Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund
FAQs

Last updated: 13 Aug 2025

Please note: *This document is subject to change - applicants should check back regularly for any amendments. Applicants should refer to the competition guidance for comprehensive information on how to complete and submit an application.*

Eligibility

1) **Who is eligible to apply for funding?**
   - Applications can only be submitted by combined authorities, local authorities, charities, and research organisations based in England. Any of these organisations can also submit an application as the Lead Organisation of a consortium.
   - Applications from consortiums (groups of stakeholders) are welcome. However:
     - A consortium must have a Lead Organisation to serve as the main contact point through which the grant can be awarded and managed.
     - The Lead Organisation must be a local authority, combined authority, charity or research organisation.
     - All participating organisations must be identified. This may include local stakeholders such as businesses, voluntary and community groups, and social enterprises.
     - All members of the consortium responsible for delivering the project will be subject to due diligence checks.
     - 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.

2) **Why is eligibility restricted to local authorities, combined authorities, charities and research organisations?**
   - These organisations are best placed to understand the specific needs of local communities and to coordinate across different organisations to deliver interventions that service local communities.
   - However, we recognise that other local organisations have a vital role to play in digital inclusion interventions, and we hope they will support applications as part of a consortium.

3) **What is a Combined Authority?**
   - A combined authority refers to those established under Section 103 of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

4) **Why are research organisations able to apply?**
   - One of the two objectives for this Fund is to support innovative initiatives to increase digital participation, producing new knowledge on 'what works', and building the evidence base on effective digital inclusion interventions.

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- Research organisations are particularly well-placed to conduct innovative research to gather new evidence and help achieve these objectives.

5) **Do higher education institutions (i.e. Universities) count as research organisations?**
   - Research organisations must appear on the UKRI list of research organisations to be eligible. Please find the list [here.](here)

6) **Can [this organisation] apply? e.g. NHS bodies, voluntary and social enterprises, etc.**
   - Only local and combined authorities, charities, and research organisations can submit applications.
   - Any organisation can form part of a consortium as long as the consortium has a Lead Organisation that is a combined authority, local authority, charity or research organisation.

7) **Does the size of the organisation factor into the assessment of its application or the amount of funding for which it can apply?**
   - No, we welcome applications from organisations of different sizes. However, all applicants should only propose projects they are able to confidently demonstrate that they can deliver.
   - All applicants are required to provide a breakdown of all the proposed project costs in full which will be assessed to ensure they meet the eligible expenditure criteria.

8) **Who can form part of a consortium?**
   - Any organisation based in England can form part of a consortium as long as the consortium has a Lead Organisation that is a combined authority, local authority, charity or research organisation.
   - This includes, but is not limited to, social enterprises, civil society groups, integrated care boards, not-for-profit community interest groups, NHS acute trusts and businesses.
   - The Lead Organisation will be responsible for managing and delivering the proposal which includes conducting due diligence checks on the participating organisations. DSIT will also conduct due diligence on all project partners responsible for delivering the project.

9) **How many consortiums can I be a part of?**
   - There is no limit on how many consortiums you can be part of. However, you will need to provide evidence that you are able to manage all necessary responsibilities should you be successful in all/any of the applications of which you are a part. This may include demonstrating sufficient resource capabilities and clear governance structures for managing multiple projects.

10) **Can local authorities apply for funding independently from a Combined Authority they are a part of that's also applying for funding?**
   - Yes. Local and combined authorities can submit applications independently and in collaboration.

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11) Can a charity or research organisation apply as an individual organisation and as part of a consortium?
- Yes, combined authorities, local authorities, charities, and research organisations can submit individual applications as well as applications on behalf of consortia.
- The Lead Organisation will be responsible for managing and delivering the proposal which includes conducting due diligence checks on the participating organisations.
- There is no limit on how many consortiums you can be part of as a supporting partner. However, you will need to provide evidence that you are able to manage all necessary responsibilities should you be successful in all/any of the applications you are part of. This will include demonstrating sufficient resource capabilities and clear governance structures for managing multiple projects.

12) Can we subcontract work within the grant?
- Applicants can work with a wide range of partners to deliver their proposed activities, including subcontractors.
- 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.

13) Will DSIT help matchmake consortia by helping interested parties connect with each other?
- DSIT will not be helping to matchmake consortia by helping interested parties connect with each other. We encourage all applications to consult within their network for other organisations who might wish to apply as a consortium.

Scope

14) Is [this idea] within scope of the Fund?
- DSIT cannot comment on individual proposals, including whether a particular project would qualify for funding or whether it would be successful.
- As set out in the guidance document, the Fund has been designed to support a wide range of projects and all applicants should refer to the criteria to inform their proposals.

15) My idea is not listed in the areas of exploration – does that mean I won't get funding?
- No. The non-exhaustive list of areas of exploration has been provided to give potential applicants inspiration. It reflects the complexity of digital exclusion and its diverse effects on individual lives.
- We cannot comment on individual proposals including whether a particular project would qualify for funding or whether it would be successful.
- All proposals need to present a clear digital inclusion challenge that the project intends to address.

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16) Please clarify what R&D stands for?

- R&D stands for Research and Development, and 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 information, including the criteria that needs to be met, can be found at Annex C of the HMT Consolidated Budgeting Guidance.

17) What if my proposal meets both objectives of the Fund?

- Applicants must specify whether their proposal is an innovative initiative designed to produce new knowledge or whether it is designed to scale or replicate best practice.

- Funding category 1 supports a wide range of projects with a particular emphasis on replicating or scaling examples of best practice while category 2 supports innovative projects designed to produce new knowledge.

- An individual proposal cannot include a request for category 1 and category 2 funding. Applicants should apply for the category of funding that is deliverable and can meet the objectives of the Fund.

18) If applying under best practice, can the project that we are replicating in England have originated internationally or in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland?

- Yes, examples of best practice can be sourced from anywhere in the world.

- However, applicants must be based in England and the application must make clear where in the nine regions of England the funded project would take place.

19) Must a project be entirely new?

- Ongoing projects are not eligible for funding and a grant recipient could not 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.

- However, one of the two objectives of this Fund is to support the replicating and scaling of best practice interventions. 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.

- 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 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.

20) We have recently started a project that has received part-funding, would we be eligible to apply for the fund to continue this work?

- Ongoing projects are not eligible for funding and a grant recipient could not 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 could not be used to fund a project which was already in receipt of government funding (whether in whole or in part).

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- 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.
- If the 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.

21) **If our current grant funding ends in 2026, can we apply for further funding before the current grant ends?**
- This Fund concludes on 31 March 2026. All funded activities must conclude by that date.

22) **The Digital Inclusion Action Plan: First Steps referenced several population groups who are most affected by digital exclusion, are you still looking to target these areas?**
- All applications must meet a series of criteria which includes specifying how the proposal will support at least one of the Digital Inclusion Action Plan: First Steps focus demographic groups.

23) **What are the target demographic groups for this Fund?**
- The Digital Inclusion Action Plan identifies five broad demographic groups who are more likely to be digitally excluded. These are:
  - Low-income households: more likely to struggle to afford broadband and data.
  - Older people: less likely to use the internet.
  - Disabled people: more likely to be impacted by the digital skills gap and struggle with accessibility.
  - People experiencing unemployment and seeking work: more likely to be unable to afford broadband, data and devices.
  - Young people (including those not in education, employment or training): most likely to perceive a lack of digital skills as a barrier to future work.
- You can find more information **here**.

Regional spread

24) **Why are you limiting projects by region?**
- Funding for projects will not be limited by region. Funding is available to support projects in every region of England.
- DSIT is keen to increase the support for digital inclusion for as many people as possible, including in regions where it has not previously been made a priority for local communities.

25) **The fund says a proposal must take place in at least one region – does it have to say specifically which? What about national providers?**
- Yes, an application must specify at least one region in which the proposed project will take place. If the proposed project will only take place in one region, then the applicant must specify that region.
- If the proposed project will be available to people in more than one region, then the applicant must specify all the regions where the project will be available.

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- If the applicant is a national provider, or the project spans multiple regions, the application should specify which regions the funded project itself would be available.

26) **What if I am a national organisation – my project will have greater impact across more than one region, why do I need to select only one?**
    - Projects can select more than one region in England. Applicants will need to identify in which of the nine regions the proposed project will be delivered.

27) **How do you intend to promote an even split of applications, across regions and categories?**
    - Once applications are assessed, grants will be awarded in order of the highest scoring proposals in each region until all funding has been allocated.

28) **How local can an area covered be? Do we need to evidence impact across the entire selected region, or can this be more specific to a sub-region?**
    - The proposed project must take place in at least one of the nine regions of England but does not need to evidence impact across the entire region.
    - Applications must include 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.

Funding

29) **Can I apply for less than £25,000?**
    - No, applicants must apply for a minimum of £25,000. All applicants can apply for grants of £25,000 to £500,000.

30) **Is a consortium bid capped at £500K in total for all partners?**
    - All applications are capped at a maximum funding amount of £500,000 per application.

31) **Will this be a rolling fund with funding available next year or do projects need to be completed by 31 March 2026?**
    - This is a one-year fund for FY 25-26.
    - All projects must conclude by 31 March 2026 and final invoices must be submitted by 30 April 2026.
    - However, in your application, you must explain how your project will result in long-lasting impacts beyond the funding period.

32) **Will there be another pot of funding beyond March 2026?**
    - The Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund is for this financial year (2025-2026) only, with all grant funding to be awarded for spend up to 31 March 2026.
    - The full detail of DSIT's longer-term spending plans is still being developed. Government is also exploring innovative ways to promote digital inclusion through community engagement, advocacy and strategic collaboration.

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33)Why are there three types of funding for this project?

- The Government has allocated £7.242mn to be awarded to stakeholders across England.
- The complex nature of digital exclusion, and the different barriers that people face, means that there are multiple drivers of digital exclusion. The diverse types of funding available through this Fund intend to support a wide range of projects that support innovation as well as replicating and scaling of best practice.

34)Can I apply for more than one type of funding in one proposal?

- Yes. Applicants can apply for a combination of funding categories 1 and 3 or funding categories 2 and 3 within one proposal.
- Applicants cannot apply for funding categories 1 and 2 in the same proposal.

35)Why can't I apply for funding categories 1 and 2 in the same proposal?

- Category 2 funding can only support innovative proposals that meet the R&D criteria set out in Annex C of the Government's Consolidated Budget Guidance. These activities will produce 'new knowledge' and help fill in evidence gaps on effective interventions.
- In contrast, category 1 funding can support a wide range of projects with a particular emphasis on replicating or scaling examples of best practice in digital inclusion intervention. Best practice proposals will not be new and innovative so cannot qualify for category 2 funding.

36)My project is both expanding on best practice and innovative / R&D. Which type of money should I apply for?

- Category 2 funding can only support innovative proposals that meet the R&D criteria set out in Annex C of the Government's Consolidated Budget Guidance. These activities will produce 'new knowledge' and help fill in evidence gaps on effective interventions.
- In contrast, category 1 funding can support a wide range of projects with a particular emphasis on replicating or scaling examples of best practice in digital inclusion intervention.
- Applicants cannot apply for funding categories 1 and 2 in the same proposal. While we recognise that there may be overlap in the project proposal being both best practice and innovative, applicants should consider which category of funding the proposed project best meets the criteria for.

37)We've received government funding before, would this hinder our chances for a grant?

- No, whether an applicant has previously received government funding is not relevant to this application and assessment process.
- All applicants are assessed and scored by an independent team of assessors based on the criteria of this Fund.
- You should ensure your funding application does not exceed any subsidy control or funding limits.
- This funding cannot be used to fund a project which was already in receipt of government funding (whether in whole or in part).

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38)Can equipment costs for participants be included?
- Yes, and applicants should list all costs including equipment costs in their application.

39)Can we claim a contribution to overheads?
- Applications that include requests for either funding category 1 or category 2 may include costs for overheads. However, all costs must be clearly set out in the application and necessary for the delivery of the project to assess if they meet the eligible expenditure criteria.
- Funding cannot be awarded for existing overhead costs unrelated to the implementation of the project.
- The maximum amount of overheads able to be claimed is 20% of fixed labour costs.

Timings and logistics

40)Where do I apply?
- Applications will be submitted through Find a Grant via this link: https://find-government-grants.service.gov.uk/grants/digital-inclusion-innovation-fund-2.

41)When will I find out if my application is successful?
- While it is difficult to predict exactly when applicants will be informed of the results of their applications, our current intention is to update all applicants in October.

42)Will the guidance make clear the range of due diligence required - so consortiums can build this into their engagement? Are there exceptions for turnover/revenue of organisations involved?
- A Lead Organisation will need to carry out a proportionate level of due diligence that reflects the grant size and partners involved. This should be in line with the level of due diligence an organisation would carry out for any partnership.
- There are no exceptions to due diligence responsibilities based on organisational turnover or revenue.

43)When will I receive my grant funding?
- Grant awards will be allocated in arrears following the submission of evidence by grant recipients to show how resources were allocated to implement the proposal.
- 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.
- Grant recipients can submit their evidence and request payment as soon as they have completed and paid for the activities necessary to progress their proposal.
- Any activities not completed by 31 March 2026 will not be funded or reimbursed.

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44) What if it looks like my funded project may run late?
- All projects must conclude by 31 March 2026.
- Grant recipients will submit a monitoring report in January 2026 where we expect projects to provide an update on the deliverability of your project. This should help identify any projects at risk of delivering on time.
- Grant recipients should proactively engage through the central mailbox (ggms_diginc_innofund@cabinetoffice.gov.uk) to raise delivery concerns as early as possible.
- Any activities not completed by 31 March 2026 will not be funded or reimbursed.

45) Will applications be disqualified entirely at the assessment stage or will there be scope to amend and lower the amount requested or re-align scope of the project?
- There will be no scope for amendments to your application content once submitted. Please ensure you are satisfied with the quality of your application, and your ability to deliver this work.

46) What does 'DSIT comms' refer to in the commitments?
- Grant recipients may also 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.

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

46) I am based in [Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland], how will I benefit from the Innovation Fund?
- DSIT has worked closely with the Devolved Governments on the design of the Innovation Fund.
- The Devolved Governments are already delivering tailored digital inclusion programmes in their respective nations and the UK Government is committed to ensure this funding programme supports digital inclusion activities throughout the UK.

47) Why is the Fund only open in England?
- Whilst the UK Government's Digital Inclusion Action Plan mentions UK activity across the whole digital agenda, we recognise the action already taken by the Devolved Governments in supporting digital inclusion initiatives in their respective areas. DSIT is committed to delivering in partnership with the Devolved Governments, who are best placed to distribute funding in their respective nations for greatest impact.

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48) How much money will the devolved governments get?
- We have worked with the Devolved Governments to ensure that proportionate allocations of funding been agreed to support digital inclusion initiatives across the UK. This amounts to:
  - £764,020 in Scotland
  - £400,368 in Wales
  - £267,249 in Northern Ireland

Monitoring and Evaluation requirements

49) Will all evaluation activities need to be completed by March 2026? Will these expectations be proportionate to the funding provided and timeframe for delivery?
- Successful applicants will be required to provide monitoring data, in a standard template, upon conclusion of the project no later than 30 April 2026.

50) Following completion of the fund, what information will you share on the projects that have been carried out?
- The Government will publish a monitoring and evaluation report following the completion of the Fund. The report will collate all the data and analysis from the funded projects.

51) How frequent are the reporting requirements, what evidence will be required?
- Successful applicants will be required to provide monitoring data, in a standard template, in January 2026 and again upon conclusion of the project.

52) Will grant recipients set their own payment milestones?
- Grant recipients do not set payment milestones. 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.

53) How will learning from the projects be used to advance digital inclusion?
- The government is launching the Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund to support local initiatives that increase digital participation. We will use the fund to identify best practice with an ambition to scale-up and replicate successful digital inclusion projects across the country. We want to ensure funding is used to meet the specific and diverse needs of local people and communities.
- We are taking an iterative approach to identifying what works in advancing digital inclusion. Consequently, it will be important to review the outcomes of the Fund, assess the wider evidence base and incorporate our learnings into future programmes.
- Monitoring and evaluation responsibilities are a core part of the application and responsibilities of grant recipients.

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