing a range of individual grants to fund activities of different sizes designed to help different demographics and communities. **Any funding awarded will only be available to be claimed in the financial year up to 31 March 2026.**

Application criteria

8. All applications must explain how the proposed project would:
   i) Contribute to **either** one of the Fund's primary objectives:

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         a. To support innovative initiatives to increase digital participation, producing new knowledge on 'what works' and building the evidence base on effective digital inclusion interventions;

         b. To support best practice with the ambition to scale and replicate successful digital inclusion activities across England.

    ii) Address at least one of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan Focus Areas:

         a. Opening up opportunities through skills.

         b. Breaking down barriers to digital services.

         c. Tackling data and device poverty.

         d. Building confidence and supporting local delivery.

    iii) Support at least one of the Action Plan focus demographic groups:

         a. Low-income households, specifically grades C2, D and E.[1]

         b. Older people, specifically aged 60 and over.

         c. Disabled people, specifically people with a physical or mental health condition or illness that has lasted or is expected to last 12 months or more, and the condition and/or illness reduces their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

         d. People experiencing unemployment.

         e. Young people (25 and younger), including those not in education, employment or training.

    iv) Address a clear digital inclusion challenge with rationale for intervention and the outcomes expected while ensuring value for money.

    v) Allow for effective monitoring and evaluation.

    vi) Be delivered and result in long-lasting impacts beyond the funding period.

9. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals to support best practice with the ambition to scale and replicate successful activities to increase digital participation across England. Proposals designed to scale or replicate an example of best practice must provide evidence to demonstrate the past success of that example as well as details of how the proposal would build on that success. Examples of proposals to support best practice in this context include:

    i) Replicating a project that has previously been completed successfully.

    ii) A project that has been completed successfully in one area but will now be expanded further, for example, by targeting new demographic groups or expanding to a new area.

    iii) A new project that will implement or expand the use of an existing tool or framework.

10. Alternatively, applicants are also strongly encouraged to submit innovative proposals. To qualify as 'innovative', the proposal must meet the five criteria for Research and Development ('R&D') set out in Annex C of the Government's [Consolidated Budget Guidance 2024-25]. Examples of innovative proposals in this context include:

    i) A brand-new idea that has never been tried before.

    ii) A project that has been implemented before but not in the same way i.e. novel and uncertain aspects.

    iii) A project that has been implemented before but to collect new evidence.

    iv) A project to develop a new digital inclusion tool.

    v) A project to gather new evidence to inform an existing tool or framework.

11. R&D is described as "*creative work undertaken on a systematic basis to increase the stock of knowledge, and use of this stock of knowledge for discovering or developing new products, including improved versions or qualities of existing products, or discovering or developing new or more efficient processes of production*". More

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[1] Office for National Statistics,
https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/aboutcensus/censusproducts/approximatedsocialgradedata

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information, including the criteria that needs to be met, can be found at Annex C of the Government's Consolidated Budgeting Guidance.

12. Long-lasting impacts beyond the funding period refers to how the expected outcomes of the proposal would continue to support digital inclusion in the local community after the fund ends on 31 March 2026.

13. Applicants must make clear the duration of the proposed project which can run until 31 March 2026, including setting out clear delivery milestones.

14. Funding **cannot** be awarded to support the following activities:
    i) Any project that is ongoing or available to the public on the date that the grant recipient signs the grant funding agreement or MOU.
    ii) To match fund a project which was already receiving government funding, whether in whole or in part.
    iii) Staff costs unless required to deliver the proposed project.
    iv) Installation of physical digital infrastructure projects e.g. broadband infrastructure, telecommunications, data centres. This does not include devices such as laptops and computers.
    v) Cyber security activities that have received funding under the CyberFirst or Cyber Local programmes in FY 25/26.

15. The maximum amount of overheads able to be claimed by an applicant is 20% of fixed labour costs.

16. Ongoing projects are not eligible for funding and a grant recipient cannot allocate funding received through this Fund to support activities that have already received funding, in whole or in part, or are available to the public. Funding also cannot be used to fund a project which was already in receipt of government funding (whether in whole or in part).

17. A project must be new in that it must be distinct from any existing projects that have already received funding (in whole or in part) or are available to the public. For example, if a project in question is due to conclude, a proposal could request funding to run a new project that would replicate the activity that is coming to an end, provided evidence to demonstrate the past success of that example as well as details of how the proposal would build on that success are adequately explained.

Scope of the Fund

18. The Government encourages eligible applicants to submit proposals for projects of various sizes. To collect evidence and understand what works best, there is value in running smaller, more narrowly focused projects through to large and far-reaching projects. Applicants are encouraged to apply for any project size but should be pragmatic and realistic about the amount of funding needed to implement the proposal.

19. Digital technologies have transformed modern society, creating opportunities for people to access information, create connections, and live healthier and more fulfilled lives. However, we know those who cannot use digital technologies are likely to have fewer job opportunities, pay more for certain transactions, have worse health outcomes, and find it more difficult to manage their finances. This Fund is designed to support a broad range of projects, tackling different aspects of digital exclusion. The following is a non-exhaustive list of areas of exploration which projects could

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address. Applicants are also encouraged to consider other areas related to digital inclusion:

    i) **Community engagement** – How can digital inclusion support greater social cohesion and strengthen local communities?

    ii) **Financial services** – Are there ways to improve access to financial services and economic empowerment through digital inclusion interventions?

    iii) **Employment** – How can expanding engagement with digital society help people to access and pursue employment opportunities?

    iv) **Education and skills** – How can increasing digital inclusion support greater access to education and skills including media literacy?

    v) **Safety and security** – What interventions can support greater understanding of how to be safe and secure in a digital society?

    vi) **Health and wellbeing** – What are the opportunities to support greater understanding of and control over personal health and wellbeing through digital inclusion?

Eligibility

20. Applications can only be submitted by combined authorities, local authorities, charities, and research organisations. Any of these organisations can also submit an application as the Lead Organisation of a consortium. Further details on charities and research organisations are set out in paragraphs 27-29 below while further details on consortiums are set out in paragraphs 30 and 31 further below.

21. A local authority refers to those organisations listed in section 23 of the Local Government Act 2003.

22. A combined authority refers to those established under section 103 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

23. Applicants must be based in England. This means the applicant must be registered in England and have their head office in England. It also means the proposed project must take place in at least one of the nine regions of England, but it can also span multiple regions of England (North East, North West, Yorkshire and The Humber, East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England, London, South East, and South West).

24. The total amount available is **£7.242mn** which is comprised of three types of funding:

    i) **Category 1**: **£2.594mn** to be allocated to support a wide range of projects with a particular emphasis on replicating or scaling examples of best practice in digital inclusion interventions.

    ii) **Category 2**: **£3.380mn** to be allocated to support innovative interventions that produce new knowledge and help fill evidence gaps on effective digital inclusion interventions. These projects must meet the R&D criteria in Annex C of the Government's [Consolidated Budget Guidance 2024-25](#).

    iii) **Category 3**: **£1.267mn** to be allocated to physical and intangible assets that can be capitalised. This equipment and inventory to support the delivery of digital inclusion activities may include laptops, devices, and new software.

25. Applicants will need to specify at least one category of funding they are requesting. They must also specify the amount being requested. Applicants can apply for a mix of funding from categories 1 and 3, or 2 and 3. However, applicants cannot submit an application that requests a mix of funding categories 1 and 2. This is because category 2 funding requests must meet the R&D criteria to produce 'new knowledge' while category 1 is focused on replicating and scaling best practice.

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26. All applicants can apply for **grants of £25,000 to £500,000** regardless of the organisation, category of funding, or region of England. All applicants should make clear the amount of funding being requested and how it will be spent.

27. Eligible charities and research organisations must:
    i) Be registered and operating in England.
    ii) Have been registered for at least 1 year from the date that this Fund went live.
    iii) Commit to ensuring that any funding awarded is used exclusively to implement the proposed project.

28. To be eligible for funding as a research organisation, the applicant must be a research organisation eligible for UKRI funding. The complete list of eligible research organisations can be found here.

29. The following organisations are not eligible to apply for funding as an individual applicant or as a Lead Organisation of a consortium:
    i) NHS bodies
    ii) Catapult centres
    iii) Companies

30. Applications from consortiums (groups of stakeholders) are welcome. However:
    i) A consortium must have a Lead Organisation to serve as the main contact point through which the grant can be awarded and managed.
    ii) The Lead Organisation must be a local authority, combined authority, charity or research organisation.
    iii) All participating organisations must be identified. This may include local stakeholders such as companies, voluntary and community groups, and social enterprises.
    iv) All members of the consortium responsible for delivering the project will be subject to due diligence checks.
    v) The Lead Organisation will be responsible for conducting relevant due diligence checks (in addition to those conducted by the fund administrator) and ensuring that any partners who receive funding only use it to support implementation of the funded project.

31. Applicants working with subcontractors are responsible for ensuring that these partners can meet their obligations and must carry out appropriate due diligence checks. All subcontractors must be clearly identified in the application, and DSIT will also conduct its own due diligence on these organisations. Applicants must also provide a detailed breakdown of all associated costs in their application.

Monitoring and evaluation

32. DSIT are committed to ensuring that all funded projects are appropriately monitored and evaluated. This will ensure it is possible to assess the success of the Fund overall, as well as the effectiveness of the individual funded activities to support digital inclusion. All grant recipients will be responsible for collecting and/or providing DSIT with quantitative and/or qualitative data on inputs, activities, outputs and – where available for the project – outcomes and impacts. This data will be collected via the monitoring form and engagement with independent evaluators.

33. To support the process evaluation of the Fund, grant recipients will be required to provide DSIT with information about both project inputs and project activities as part of the monitoring form. This will include:
    i) Inputs: the resources and time investments used to deliver the project, such as:

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       a. Financial resources
       b. Human resources
       c. Partnerships
       d. Assets.

  ii) Activities: the steps, interventions or actions the project team has undertaken to achieve its objectives, such as:
       a. Planning and development
       b. Capacity building
       c. Service delivery
       d. Collaboration
       e. Monitoring and data collection.

Grant recipients will also be asked to provide DSIT with information on the extent to which achieved inputs and activities aligned with initial plans, barriers and enablers that were experienced, and lessons learned.

34. Applications must identify both output and outcome key performance indicators (KPIs) for the project.

  i) Output KPIs demonstrate the delivery of products or services resulting from project activities. Output KPIs should demonstrate how the project is supporting at least one of the target population groups identified in the Digital Inclusion Action Plan. Relevant examples may include, but are not limited to:
       a. Number and demographics of participants engaged/supported
       b. Number of training sessions delivered
       c. Number of devices or other pieces of equipment distributed/funded
       d. Number of data packages distributed/funded
       e. Forms of support materials developed and distributed.

  ii) Outcome KPIs demonstrate the benefits that the project is designed to deliver and should reflect one or more of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan focus areas. Relevant examples may include, but are not limited to:
       a. Improved digital skills
       b. Improved access to devices or data
       c. Improved inclusivity or accessibility of digital services
       d. Increased realisation of benefits of being online
       e. Increased ability to remain safe and secure online.

35. All grant recipients will be responsible for collecting data which monitors progress against identified output and outcome KPIs, and for sharing this data with DSIT. For each of these KPIs, applicants must explain how they will collect quantitative and/or qualitative data to measure their progress. Where possible and relevant, projects should provide outcome data from before and after their activities, so that any changes resulting from the project can be clearly identified. For example, through the administration of questionnaires to participants pre- and post- engagement. Grant recipients will be provided with a bank of core questions which, where relevant, they should draw from in any collection of quantitative outcome data.

36. All grant recipients will be expected to contribute evidence and learning that supports the Fund's overarching intended impacts by:

  i) Demonstrating measurable improvements in digital participation among target groups;
  ii) Generating new knowledge and actionable insights into effective and scalable approaches for tackling digital exclusion; or
  iii) Providing evidence that can inform policy, shape future interventions, and drive collaboration between local authorities, charities, research organisations and communities.

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37. For further information on how grant recipients will be expected to support monitoring and evaluation, please see **Annex C**.

Application process

38. Combined authorities, local authorities, charities, and research organisations may submit applications to the Fund individually or in collaboration with other stakeholders. This must be completed and submitted online via Find a Grant located at: https://find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/grants/digital-inclusion-innovation-fund-2.

39. Combined authorities and local authorities are encouraged to invite and manage applications within their individual or collective areas, tailoring proposals to local priorities that fit within the overall priorities of the Fund. We expect combined and local authorities to work with local stakeholders to develop, refine, and submit applications.

40. A single eligible applicant is only able to be the Lead organisation for one consortium application. However, that same applicant can submit an individual application or may contribute to other applications as part of a consortium, so long as they are not the Lead organisation. If an applicant is involved in several successful applications, the applicant will be asked to provide an explanation (with proof) of their ability to manage all necessary responsibilities. This may include demonstrating sufficient resource capabilities and clear governance structures.

41. When completing the application online:
    i) All applicants should complete Sections 1 and 2.
    ii) Applicants requesting **funding category 1** must complete questions 1, 3, 4 and 5 of Section 3. Please respond N/A to question 2 in Section 3.
    iii) Applicants requesting **funding category 2** must complete questions 1, 2, 4, and 5 of Section 3. Please respond N/A to question 3 in Section 3.
    iv) All applicants should complete Section 4 if they are involved with more than one application in any way. For further details on funding categories, refer to para 22-23.
    v) All applicants must complete a project cost breakdown form. This is available and must be submitted online via Find a Grant located at: https://find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/grants/digital-inclusion-innovation-fund-2.

Assessment process

42. A dedicated team from the Government Grant Management Service will review all applications, ensuring consistency through a moderation process.

43. DSIT representatives will participate in the review and award process. DSIT Ministers will approve the final list of successful applications.

44. How scoring will be assigned:

Score	Description
4	The response was robust, detailed, well-articulated in all material respects providing strong evidence that the criteria would be met, with no weaknesses or areas of concern with the content.

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3	The response presented evidence that the criteria would be met, good in many respects but with minimal weaknesses or concerns with the content.
2	The response provided limited evidence that the criteria would be met, there were some weaknesses or concerns with the content. The response lacked some detail or clarity.
1	The response did not provide evidence that the criteria would be met and was wholly unsatisfactory in terms of content. Major weaknesses, issues or omissions were identified. The response was poorly articulated and/or inconsistent.

45. In the application, all questions in section 3 will be scored on a scale of 1 to 4. An applicant must not score lower than a 2 on any individual question. To qualify for funding, an application must score at least 60% across all questions. In the event of 2 or more applications achieving the same Total Score, the tie breaker will be considered by an independent panel using firstly the highest score for 'Rationale'. If still tied, the highest score for 'Innovation' or 'Best Practice' depending on which is relevant. If still tied, the highest score for 'Delivery and Sustainability'.

46. Funding will be awarded based on merit (i.e. from highest to lowest scores). Eligible applications will be evaluated and scored according to how well they meet the specified criteria (pass mark is 60%). Grants will be distributed beginning with the highest scoring proposals, in each region, until the available funding for each category of spend has run out. The goal is to ensure an even distribution of funded projects across all nine regions of England: North East, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England, London, South East and South West. If a successful proposal covers several regions, it will be counted as a funded project in each of those regions to help achieve regional balance. If there are not enough qualifying projects in a particular region, any leftover funding will go to the next highest scoring application regardless of region to make full use of the funding.

47. All three categories of funding will be awarded until the full amount has been reached. When funding category 1 has been fully awarded, no further proposals for 'best practice' projects will receive funding. When funding category 2 has been fully awarded, no further proposals for 'innovative' projects will receive funding. When funding category 3 has been fully awarded, no further proposals for tangible or intangible assets will receive funding.

48. Funding will be provided by DSIT based on the project deliverables completed in the financial year ending on 31 March 2026. Grant payments will be available at two points over the lifecycle of the funded project: grant recipients will be invited to submit invoices by 16 January 2026 accounting for activities through to and including 16 January 2026. Grant recipients will then submit final invoices by 30 April 2026 accounting for all remaining unclaimed activity up to and including 31 March 2026. Payments will only be made after the necessary evidence that demonstrates costs and expenditure has been provided.

49. The project cannot commence until the funding agreement has been signed by both parties and no retrospective activities will be funded.

50. Applicants will also be informed if their application was unsuccessful and provided with feedback via the Fund delivery partner.

51. For any questions, please contact **ggms_diginc_innofund@cabinetoffice.gov.uk** who will aim to get back to you as soon as possible.

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Successful applicants

52. The successful applicant and the organisations with whom they intend to collaborate will be required to pass comprehensive due diligence checks. This may require the submission of additional details.

53. Charities and research organisations awarded funding will sign a grant funding agreement. Local authorities and combined authorities awarded funding will sign a Memorandum of Understanding. These documents will commit the grant recipient to delivering the successful proposal. Annex C sets out relevant core terms that will be included in these documents.

54. Successful applicants will receive payment in arrears following the submission of evidence demonstrating how resources were spent. Before being approved for payment, all claims for payment will be reviewed to ensure that all costs and activities are eligible to be funded. Grant payments will be available at two points over the lifecycle of the funded project: grant recipients will be invited to submit invoices by 16 January 2026 accounting for activities through to and including 16 January 2026. Grant recipients will then submit final invoices by 30 April 2026 accounting for all remaining unclaimed activity up to and including 31 March 2026.

55. Successful applicants will be required to submit a monitoring report in January 2025 and a final report following completion of the project. The monitoring report will help identify any potential issues or barriers to delivery as early as possible. A template for these reports will be provided along with the grant funding agreement or Memorandum of Understanding.

56. Though not a requirement, successful applicants will be invited to share any pre-implementation figures or existing data, if available, that could provide helpful benchmarks to support the evaluation of funded projects.

57. Successful applicants will be required to collaborate with the independent evaluator to support the evaluation of the Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund. This will require agreeing to information-sharing arrangements and giving consent to share data and management information relating to the funded project.

58. Please note that this funding may be subject to change and withdrawal at any point during the competition window and application assessment process, up to decisions being communicated to applicants. DSIT reserves the right to withdraw this opportunity without notice and will not be liable for any costs incurred by applicants during any stage of the process. By issuing this competition document, the Department is not bound in any way and is not required to accept any proposal.

Indicative timeframe

59. The following is an indicative timetable:

Date	Development
12:00 on 13 Aug 2025	Scheme launches for applicants to submit proposals
15:00 on 10 Sept 2025	Deadline to submit an application (submissions after 15:00 will not be accepted)
10 Sept 2025 to 19 Oct 2025	Application assessment (inc. eligibility checks; decision-making and due diligence checks)
20 Oct 2025	Notification letters sent to inform applicants of results

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22 Oct 25 (2 working days)	Applicants must respond to letters
23 Oct 2025	Grant funding agreements and MOUs issued
29 Oct 2025 (5 working days)	Grant funding agreements and MOUs must be signed
03 Nov 2025	Projects begin
16 January 2026	First instalment of invoices to be submitted by this date – they should account for activities that took place up to and including 16 January 2025.
31 March 2026	All funded activities must conclude
30 April 2026	Final instalment of invoices must be submitted by this date – they should account for all remaining unclaimed activity up to and including 31 March 2026.

Application pro forma

60. All applications must be submitted online via Find a Grant located at: https://find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/grants/digital-inclusion-innovation-fund-2.

61. The full proposal must be submitted via the online application form by 15:00 GMT on Wednesday 10 September 2025. Any supporting materials must be attached to the online application form and in- line with the guidance on such materials. Please note that responses cannot exceed the word count set within the application form, so we advise checking these in advance. DSIT strongly recommends that you begin to complete the online application form several days before the application submission deadline, to ensure that you leave ample time to complete and submit the entire application.

62. Applications (or any part of an application) submitted after the deadline will not be accepted. You must have uploaded all supporting information and declarations and clicked 'submit application' by the application deadline. You can save your application at any time by clicking "Save and come back later". You will then be able to return to your application from through the Grant Advert to complete it. You may also find it useful to review the offline application pro forma, available in the Supporting Documents. This is a Word document copy of the questions that will be asked of you in the online application form, which you can use to view the sequence of all the questions and to plan your time allocation or content prior to submitting your application. The offline Word document is for reference only and **cannot be submitted** as your application. All applications will need to be completed and submitted through the online platform.

63. The following guidance is given to assist in completion of the online application form:

    Name of applicant: If the submission is being made on behalf of a consortium, this will be the Lead Organisation which must be a local authority, combined authority, charity or research organisation.

    Accountable officer: Name and role of the lead contact (individual representative who is submitting the application on behalf of an organisation) who will take responsibility for implementing the proposal if successful.

    Name of all other organisations with responsibility for delivering the project (including type of organisation, address of head office and registration if relevant).

    Project title: The name of the project for which you are applying for funding.

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Project start and end dates: Clear start and end dates of the project. The project cannot start until the funding agreement is signed by your organisation and DSIT. No retrospective activities can be funded.

Location of project: Use the dropdown menu of all nine regions of England to indicate where the proposed project will take place. This may be one region or multiple regions depending on where the project will be active. A specific address should be provided if possible.

Category and amount of funding sought: Specify the amount(s) and category or categories of funding being applied for in the proposal.

Total funding sought: The total amount being requested for this proposal.

Total project costs: The total cost of the project including any equipment and human resources.

Total amount and source of any match funding: Specify whether any funding received through this fund will be matched in any way by another source of funding. This cannot be additional government funding

Project overview: This section should detail the purpose, scope and expected outcomes of the project. **Please note this section should be 500 words maximum.**

Project costs: The separate **Project Cost Breakdown form** should set out all of the project costs in full. Costs should be broken down in sufficient detail to facilitate a clear assessment of whether each cost is eligible and appropriate under this Fund.

Project timescale: A table to show the key milestones and corresponding target dates from project start to completion.

Rationale and Value for Money: Please explain how this proposal supports either one of the Fund objectives and aligns with at least one of the Action Plan Focus Areas. You should set out your rationale for intervention including a digital inclusion challenge you aim to address and the outcomes you aim to achieve. You should also identify who you expect to benefit from the project with reference to the Action Plan key demographics. Explain why funding this project is an efficient use of government funding including how the benefits outweigh the costs and why funding this project is better than doing nothing. **Please note this section should be 1000 words maximum.**

Innovation: Please explain how your proposed project is innovative and will help to build the evidence base on effective interventions to support digital inclusion. Make sure you explain how the proposal meets the R&D criteria in Annex C of the Government's Consolidated Budget Guidance. **Please note this section should be 300 words maximum. If you complete this question, you should respond N/A to question 3 on 'best practice' should not apply for funding category 1.**

Best practice: Please explain how this project will replicate or scale best practice. This should include evidence to demonstrate past success of the project in question and details of how this proposal will either replicate or expand on this success. **Please note this section should be 300 words maximum If you complete this question, you should respond with N/A to question 2 on 'innovation' should not apply for funding category 2.**

Deliverability and Sustainability**:** How will you ensure your project is delivered on time and to budget, and how will your proposal result in long-lasting impacts beyond the

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conclusion of the fund in March 2026? **Please note this section should be 500 words maximum.**

Monitoring and evaluation: Please explain what data you will collect as part of this project and how. This should include setting out clear KPIs that demonstrates how effectively the project meets its intended outcomes and objectives. It should also include a plan to collect and share relevant data that can be used to evaluate the impact of the project. Applicants should refer to sections 10 to 14 in Annex C. **Please note this section should be 200 words maximum**.

Section 4 is only to be completed if an applicant (or partner organisation) is involved in at least two applications. In this scenario, the applicant (or partner) must provide an explanation (with proof) of their ability to manage all the necessary responsibilities, including demonstrating sufficient resource capabilities and clear governance structures should they be successful in being granted funding for all or some of the projects they are planning to participate in. These details are not scored but will be assessed and may influence the outcome of the assessment process. **Please note this section should be 200 words maximum**.

Submitting your application

64. The online application must be submitted by **no later than 15:00pm on Wednesday 10 September 2025** and should be submitted online via Find a Grant located at: https://find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/grants/digital-inclusion-innovation-fund-2.

65. By submitting an application, applicants confirm that they accept the core terms and will comply with the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and any relevant regulations, and that any subsidy received will not be used in a manner that contravenes these regulations. Applicants acknowledge their responsibility to ensure compliance and retain necessary records.

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ANNEX A: Application Pro forma (for reference purposes only)

DIGITAL INCLUSION INNOVATION FUND APPLICATION PRO FORMA	
SECTION 1	
Name of applicant (Lead Organisation if there is a consortium)	
Head office postal address	
Accountable Officer (name and job title)	
Accountable Officer telephone number	
Accountable Officer email address	
Name of all other organisations with responsibility for delivering this project, if relevant (including type of organisation, address of head office and registration details)	
Project title	
Project start and end dates	
Location of project	**[choose all that apply from list of all nine regions]**
Category and amount of funding sought	**Category 1:** **Category 2:** **Category 3:**
Total funding sought	
Total project costs	
Total amount and source of any match funding (this cannot be additional government funding)	
SECTION 2	
Is your organisation eligible to receive grant funding for your proposal?	
[Yes or No]	
If applying as the Lead Organisation of a consortium, please confirm you have conducted financial due diligence on all partner organisations and you have reviewed their financial soundness as part of the application process.	
[Yes or No]	
Do you agree to accept and abide by the core terms reflected in Annex C?	
[Yes or No]	
Project overview (max 500 words)	
Project costs	
[Complete project breakdown form]	

Project timescale: Project	Milestone

SECTION 3 (See Annex B for detailed descriptions and the assessment framework)	
1) Rationale and value for money: What is the project, what will it achieve and why if funding this project an efficient use of government funding? (max 1000 words)	
[Only relevant for applications involving funding category 2 and/or funding category 3] **2) Innovation: How is this project innovative?** (max 300 words)	

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[Only relevant for applications involving funding category 1 and/or funding category 3] **3) Best Practice: How will this project replicate or scale best practice?** (max 300 words)
4) Deliverability and Sustainability: How will you ensure your project is delivered on time and to budget, and how will your proposal result in long-lasting impacts beyond the funding period? (max 500 words)
5) Monitoring and evaluation: What KPIs will you set and what data will you collect? (max 200 words)

SECTION 4
[For those applicants involved in more than one application] **Sufficient resource and capability: Provide an explanation with proof of your ability to manage all responsibilities, including sufficient resource capabilities and clear governance structures, should you be successful in securing funding for all/more than 1 of the projects you intend to participate in.** (max 200 words)

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ANNEX B: Assessment framework

Criteria	Consideration of criteria	Scoring	Weight	Available marks
Rationale and value for money	A strong rationale for intervention including identifying the digital inclusion challenge(s) that the scheme is intended to address and the outcomes expected. This explanation should reference how the proposal supports at least one of the Fund objectives and at least one of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan Focus Areas and key demographics. Explain why funding this project is an efficient use of government funding including how the benefits outweigh the costs and why funding this project is better than doing nothing.	**1-4**	**X 5**	**20**
Innovation	Clear explanation of why the proposed project is innovative, including clear identification of how the proposal will produce new knowledge on 'what works' and build the evidence base on effective digital inclusion interventions. This must include strong demonstration of how the proposed project meets the R&D criteria set out in the Government's Consolidated Budget Guidance.	**1-4**	**X 5**	**20**
Best practice	Clear explanation of how this project will replicate or scale best practice. This should include evidence to demonstrate past success of the example of best practice along with details of how the proposal will either replicate or expand on that success.	**1-4**	**X 5**	**20**
Deliverability and Sustainability	Who will lead on key activities, for example, project management, etc within your team? What role project will partners take in the project? Provide a project activity and delivery plan, setting out key activities, risks, and timescales for completing your projects (including how you will ensure the project timescales are met). What is your resource capability and project management including skills & experience in delivering this type of project? Provide a strong rationale for why the proposed project will continue to support the local	**1-4**	**X 5**	**20**

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		1-4	X 5	20
	community and improve digital inclusion even after the funding has concluded.			
Monitoring and evaluation	Provide a clear explanation of how and what data will be collected. Identify clear KPIs for how the success of the programme will be measured.	**1-4**	**X 5**	**20**
Sufficient resource and capability	**[For those applicants (and/or partners) involved in more than one application]** Provide an explanation (with proof) of your ability to manage all of the necessary responsibilities, including demonstrating sufficient resource capabilities and clear governance structures should you be successful in being granted funding for all/more than 1 of the projects that you are planning to participate in (max 200 words)	**N/A**	**N/A**	**Not Scored** - only taken into account if the applicant is involved in more than 1 successful application

Annex C: Core Terms

The successful applicant must be capable of accepting terms to be communicated after the applicant has been deemed successful. The terms will include but are not limited to the following core terms:

1) Total amount of the grant

2) Start and end dates of the project

3) Outcomes including but not limited to:

   a. The purpose of the Fund is to support innovative interventions designed by local stakeholders to tackle the Digital Inclusion Action Plan focus areas, increasing digital participation. It is also to produce new knowledge on 'what works', building the evidence base on effective digital inclusion interventions. Outcomes of this Fund should evidence this.

4) Funded activities which may be agreed between Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) and a successful applicant must be demonstrably connected with the following criteria:
   a. Contribute to the Fund's primary objectives.
   b. Contribute to at least one of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan Focus Areas.
   c. Support at least one of the Action Plan focus demographic groups.
   d. Address a clear digital inclusion challenge with rationale for intervention, and demonstrate value for money.
   e. Be innovative and/or designed to replicate / scale best practice.
   f. Monitor and collect data that can be used to evaluate the impact of the funded project.
   g. Be deliverable and sustainable i.e. achieve long-lasting impacts (without further funding) beyond 31 March 2026.

5) Ineligible expenditure includes:
   a. Any project or programme of work that is ongoing or available to the public on the date that this Fund opens for applications.
   b. Staff costs unless required to deliver the proposed project.
   c. Installation of physical digital infrastructure projects e.g. broadband infrastructure, telecommunications, data centres.
   d. Cyber security activities that have received funding under the CyberFirst or Cyber Local programmes in FY 25/26.
   e. Input VAT reclaimable by the Grant Recipient from HMRC.
   f. Liabilities incurred before the commencement of the Funding Agreement.

6) The maximum amount of overheads able to be claimed by an applicant is 20% of fixed labour costs.

7) Events of default include but are not limited to:
   a. Where the grant recipient uses the grant for a purpose other than the funded project or uses it for ineligible expenditure;
   b. Where the grant recipient fails to comply with its obligations under the eventual grant funding agreement;
   c. Where there is a delay to the start of the delivery of the funded project without a satisfactory explanation;
   d. Where the future of the funded project appears to DSIT to be in jeopardy;

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e. Where the grant recipient is in the opinion of DSIT to be delivering the funded project in a negligent manner (in this context negligence includes but is not limited to failing to prevent or report actual or anticipated fraud or corruption);

f. Where the grant recipient receives funding from a third party which contravenes any terms related to match and/or duplicate funding, or from a third party with which association would be likely to bring the funded activities and/or DSIT into disrepute;

g. Where the grant recipient materially misleads DSIT either during the application process or during the delivery of the funded activities;

h. Where the grant recipient commits or has committed a prohibited act or fails to report a prohibited act to DSIT whether committed by the grant recipient, it's representatives or an associated third party;

i. Where the grant recipient fails to act in accordance with the law, or acts dishonestly or negligently at any time during the term of the Agreement;

j. Where the grant recipient ceases to operate for any reason, becomes insolvent, or it is declared bankrupt, or it is placed into receivership, administration or liquidation, or a petition has been presented for its winding up, or it enters into any arrangement or composition for the benefit of its creditors, or it is unable to pay its debts as they fall due;

k. Where a competent authority requires any grant paid to be recovered by reason of a breach of Subsidy Control Law or the grant recipient fails to comply with the provisions of the exemption or scheme under Subsidy Control Law that applies to the Funded Activities and the Grant; and/or

l. Where the grant recipient undergoes a change of control which DSIT reasonably considers will be detrimental to the funded activities.

8) Rights reserved for DSIT in relation to an event of default include but are not limited to:

a. Giving the grant recipient an opportunity to remedy the event of default (if the event is in the opinion of DSIT, remediable);

b. Suspend or terminate the payment of the grant for such period as DSIT determines necessary;

c. Terminate the agreement;

d. Reduce the maximum sum in which case the payment of the grant shall therefore be made in accordance with that reduced amount and notified to the grant recipient; and/or

e. Require the grant recipient to repay the authority the whole or any part of the amount of grant previously paid to the grant recipient. Such sums shall be recovered as a civil debt;

f. Either party may terminate the agreement at any time by giving at least 3 months written notice.

9) The Grant Recipient must appoint an accountable officer responsible for:

a. Maintaining oversight of the grant recipient's use of the grant;

b. Safeguarding, controlling and ensuring the efficient, economical and effective management of the grant;

c. Advising the grant recipient on the discharge of its responsibilities under this agreement and under any subsequent variations agreed by the parties, or any guidance or other information notified by the authority;

d. Ensuring that principles of probity, robust governance, transparency and value for money are maintained at all times in relation to the grant; and

e. Being responsible for signing the accounts relating to the grant, ensuring that they are properly prepared and presented and that proper accounting records are maintained in a form that complies with generally accepted accounting practices to which the grant recipient is subject; and ensuring that conflicts of interest are avoided.

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10) All grant recipients commit to collaborating with DSIT and any evaluation partner by giving consent to sharing data and agreeing to information-sharing arrangements. They also commit to providing the following information to DSIT and any evaluation partner:
   a. Quantitative data:
      i. Project timeline
      ii. Total budget
      iii. Costs inc. staff, equipment, venue fees, etc.
      iv. Number and demographic of people supported by the project itself and any project partners e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, location, etc.
   b. Qualitative data:
      i. Any support that participants needed during the project delivery phase
      ii. Details on what aspect of the project worked well and what aspects did not work well
      iii. What lessons can be learned about how this project was delivered

11) To support the process evaluation of the Fund, grant recipients will be required to provide DSIT with information about both project inputs and project activities as part of the monitoring form. This will include:
   a. Inputs: the resources and time investments used to deliver the project, such as:
      i. Financial resources
      ii. Human resources
      iii. Partnerships
      iv. Assets
   b. Activities: the steps, interventions or actions the project team has undertaken to achieve its objectives, such as:
      i. Planning and development
      ii. Capacity building
      iii. Service delivery
      iv. Collaboration
      v. Monitoring and data collection.
   Grant recipients will also be asked to provide DSIT with feedback on the extent to which achieved inputs and activities aligned with initial plans, barriers and enablers that were experienced, and lessons learned.

12) Applications must identify both output and outcome key performance indicators (KPIs) for the project.
   a. Output KPIs demonstrate the delivery of products or services resulting from project activities. Output KPIs should demonstrate how the project is supporting at least one of the target population groups identified in the Digital Inclusion Action Plan. Relevant examples may include, but are not limited to:
      i. Number and demographics of participants engaged/supported
      ii. Number of training sessions delivered
      iii. Number of devices or other pieces of equipment distributed/funded
      iv. Number of data packages distributed/funded
      v. Forms of support materials developed and distributed.
   b. Outcome KPIs demonstrate the benefits that the project is designed to deliver and should reflect one or more of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan focus areas. Relevant examples may include, but are not limited to:
      i. Improved digital skills
      ii. Improved access to devices or data
      iii. Improved inclusivity or accessibility of digital services
      iv. Increased realisation of benefits of being online
      v. Increased ability to remain safe and secure online.

13) All grant recipients will be responsible for collecting data which monitors progress against identified output and outcome KPIs, and for sharing this data with DSIT. For

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each of these KPIs, applicants must explain how they will collect quantitative and/or qualitative data to measure their progress. Where possible and relevant, projects should provide outcome data from before and after their activities, so that any changes resulting from the project can be clearly identified. For example, through the administration of questionnaires to participants pre- and post- engagement. Grant recipients will be provided with a bank of core questions which, where relevant, they should draw from in any collection of quantitative outcome data.

14) All grant recipients will be expected to contribute evidence and learning that supports the Fund's overarching intended impacts by:
    a. Demonstrating measurable improvements in digital participation among target groups;
    b. Generating new knowledge and actionable insights into effective and scalable approaches for tackling digital exclusion; or
    c. Providing evidence that can inform policy, shape future interventions, and drive collaboration between local authorities, charities, research organisations and communities

15) All grant recipients commit to using all funding received through this Fund for the exclusive purpose of the activities outline in the successful application and not for any other commercial purpose.

16) Grant recipients may be required to support DSIT communications efforts to raise awareness of the Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund and the funded projects themselves. For example, this may include contributing to social media posts, press releases and other digital communications, as well as supporting the sharing of these outputs. Further detail will be set out in the Grant Funding Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding agreed by the grant recipients, which may require grant recipients to comply with specified branding requirements.

17) Intellectual property rights:
    a. Intellectual property in all IPR material developed by the Grant Recipient will be the property of the Grant Recipient.
    b. The Grant Recipient grants to DSIT a non-exclusive, irrevocable and royalty-free, sub-licensable, worldwide licence to use all IPR material for the purpose of ensuring delivery of the funded activities, and for the purpose of supporting other projects.

18) Insurance:
    a. The grant recipient will ensure that it has and maintains at all times adequate insurance with an insurer of good repute to cover claims under the Grant Funding Agreement or any other claims or demands which may be brought or made against it by any person suffering any injury damage or loss in connection with the Funded Activities or the Grant Funding Agreement.

19) Compliance with environmental requirements and modern-day slavery requirements.

20) Subsidy control requirements, including but not limited to:
    a. The grant recipient administering the grant in a manner which complies with subsidy control law and the assessment made by HMG.

These terms are provided as the minimum conditions. They do not represent all terms which may be required to govern an award made on the basis of a successful application. DSIT will consider minor amendments to the terms at the stage where a successful applicant is identified. Amendments will be at the discretion of DSIT.