Evaluation of the Tech for Good Programme

Institute for Voluntary
Action Research

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Contents

Introduction

In 2019, the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) was commissioned by Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn Foundation to evaluate the Tech for Good programme (referred to as 'Tech for Good' or 'the programme' in this report), assessing progress to date and providing recommendations for future programme refinement. Specifically, we explored the contribution of the programme, including progress for individual funded partners[1], as well as influence on the culture of funding and support for social tech[2] across the sector.

This report presents evaluation findings and key messages on: digital readiness and the programme; funding and support; outcomes of the programme; and Tech for Good in the wider ecosystem.

About Tech for Good

The Tech for Good programme is a collaboration between Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn Foundation. It aims to provide not-for-profit organisations with resources (time, money and expertise) to develop user-centred, effective digital solutions to specific social problems or needs. As well as helping organisations to *develop or scale digital products or services which deliver new or improved outcomes for beneficiaries'*, the programme's ambition is to have a ripple effect, helping organisations to *'take a significant digital step forward'* more generally in their organisation. In addition to the provision of resources for individual funded partners, the funders have an appetite to use the programme to raise awareness of the importance of social tech by sharing learning that helps to influence and strengthen the wider Tech for Good ecosystem.[3]

Since 2017, the programme has awarded 30 grants across three cohorts (2017, 2018 and 2019). Currently, Tech for Good gives organisations grants of up to £48,000 for a period of nine months, alongside a package of support which includes peer learning opportunities, one-to-one mentoring and advice. Grants are structured in relation to three key phases: a soft development phase, a hard development phase and a launch phase. To apply, organisations submit a video application and they must have secured a digital partner who is able to support the development of the digital product. Eligibility criteria for the programme is clearly defined and a range of factors are taken into account when assessing the strength of applications, including:

- A clear demonstration that tech is the right solution to the problem/need
- Evidence that existing tech does not exist/is not appropriate to address the problem/need
- Evidence that the organisation is able to adopt an agile, user-centred development approach
- Evidence that the 'digital support partner' adds value to the proposal

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[1] Organisations that took part in the programme and received a grant
[2] Comic Relief describes social tech as: 'The intentional design, development and use of digital technologies to address social challenges. The tech is built in a collaborative, user-led way which means the end result is genuinely wanted and needed by those it was designed for'.
[3] For example, via the Tech for Good Hub, which provides information and advice that is relevant to the development of digital products and services within the not-for-profit sector and by running funder learning events.

Our approach

The evaluation took place between September 2019 and November 2020. Data collection coincided with the outbreak of Covid-19 and a UK lockdown, in which voluntary organisations faced increased pressures to adapt and support their communities.[4] In light of this, some adaptations were made to the methodology, but the evaluation questions remained the same. For example, we received a low number of responses to an online survey so instead focused on gathering more qualitative data.

The findings in this report are based on the following data collection activities:

- An inception meeting with the Tech for Good programme team
- Telephone interviews with six members of the Tech for Good team
- Desk-based review and mapping of the full Tech for Good cohort
- Survey of previous cohort funded partners (2016, 2017, 2018) – just seven responses were received
- Interviews with 15 funded organisations
  - Eight from the 2019 cohort
  - Seven from cohorts in 2017 and 2018 that were eligible for the current programme criteria
- Two online focus groups with five funded partners
- Interviews with nine wider field experts – individuals and organisations supporting the use of tech for social change either as funders, support providers or experts from the wider sector (in the UK and beyond)

We drew on data from across the above evaluation activities, presenting anonymised quotations in italics from the Tech for Good team, funded partners and field experts to illustrate key points throughout the report. A list of organisations that took part in the evaluation is in Appendix 1.

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[4] IVAR: Covid-19 Briefings

Evaluation findings

1.   Digital readiness and the programme

One of the key themes explored in the evaluation was the 'digital readiness' of applicant organisations. The term 'digital readiness' encompasses 'readiness' to apply to a digital fund and 'readiness' to embrace change and digital within their organisation. At the outset of the evaluation, the Tech for Good team noted that the programme requires organisations to have *'a number of ducks in a row'* upon application and had observed charities presenting social tech as an 'add on' rather than an integrated organisational activity. They were therefore considering if and how the programme could cater for the needs of *'traditional charities'* alongside *'digital first'* organisations.

This section explores this topic, presenting evaluation findings on:

- Why organisations apply to Tech for Good
- Where digital sat within the organisation at the time of applying
- Factors that appear to enable 'digital readiness'

1.1   Drivers for applying to Tech for Good

Funded partners described three key drivers for applying to the programme:

- **Improving the functionality of existing tech:** '[Tech for Good] *came at the right point in time when we were looking to take* [name of digital product] *forward ... it was an opportunity to do something more ambitious'.*
- **Demonstrating proof of concept:** *'What appealed to us with Tech for Good was that it was designed for early stage ideas and concepts ... it felt like a programme that could validate assumptions we were making and test out some of those ideas'; 'Tech for Good made this idea possible'.*
- **An opportunity to take the first step into digital provision:** For some organisations, it was a chance to think about how digital can be integrated into their organisation and service delivery: *'it seemed like too good an opportunity to miss'.*

1.2   Use and positioning of digital within Tech for Good organisations

The programme attracts a variety of organisations.[5] Examples of how this looked in practice include:

- **Funded partners with an organisational commitment to digital, with multiple levels of the team engaging in a digital culture**: *'Digital leadership was already embedded into the organisation through the Trustees and the CEO. It's a culture that is working towards and embracing digital transformation across the whole organisation'.* This full

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[5] The Explore Fund may help homogenise the starting points and support needs within the Tech for Good cohort as they may be coming to the programme from a more similar starting place (regarding their digital journey).

IVAR

organisational engagement was felt to remove the need to justify 'why' to invest in digital and instead to focus on 'how' to use digital: *'You have that buy-in from the board and CEO, so we can crack on rather than feeling like you need to justify why you want to do these things. All those conversations about why you want to do them have happened and then it's very much about well how'* (funded partner).

- Organisations where **team engagement was an ongoing process**: *'this change in mind-set within the team is ongoing. One of my roles at the moment is getting the rest of our team to have confidence and understanding around digital tech and not be scared of it'* (funded partner).
- Organisations where **digital confidence was fragmented or dispersed across a team** and this grant was a first step into digital: *'this was definitely a start of the journey towards tech for us'* (funded partner). One individual extended the question of digital readiness to **what does it take to make your whole organisation ready for change and to make it stick?**

1.3   Digital readiness

We asked funded partners what they needed to have in place – whether in terms of skills, capacity or organisational culture – in order to be ready to apply to the Tech for Good programme. Common responses included:

- A clear purpose for the use of tech
- Confidence – some funded partners described previous Tech for Good funding as having given them confidence to develop an additional tech solution and reapply for the programme
- Clarity of the needs of beneficiaries
- Organisational buy-in at both senior and operational level and therefore support to explore digital solutions
- Understanding what else exists and where there's a gap in provision
- Clarity about the roles for those applying in a partnership.

Barriers to embedding digital in their work included: a fragmented view of digital across the team; not knowing the purpose of tech or what is possible; lack of senior buy-in; misperceptions about the role of digital; unrealistic expectations and underestimation of the time needed for digital development; and lack of funding to maintain digital costs.

During scoping interviews, a distinction was made by Tech for Good staff between opportunistic forms of tech, and tech that directly connects to the purpose of the organisation (*'a lot of what we receive is great ideas but people are already locked into the solution'*). Findings from funded partners echoed this tension, with some suggesting it might be useful to give organisations support to explore ideas, understand the purpose of Tech for Good and identify appropriate funding programmes before they've invested resource into the application process:

> [Offer] *access to CAST* [Centre for the Acceleration of Social Technology] *first, before they apply, rather than during and when they have already signed up.* (funded partner)

> *If you don't know what you're looking for, how are you going to find it? … that can be quite an overwhelming task.* (field expert)

Overall, there were four key features that funded partners felt contributed to their organisation's 'digital readiness':

- **Embracing change and unpredictability**: *'Willingness to break from "we have always done it this way"'*; *'clear about end point you want to reach even if you're not sure how to get there. But also willingness to recognise if, once the project has started, following research, it seems the end point is not quite right and willingness to review that based on evidence'*; *'you need a culture of accepting agile – that things may change as you go'*.

- **Time to experiment**: For many organisations, 'digital readiness' and willingness to embrace change came with time and experience – time to experiment with new ways of working, and embedding a culture of adaptability across the organisation, as well as funding that actively encouraged this.

- **An explicit commitment to digital,** either in the form of a strategy that was pushed by the whole organisation, a clear vision for what digital could enhance, or a ring-fenced role in the team: *'when we applied this time it had been after I had taken on my role and we had made it clear in my remit that I would lead on digital strategy. Before this, we just had one role to look at our approach which wasn't strategic before. Having that view that strategically, this is something the organisation wants to do'*. This organisation describes a *'push from the whole organisation ... This partly came from what's happening in the world. It also came from our current chair who works in digital advertising. They said we need to embrace this as an organisation and question how we work with digital and what that means for us'*.

- **A healthy partnership with support organisations**: A digital partner with a *'true partnership ethos, actively involved in every stage of the process from project conceptualisation, through the application process and into project development and delivery'*. Clarity about roles in a partnership also helped organisations feel ready to apply to the programme.[6]

1.4   What does this mean for the programme?

The findings build on learning from previous Tech for Good evaluations – funded organisations sit on a broad spectrum of digital expertise and experience. There is a wide range of starting points for organisations accessing the programme. Below we outline possible ways for the programme to broaden its reach and support for organisations to become 'tech ready'.

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[6] 'Tech for Good Evaluation: Interim Report', *InFocus*, December 2018; 'Evaluation of the Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn Foundation Tech for Good Programme', *InFocus*, July 2019. The 2019 inFocus evaluation explores the digital support element in depth.

Digital readiness and the programme: practical implications for Tech for Good

1. Offer pre-application support
Support organisations to navigate and apply for the appropriate funding and offer access to support with design processes. A light-touch design process could help organisations to test their initial ideas and assumptions, while giving the Tech for Good team a chance to clarify the purpose of the programme to potential applicants.

2. Align organisational readiness to the type of funding/support available
The development of the Explore Fund[7] reflects Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn Foundation's commitment to thinking critically about the needs of organisations at different stages of their digital journey. The evaluation findings suggest that this was an astute development.

3. Supporting 'champions' to help embed and sustain social tech
Lack of digital leadership within organisations can be a blocker to engaging with the programme, embedding digital and sustaining the services developed during Tech for Good. Think critically about how the support offer (provided alongside the grant) can build on the digital enablers and support champions to embed digital within their organisations. For example, run sessions for tech-cautious colleagues/CEO/Trustees on digital practice and purpose.

4. Continue to showcase stories about organisations' use of digital
Given the ambiguity of social tech and 'good digital' for many organisations (both Tech for Good funded organisations and across the sector), Tech for Good could play a valuable role in further using its platform, including the Hub, to showcase and demystify what 'digital' looks like in practice and encourage reuse of existing tools. This could act as a catalyst for tech curious organisations, as well as funders thinking about funding tech in the future.

The Tech for Good Hub has the potential to extend its reach to both tech-curious organisations and those not yet thinking about digital. Using Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn's network to reach funded partners from non-digital specific funds could amplify learning and increase the reach of the programme.

2. Funding and support

Overall, we heard positive responses from organisations regarding their experience of the programme – in terms of the accessible application process, proportionate reporting, and the flexibility that has been provided to the most recent cohort.[8] In this section, we share findings on features of the programme (in particular grant value and length) as well as the wraparound support provided. Funded partners also shared the kinds of support or funding that could contribute to sustaining digital journeys.

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[7] In June 2020, the programme launched a new strand of early stage digital funding – 'Explore'. Explore supports organisations and collaborations over a three-month period to explore digital service delivery challenges and prototype solutions. Explore is delivered through CAST (Centre for the Acceleration of Social Technology) as an intermediary funding partner and provider of digital support to funded-partners.
[8] This cohort was part of the programme during the pandemic in 2020.

2.1 Grant value

The responses from funded organisations about the grant value were relatively mixed. Some organisations found the grant size proportionate to the amount of work to carry out their digital development plans: 'overall it felt enough'. Others, however, felt they had been confined by the grant value and were unable to reach the full potential of the programme or to continue the maintenance of the product, thus limiting the longer-term success of some of the digital products or services that were being developed.

> *It was enough for developing a prototype, but not the full set of games.* (funded partner)

> *It was enough to develop the product, but it was not enough to do the early stages of work. Given the vagueness of how the exploration is going to look, one might need more funds for the discovery phase.* (funded partner)

> *We could do the basics of the product but of course it would be better if we could have had a larger grant only in terms of thinking a little bit about extending the functionality … So we worked around the limitations of the budget but we could have done with a bit more.* (funded partner)

One funded partner also questioned whether organisational turnover was a useful indicator upon which to base decisions about grant value:

> *I think it should be more than turnover. I think they should also look at the history and the experience of the organisation in producing tech and the success that they have had … the size of the audience and the reach that they have and their ability to create the product and how they sustain it and their business plan.*[9]

More important than grant size was the pacing of funding provision, with appetite for staggering grants or extending grants, rather than providing a set grant size at the beginning. The importance of matching the scale and pace of funding to how digital development works was also echoed in our interviews with field experts. One field expert highlighted the importance of 'scale funding' (taking a good product and funding it at scale) within the landscape of funding opportunities made available to organisations: 'Organisations need to be able to go beyond building a product and marketing. They need to think of scaling up more widely but without funding it gets very difficult to do this'. Being prepared to provide additional funds when it is clear that a product is working well is seen as a feature of funding that helps charities to sustain digital: 'Give small money to get MVPs [minimum viable product] up and running but be ready to fund big when it works well' (field expert). However, whether grant funding is an appropriate funding model at all was also questioned:

> *The issue with tech is that it's ongoing. You can't just develop it and let it run … it will have to be maintained.* (field expert)

> *Tech is always changing and improving and therefore I don't think a grant-making process is always a sustainable process for tech outputs.* (field expert)

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[9] NB organisational income was used as eligibility criteria during the application stage, rather than to decide the appropriate size of the grant.

2.2   Grant length

The majority of organisations felt that a longer grant period would help take account of unexpected delays, the intensity of investing time in a learning programme, and the capacity required to commit to the programme on top of an already full workload. Delays were often described as being out of the organisation's control, either due to their digital partner, time delays associated with complicated coding or key staff leaving.

> *For me, the development of tech and digital doesn't always go smoothly ... with all of the best intentions in the world, things will go wrong, so whilst 9 months seems quite a long time, maybe an extension to 12 months would provide more scope and time to accommodate challenges along the way ... We also had a project manager leave 4 months into the project, so that led to some delays ... so a 9-month project was a short period of time.* (funded partner)

> *Maybe a year would have been better ... the frustrations for us were to do with our digital partner going AWOL ...* (funded partner)

For many organisations, especially those with smaller teams, dedicating intensive resource was an additional pressure:

> *I was worried about getting it finished within the deadline which meant that I spent way more time than I expected working on this project. I was doing this alongside my full-time job which made it much harder as we are a small team of two and need to be all hands-on deck for our service and this project.* (funded partner)

> *The programme was designed for big clients that spent money quickly and incentivised against smaller organisations with open projects spending wisely.* (funded partner)

> *Any charity that is under one or two million ... just surviving and delivering their normal services takes up a lot of their time ... it's very hard for them to find the wiggle room to innovate in this way and take on new ways of working.* (Tech for Good specialist)

The most time-consuming element of the programme for many organisations was the discovery phase: *'Discovery phase took a lot of time and then we had to build something ... Had it been longer, we might have built something different and more usable for our service users'* (funded partner). We also heard that the timescale of the fund didn't always allow organisations to iterate their projects after the discovery phase: *'with grant funded projects often being pre-defined on deliverables and time scales this doesn't always allow for the unknown to be taken into account'* (funded partner).

Organisations' suggestions for change included extending the programme from nine months to 12 months to allow for more flexibility. As well as accounting for the length of the discovery phase and/or delays and unknowns, organisations felt this could provide more time towards the end of the programme to ring-fence time for discussions on the sustainability and future of the product and service, as well as allowing for continued engagement with service users beyond the discovery phase.

This opinion was echoed by some of the field experts we spoke to, who talked about the need for **funding timescales and processes to align with the ambition of the programme:**

Be more open to change and adjustment to funding and budget allocations ... funders need to try and mirror an agile open development process – respond to change, iteration and quickly ... if a project changes, that is a good thing, not a hurdle that has to be overcome or 'approved' by the funder. (field expert)

2.3 Support provision

Learning opportunities and wrap-around support are built into the delivery of the Tech for Good programme alongside the grant funding. This includes peer learning opportunities for each of the cohorts, one-to-one mentoring and advice for individual organisations provided by CAST, as well as opportunities to share learning through the Tech for Good Hub and Funder Learner Events.

Similar to previous evaluation findings, the majority of organisations we spoke to were positive about their experience of support they received. Most valued aspects included **being part of a cohort, one-to-one mentoring support and some of the workshops** (the 'unintended consequences' workshop and the 'digital safeguarding' workshops were mentioned in particular). Some funded partners had an appetite to stay in touch with their cohort beyond the programme.

> *The kick-off session was nice because it helped you feel part of a cohort and learn about everyone and meet all the partners like CAST – I felt part of something.* (funded partner)
>
> *The monthly peer support meetings were really, really beneficial.* (funded partner)
>
> *One of the workshops was around unintended consequences ... That was a very useful way for us to start thinking a little bit more about the responsible building of tech.* (funded partner)

2.3.1 One-to-one mentoring support

Funded partners described being supported to negotiate difficulties with their digital partner, gain clarity over the target audience for their digital product, and rethink their user engagement strategies. Funded partners also spoke highly about the tone and focus of the support provided – particularly the support provider's level of fluidity and ability to change:

> *There were occasions where I'd not been sure we were going in the right direction and then I'd speak to [X] ... He was a great sounding board and he would have pearls of wisdom ... I'd then be able to pick up the phone with our partners and digital partner and say let's rethink. He validated my gut feeling. Helped us build confidence and keep us on course and focused.* (funded partner)
>
> *It provided us with a space to have those conversations where you can say the wrong thing and say 'does this sound right?' ... This was a nice space to have ... It never felt like a funder breathing down our neck.* (funded partner)
>
> *A question you'd ask yourself as a grantee is 'would you rather have had an extra £5 or £10K, as opposed to the extra support?' On this grant, I think we probably would have rather had the support as they've put us in touch with*

some really good people who we've learnt from. So in this case, I think it was the right thing to do. (funded partner)

The support offer was appreciated by organisations new to digital development, as well as those further on in their digital journey:

> *More of the handholding than workshops would have benefitted us in the beginning as we needed help but also pushing in the right direction.* (funded partner)

> *At no point did I feel patronised, given that we were one of the few from a tech background.* (funded partner)

Some who had been through the programme before found the support repetitive, but welcomed the fact they could choose which workshops to attend.

Based on our discussions with field experts, the wraparound support provided by the programme was well respected given that, often, many organisations will *'not have had the exposure to the possibilities of what digital and tech can offer'* (field expert), therefore providing a structure of support that helps organisations to realise some of these different possibilities felt useful.

2.3.2 Frequency and content of support

While the majority of feedback was positive, one funded partner said they found the monthly calls *'burdensome'* and *'a distraction'*, often having little progress to discuss each time. At times, they also felt overwhelmed by the amount of information they had been given at the start of the programme, which they had needed some help deciphering.

Some organisations also found the reporting process slightly repetitive, and two funded partners noted that they didn't find Fusebox the most useful platform as they were not using it outside their support meetings.

> *When they were getting the feedback from us – one in February, one in May and one now – I think some of the questions are repetitive … there isn't anything we can add so it was a case of copy and paste for us.* (funded partner)

Finally, some felt it was not clear who was expected to attend the workshops and peer-learning opportunities (i.e. the CEO or project manager) and that support was not always relevant for them:

> *The monthly sessions were helpful to some extent, but we did not find support on our specific topics for our project. It seemed like our project was very different from others and opening up the floor to the organisations to talk was not always the best way as sometimes we didn't have anything to talk about.* (funded partner)

2.3.3 Pathways for future support

A number of funded partners commented on their disappointment regarding the support that was provided towards the end of the programme, specifically around future funding opportunities, as well as time to think through the sustainability of their digital products, including marketing.

This is one area I was a little disappointed in if I'm honest ... It would be nice if Comic could have provided a list of potential funders we could have looked to for developing the product further ... I'm concerned a lot of people may have created a prototype but then it may not be taken forwards. (funded partner)

It fizzled out at the end. We thought 'have we finished, is that it?' ... I would love to have had the opportunity to showcase what had built but it coincided with the next cohort starting. We had our call all set up, then it never happened. (funded partner)

We were energised about the possibility of being introduced to other funders. We had the impressions that it was considered to be an exciting, promising piece of work we were working on ... We were thinking that possibly more funding might be available or that [the programme] *would use its links and connections to make this possible.* (funded partner)

Some of this feedback may well have been affected by what was possible to provide in the current cohort's operating context (i.e. Covid-19), however, ensuring that there is a space for organisations to consider the sustainability of their products towards the end of their funding was felt to be an important priority for many of the field experts we spoke to.

You can't build a tech product that people then rely on and then you don't have funding to carry it on so it folds ... so you have to fund a sustainability plan or provide some ongoing funding to keep the product going. (field expert)

If you put all this money behind developing an app, and there's no business model behind it, then it's probably going to die and then people won't be as motivated to develop it. (field expert)

Funded partners in previous cohorts had found different ways to cover the ongoing costs associated with their digital products (i.e. hosting fees and keeping information and advice up-to-date) such as through collecting licensing fees, applying for additional grant funding, or taking account of the ongoing maintenance costs within the organisation's overheads/infrastructure. However, not everyone had the opportunity to take their products forward.

The [digital product] *has been suspended and that's the one thing I do feel bad about. While there is no doubt that this* [programme] *took us on a digitalisation journey and it was a success, it has been a shame that so much investment and money was wasted.* (funded partners)

2.4   What does this mean for Tech for Good?

On the whole, funded partners have had a very positive experience of the Tech for Good programme and have welcomed the combination of grant funding alongside support, as well as the flexibility built into the programme (in terms of process and any final 'product'). However, there are some areas for development that the Tech for Good team could consider.

Funding and support: practical implications for Tech for Good

1. Alignment between funding approach and the agile development process that the programme seeks to support

The starting point of funded partners varies depending on whether they are new to digital or have a pre-existing digital offer. Given this, their funding needs can also vary, depending on the scale of their ambition and the progress they make throughout the programme. Consider staggering or extending the provision of funds based on the needs and progress of individual organisations. Additionally, extending the length of the programme to at least 12 months could enable organisations to better accommodate delays and/or changes in direction, and to provide space to explore 'next steps' in embedding or sustaining digital products or transformation.

2. Consider offering a more tailored support to take account of an organisation's digital experience and expertise.

While all funded partners (whether they were new to digital or not) welcomed the support, there were differences as to how much added value this provided, particularly for those who had successfully applied to the programme before. The Tech for Good team may wish to consider a more tailored or modular approach, based on organisations' existing relationship with the programme as well as their previous digital experience, to ensure that all organisations are left in a better place than when they started. This would include, for example, identifying support needs during the application and assessment processes to ensure plans are in place for each funded partner when they begin the programme.

3.   Outcomes

In this section we explore the outcomes achieved by the Tech for Good programme and its funded partners, and consider what success means in relation to digital use within the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. We look at development of digital products, outcomes for service users, organisational outcomes, and what 'success' looks like.[10]

3.1   Development of digital products

Funded partners across the Tech for Good cohort have successfully developed a range of digital products and prototypes.

Examples of products that have been developed:

Products that improve direct service provision – advice and information via chat bots, apps, interactive tech games, digitisation of systems to support the allocation and distribution of food vouchers.

Products that improve organisations' systems and processes – online reporting system; online platform to support the matching of befrienders based on mutual interests and qualities; interactive data analysis system/dashboard system; and online volunteer management system.

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[10] Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn Foundation clarify at the outset of the programme that funded partners are not expected to report on traditional outcomes – the priority of the programme is learning.

The main driver for developing these digital products was to improve the service offer and service user experience. For example, by:

- Increasing service reach or extending service provision (e.g. providing information and advice 24 hours a day): *'It was an upgrade and to reach out to more people'* (funded partner).
- Improving accessibility (e.g. making it easier for individuals to access advice and information) and responding to client preferences (i.e. the choice to access digital services versus face-to-face services): *'Reaching out to* [children and young people] *through conventional methods can be challenging ... it's about coming up with ideas to reach into their world and empower them'* (funded partner).
- Improving the functionality or user experience of existing digital products: *'It was designed to make the process of matching up volunteer availability with need much more streamline and efficient, as previously this was being done by ringing around to establish availability'* (funded partner).
- Filling a gap in the market (e.g. developing digital products that take account of individual accessibility needs)
- Redirecting resources to more front-line delivery
- Monitoring real-time need to support organisational planning and delivery

3.2 Outcomes for service users

Tech for Good has led to: more service users being reached; improvements to the accessibility of advice and information; creation of products that service users find useful; and improved systems and processes that enabled staff to focus on front line delivery or better respond to service user needs. This was neatly summarised by one of the field experts when they said, *'it's about freeing up resources for impact'.*

Outcomes for service users include:

- **Increased reach**, both in terms of service user numbers and developing connections with new service users: *'reaching out to them through conventional methods can be challenging. It's hard to get them together face-to-face. So coming up with ideas to reach into their world and empower them'* (funded partner). Another organisation licensed their app to NHS providers and are now accessing more people. One organisation saw the expansion of their service to a new geographical area as an indicator of effective use of digital – they are able to pilot and measure the growth of their model. Another organisation who developed a chat bot saw download rates and *'usage outside of core hours (i.e. the 24-hour provision issue)'* as success.
- **Better quality user experience**: Many organisations' perceptions of 'good' digital were when it directly improved their service delivery. One organisation has recorded that *'92% of our young people who used the app said that their anxiety symptoms were helped in that moment'* (funded partner). Another organisation used the *'approval rating'* on their app to measure the increase from 28% to 41% since their involvement in the Tech for Good programme.
- **Involvement of users in user testing** signified good use of digital for many organisations. It is empowering for the individuals they support,

and created a good relationship with service users for future project testing.
- **More time for the team to interact with service users:** A couple of organisations linked good digital to the ripple effect that it has on the way the team operates, increasing the amount of time dedicated to human connection, outside of tech: *'One of our staff members said she has more time chatting with families and can see more families. Families benefit from that extra time, even just a 5-minute chat'* (funded partner). Hours saved was one form of measurement for this: *'294 staff hours have been saved so far'* (funded partner).

In one case, the process of user testing was discussed as itself having directly benefited service users and perhaps helped develop the relationship between the organisation and the people they work with, by involving them in the process:

> *It* [user testing] *gave families an opportunity to engage with us … an opportunity to use a different element of their skills as people. Parents were saying it enabled them to use their business professional skills, not just be treated as parents of a child.* (funded partner)

The main evidence organisations were able to provide – or base reflections on – were concrete figures such as download rates, approval ratings and saved hours, or anonymised service user feedback via the digital products themselves. We noted a lack of long-term or deeper evidence of the benefits to service users. There appear to be several reasons for this:

- Timescale (for example, full implementation of a product not being possible within the nine-month grant period)
- The nature of the product (one of the many benefits of offering digital services is that individuals can use them anonymously)
- Like many other VSCEs, lack of time, skills or resources to invest in measuring outcomes

3.3   Organisational outcomes

We found clear evidence of outcomes for organisations in the programme, including:

- Increased and improved information about the needs of their service users, allowing them to make better predictions regarding future need and demand
- Advanced digital transformation, such as developing a digital strategy, better understanding the role of digital within their organisation and increased confidence with which to continue on their digital journey

> *We moved into a new 'invest in digital' phase, doing things like digital maturity assessments, strategy changes and recognising the potential of digital as we move ahead in our strategy.* (funded partner)

> *Given us a confidence as an organisation that you can do these things relatively quickly and cheaply, in terms of securing meaningful feedback and data.* (funded partner)

> *This led to an organisational shift to move many services online which was not the case before Tech for Good. Until last year, we did not really have online services.* (funded partner)

Again, thanks to Tech for Good, because the prototype has evidence that we can do that type of thing, so they were confident in our ability to create something ... we created a game in 1.5 months and is now out globally. (funded partner)

Funded partners reflected on what they had learnt about: what it takes to develop social tech; the value of user research; the value of agile development processes; and being mindful of 'not reinventing the wheel'.

Adopt a phased development approach so that you don't have to back track ... small phased steps so that if something's not right, you can easily go back a couple of steps and then move forward again ... and testing is important as well. (funded partner)

You've got to make sure you understand your service users, their current needs and pain points and how they want to access your services. This must inform your thinking and developing of what you want to do. (funded partner)

It is clear that this learning is being implemented and is strengthening organisations as a whole:

It has helped the way I approach work for other projects. I approach things a bit more logically ... I do a bit more planning and thinking before ... rather than getting on I take a step back and think things through a bit more. It's filtered into my other work – it feels a more structured approach in a helpful way. (funded partner)

We've definitely taken pieces of learning from the Tech for Good Programme into our everyday working and planning. (funded partner)

Some organisations described the *'ripple effect'* that the programme has had on their internal team and culture, as well as on interactions with service users and wider organisations in their field. They described the process of the programme as spurring on digital transformation: *'The Tech for Good grant led to an organisational shift to move many services online which was not the case before Tech for Good. Until last year, we did not really have online services'* (funded partner). For one organisation, the digital product is no longer in use, however they are confident that the Tech for Good programme *'took us on a digitalisation journey and it was a success'*.

Finally, some funded partners talked about the impact that the Tech for Good programme has had on their overall **survival and sustainability, enabling them to remain competitive and relevant** to segments of their service user base. This view was echoed by field experts.

I see chat bots as a bit like your website and email – it's just another channel. You can't really do without it. It's not going to be for everyone, but it will be for some which makes it worthwhile doing. (funded partner)

Every voluntary organisation in the sector will, over time, need to go digital and digitise their services to survive. (funded partner)

What do funders need to know more broadly to accept that 'going digital' is an important thing for charities? That if they don't go digital, they will get left behind and they'll no longer be able to keep in touch with their service users.

So it's about funders helping to alleviate some of those risks in the future.
(field expert)

3.4   What does 'success' look like

During the scoping stage of this evaluation, we heard from key stakeholders that the programme encourages organisations to engage in an agile, iterative development process – and that grant success is not tied to specific outputs, but recognises a range of outcomes relating both to the end 'product', and funded partners' organisational learning and capacity. Throughout this evaluation, we also had the opportunity to talk to individuals about what they believe 'success' means, or looks like, on the Tech for Good programme. Based on our conversations, the following two measures of success were identified:

- **A balance between learning and product outcomes:** *'We hope to prioritise the learning but also hope the social tech will be quality and have impact'* (Tech for Good team member). It is hoped that the process is as useful as the end product for funded partners: *'usually the discovery process would sit with a digital partner but the charities lead it which means they are developing skills for themselves and their organisation, beyond that specific product'* (Tech for Good team member). As such, strengthening organisations in user research skills that last beyond their involvement in the programme is one marker of success: *'The ambition for the programme is that it seeds the potential for digital transformation or a growth in capability, but that makes something great through that process, even if it's really early stage'* (Tech for Good team member).
- **Charities developing responsible digital services beyond the programme:** This includes *'taking into account beneficiary perspectives and involvement'* (Tech for Good team member).

The previous sections (3.2 and 3.3) reflect what funded partners said was at the heart of 'good digital' for their organisations – being able to involve and respond to the needs of service users: *'It's about end users and meeting needs and understanding the problem well and solving that problem'* (funded partner). It was also echoed by field experts, who highlighted two features of successful digital:

- **Having a clear purpose:** What is the organisation trying to achieve? Sometimes it's about breadth and other times it's about depth (the degree of impact on a few people). *'You need clear objectives ... you don't know if you've succeeded if you don't know what you're trying to achieve ... and you have a baseline to assess against further down the line'* (field expert).
- **Being user-led:** Grounding ideas and programmes in real need, leading with a curious mind-set to continue testing assumptions, and carving space for user feedback. *'That constantly questioning approach – I don't need to wait six months to question whether our approach is working'* (field expert).

3.5   What does this mean for Tech for Good?

Tech for Good has achieved a balance between organisational learning and capacity building, alongside enhancing beneficiary outcomes. All of the funded partners we spoke to were driven to apply to the programme based on their commitment to achieving the best for their beneficiaries, and were clear about how their digital solutions played into this, whether by improving or enhancing the

direct delivery of services, or by improving organisational systems and processes that would *'free up resources for impact'*. In addition, funded partners were also able to articulate the benefits of the programme to their wider, organisational learning and capacity. However, very few organisations got to the point of being able to fully implement or embed their digital product within the timescale of the grant. Therefore, measuring the direct impact or effect on beneficiary outcomes only occurred where organisations took it upon themselves to track outcomes beyond the programme for their own purposes.

This raises some questions about how 'success' and 'outcomes' can be best evidenced in relation to digital products and services specifically, especially as identifying the impact on longer-term beneficiary outcomes can be challenging. Equally challenging is what the programme can expect to achieve in relation to 'beneficiary outcomes' when many of these will only be achieved in the longer term. In many ways, the programme's current theory of change acknowledges this, with 'improved outcomes for beneficiaries' being listed in the programme's longer-term outcomes (see Appendix 3 for ideas on how you might approach this).

Outcomes: practical implications for Tech for Good

1. **Clarify what 'good' looks like in relation to digital at the start of the Tech for Good programme.** This could help reduce misperceptions of 'good digital' as being limited to innovation: *'it's not about having a fancy tool but it's just about how can you use technology to create more impact in the work that you're doing'* (field expert).

2. **Map out how organisations move through the funding cycle.** Explore how organisations can pause, shelve the digital product they are designing, or start from scratch again, and how the programme can encourage this, acknowledging it as a positive learning outcome. What support could organisations be given to do so, and how could that learning be shared?

3. **Help organisations articulate the purpose behind the tech, the benefits they're hoping to bring and how to embed measurement of that in their work.** What is an appropriate and proportionate measure of success based on different stages of an organisation's tech development journey? *'Research (evaluation of your impact) costs masses of money and it is really hard to apply for grants, there are very few grants that like to fund that so we are a bit stuck with that* [i.e. unable to fund good evaluation of the product]*'* (funded partner).

4. **Tailored measures of success**: Is the Tech for Good team able to create measures of success for each stage of the programme journey, rather than merging the process? This could accommodate different starting points. *'An 'Agile' approach is not conducive with traditional funding models, so funders need to be less outcomes focussed and more process focussed'* (field expert).

5. **Identify some key outcomes statements (and indicators) that align with what can reasonably be expected from a Tech for Good grant, and consider the best way of evidencing these throughout the course of the programme.** Some ideas for possible questions are presented in Appendix 3.

IVAR

4. Tech for Good in the wider ecosystem

This evaluation explored the multiple layers that make up the Tech for Good 'ecosystem': funded partners; social tech support agencies; funders that specifically fund social tech; and the wider field of funders for whom social tech may be one element of supporting social change but not a strategic priority. We heard that the Tech for Good programme occupies an important space in the wider Tech for Good ecosystem.

In this section, we look at the programme's role in relation to the health and accessibility of digital funds for not-for-profits, as well as addressing where the programme sits in the current environment, and how it is perceived by funded partners and others across the sector.

4.1   The social tech field

In many ways the sector was felt to have moved forward with social tech in the last five years. Field experts believe that organisations are *'really seeing digital as service delivery rather than the internal website and systems'*. However, some felt that digital is still seen as an 'add-on' for many organisations across the sector: *'I don't think that tech is enough at the centre of charities planning for the future'* (field expert). This was partly attributed to being *'chronically under resourced'* (limited funds, lack of in-house knowledge and expertise) (field expert). Comments were made about the speed of change with digital and the challenges this presents: *'the marrying of the two is the challenge most of the time – the social and the tech and adding in the last bit, the enterprise bit'* (field expert).

Although there is growing interest in funding social tech, it is still sometimes seen as *'falling through the gap of what people will fund''* (field expert). Some field experts commented on the dangers of isolating tech and the risk of exacerbating the perception of tech as an add-on:

> *Funders funding a ring-fenced digital project in one part of a charity is not going to solve the fundamental challenges which that organisation is facing. The outcomes may be future-proofing the organisation rather than meeting immediate needs.* (field expert)

> *Digital is not separate to what an organisation does. In smaller charities they won't have a digital division ... digital will be part of everybody's job ... Ultimately if you want to enable charities to be more technologically enabled, then that should be part of everything that's funded ... what tech would enable them to run their project better?* (field expert)

4.2   Digital and Covid-19

During the data collection process, organisations were grappling with the pressures and uncertainty presented by Covid-19, and were considering how to use digital to respond to necessary changes to their service delivery. One Tech for Good organisation set up a service in 10 days, describing this as the *'same agile way of working as we had on the Tech for Good project'.* They outlined the *'slight culture shift that Covid has forced us into. Just get something up and running – test it. Something's better than nothing. This has furthered our confidence'* (funded partner).

Field experts commented on the recent resourcefulness across the VCSE sector: *'it forced people to use tech to deliver programmes and to use existing reusable tools … rather than create something on their own, they had to use what was out there better, quickly and well'.* However, some individuals cautioned that Covid-19 may have pushed organisations into digital service delivery *'in a panic'*, and fuelled the perception of tech as an add on, as opposed to an intentional design process that genuinely responds to user needs.

4.3   Tech for Good's role in the wider ecosystem

One of the questions we addressed was: 'What role can the Tech for Good programme play in relation to the health and accessibility of digital support for not-for-profits?' This question took on a new meaning during the evaluation as organisations adapted their service delivery to cater for new and acute needs during Covid-19 and national lockdowns.

4.3.1. Providing space and resources to experiment with digital

Individuals throughout this evaluation highlighted the importance of experimentation when developing new services and ways of working – Tech for Good provides space for discovering possible solutions and ideas.[11] One field expert noted the value of *'creating space where organisations can experiment and giving them the right support to experiment'.* Organisations from multiple cohorts discussed the benefit of testing and trialling ideas and approaches throughout the programme:

> *As I read the specs it was brilliant because it gave organisations the time to develop something … develop the prototype and have a testing period to see if it would meet the needs … I thought, 'this is perfect'.* (funded partner)

Previous research[12] has shown that grant-making practices can enable organisational learning by providing time and capacity for strategic thought and reflection. The Tech for Good programme is structured in a way that allows space for learning and reflection to be built into the programme.

What features of funding are conducive to experimentation?

- **Carving out time for organisations to prioritise scanning other ways of working**: *'Giving people room to experiment and think of different models that could complement their work'* (field expert).
- **Flexibility from the start of a funding relationship**: *'Being able to adjust things. This is the model you want to support in this funder grantee relationship – an environment where things are flexible, they can experiment, they can attempt to fund a model, and not a month before the grant runs out. You have to start being agile from the start'* (field expert).
- **Adaptable milestones throughout a grant process and proportionate reporting**: *'Tech for Good said early on "we don't want you to go ahead and build anything. Spend time researching and understanding problem you're trying to solve". There was no expectation that we would have a*

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[11] The need for core funding to cover experimentation as organisations build a digital culture was a finding from IVAR and CAST's recent research: *Start Somewhere: Making tech imaginable and usable*, IVAR and CAST, June 2019
[12] Moran, R. with Buckley, E. and Jenkins, R. (2019) *Driving continuous learning as a grant maker: Evidence Review*, London: Comic Relief and IVAR

prototype to launch onto mass market at the end. It was refreshing to be given time and space to explore the idea' (funded partner).

- **Reframing failure as acceptable and a necessary part of both learning and digital design processes:** Organisations need to feel comfortable to admit to funders when it's not working in order to be able to adapt it – is there a way that funders can incentivise this way of working? One field expert commented that *'if [Tech for Good] said "We reckon 10% of each cohort will work and we are happy with that because we believe in the design process" ... that would be so powerful'.* If funders are funding a new idea and elements of it fail, instead of seeing it as a failure, field experts urged funders to appreciate that people who were involved have learned a lot and might make better tech in the future.
- **Ring-fencing funds, however small, for prototyping and testing ideas:** one field expert commented on the risks associated with experimentation across the grant-making sector. *'Right now, [funders] ask [organisations] to experiment, but whose money are they going to experiment on?'* (field expert).
- **Phased approach to a grant process:** *'phased development so that you don't have to back-track ... small phased steps so that if something's not right, you can easily go back a couple of steps and then move forward again ... and testing is important as well'* (funded partner).

4.3.2 Innovation and re-use

IVAR heard from funded organisations, digital support providers and other funders about the kind of digital funding needed within the current environment. We heard from many time-short organisations, stretched to their full capacity and struggling to find the headspace to build a product from scratch. This raised the question of Tech for Good's role in the current environment – is it predominantly to encourage developing new products, or is there a place for the team to explicitly value **reuse, connecting up the dots between projects, and adapting existing tools?** This was widely supported by field experts:

- **We need to stop funding innovation**. *'Innovation is a meaningless word in the sector. Tech that people have been doing for a while needs to get funded'* (field expert).
- *'Stop funding "new" things ... but fund something that already exists. In a traditional funding application organisations can make a compelling case that they need their own app – when they could just as easily (and more sustainably) use an existing one – so **help charities to not reinvent the wheels'** (field expert).*
- *'Any charity that is under one or two million ... just surviving and delivering their normal services takes up a lot of their time ... **it's very hard for them to find the wiggle room to innovate in this way and take on new ways of working'** (Tech for Good specialist).*
- *'**Find a way to make people re-use other stuff – this would be transformational** ... a social tech app store ... Use your expertise to 'rate' existing tech and signpost people to them and then fund them to use and adapt'* (field expert).

The Tech for Good team asked whether the programme could be structured in a way that supports intentional collaboration and coordination between potential Tech for Good applicants: *'Understanding where there are common problems and common questions that projects are asking themselves through this process – I'd love to understand where the patterns are across the work'* (Tech for Good team member). This is particularly relevant in light of Covid-19, which has *'forced*

people to use tech to deliver programmes and to use existing reusable tools ... rather than create something on their own' (field expert).

This may also help to create a 'market' for successful social tech products for other organisations that can take, adapt and reuse what is already working, as opposed to developing something new. Additionally, it could increase the pool of people who can test and help iterate and improve products, by opening them up to other organisations and new users:

> *What you could or should be doing is 'adapting and connecting'. So organisations get funding to buy existing tools into their organisation, adapt it and use it well. It would push the market for those great social apps that run out of steam because they have no market.* (field expert)

4.4   Supporting use of digital beyond Tech for Good

Throughout this evaluation, we have reflected on how the Tech for Good team can best respond to needs across the sector: *'We're are concerned that the fund is no longer meeting the needs of the sector'* (Tech for Good team member).[13] Field experts thought expansively about how to be a responsible funder in this new context, and how to support the health and accessibility of digital support: *'Looking across Comic Relief's portfolio, can they lift the sector as a whole rather than just organisations who are explicitly thinking about digital? Could they be more proactive in encouraging all grantees to think about digital?'* (field expert).

Multiple field experts commented on how to give more organisations access to Tech for Good's expertise and resources. Suggestions include:

- **Integrating social tech across the wider portfolio to respond to emerging digital needs**: For example, adding in questions to the application process for other grant programmes about whether applicants intend to use tech, and then signposting to/providing specific support. This could enable development of social tech at a larger scale across the full portfolio. It may also prevent organisations 'adding it on'.
- **Access to social tech support for all Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn Foundation funded partners**: One field expert suggested that the Tech for Good team runs an exploratory tech prototyping fund that all funded partners across Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn Foundation have access to: *'Right now,* [funders] *ask* [funded partners] *to experiment, but whose money are they going to experiment on?'* (field expert).
- **Ring-fencing funds across the funding partnership to support tech elements of wider programmes**: *'What if you just added 10k or 20k onto a normal non-digital project – some unrestricted funding to develop a digital or social tech element to it'* (field expert).

Questions for Tech for Good:
- Does the programme want to support organisations interested in developing digital services, or is its role to stimulate exploration of digital?
- What is the appetite for championing digital reuse and signposting to existing tech?
- Does the Tech for Good programme complement or compete with mainstream funds within Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn Foundation during the current context?
- Is now the time to explore integrating the success of Tech for Good across the funders' wider grants portfolio?

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[13] Tech for Good 2020 workshop presentation

Key messages

Our findings show the significant value that the programme has brought to funded organisations since 2017. The Tech for Good programme is an established programme within the UK social tech sector and has a distinctive position as a social tech fund. It is seen as a programme that values the balance between the process of learning and the development of digital products and services.

This evaluation set out to support the Tech for Good team to understand the progress and contribution the programme has made and to explore potential directions forwards. Throughout the report, we have shared IVAR's reflections on practical implications for the programme. In this section we have outlined key messages and questions that draw on the evaluation findings as a whole. How can Tech for Good build on its progress to date for the benefit of not-for-profits across the sector?

IVAR's four key messages for the Tech for Good programme:

- Champion digital reuse and signpost to existing tech
- Learning is a key deliverable
- Enhance the sustainability of outcomes
- Explore how to lightly integrate social tech and share learning across the wider funding portfolio

1. Champion digital reuse and signpost to existing tech

The importance of organisations using existing tools and pooling resources has been clearly demonstrated by the evaluation findings. Covid-19 has further catalysed this with organisations using existing tech *'rather than create something on their own'* (field expert). Tech for Good could play an influencing role by helping to champion and legitimise the use and reimagining of existing tools and resources by charities, as well as encouraging funders to support this.

This feeds into the question of sustaining digital in the longer term. Organisations commented that it's *'hard to prioritise tech as the perceived up-front cost can be high'* (field expert). Funding organisations to adapt, develop and re-use existing social tech solutions could be a solution to this. Alternatively, prioritising time in the application process and discovery phase for organisations to explore existing resources could bring added value to the programme. This is a chance for Tech for Good to *'understand where the patterns are across the work'* (Tech for Good team member) and initiate intentional collaboration and coordination between organisations. Tech for Good could also play a 'marketplace' role; hosting effective social tech products and signposting organisations to these.

Making these shifts could help Tech for Good evolve to respond to immediate and upcoming needs within the sector, helping it to remain relevant and grounded in the needs of charities.

2. Learning is a key deliverable

This evaluation explored the ways in which the programme balances 'learning' and 'increased organisational capacity' alongside product outcomes. During the

scoping interviews, the Tech for Good team highlighted the dual ambition of the programme to *'develop or scale digital products or services which deliver new or improved outcomes for beneficiaries'* alongside seeding the *'potential for digital transformation or a growth in capability'* more generally across their organisation.

It is clear from the findings that organisations benefit heavily from the process of the programme – as a result they are more responsive to the needs of service users, obtain more meaningful feedback and data, advance digital transformation, and increase their confidence in digital. Being part of the programme and learning new approaches to service design has been immeasurable and a central part of their digital journey, regardless of product outcome for some organisations. Grant-making practices play a significant role in supporting or facilitating learning. Relational approaches to grant-making are critical when learning is a central outcome:

> *Creating spaces where organisations feel safe to have open and honest conversations with their funder is likely to impact on their willingness to share organisational learning and thus affect the ability for either party* [funder or funded partner] *to identify opportunities for adaptation or course correction, which in turn may contribute to more successful outcomes.*[14]

By working in this way – with an emphasis on setting clear and appropriate expectations, investing in relationships, and making adaptations to their more formal reporting structures – the Tech for Good team has created a programme in which learning itself is a key deliverable. When learning is placed at the heart of a funding relationship, trust becomes absolutely critical: 'it's about funders trusting that they have chosen to fund organisations that understand, and are continually adapting to, what their beneficiaries need' (IVAR, 2019:41). In other words, it requires the Tech for Good team to trust that they have chosen to fund organisations that will apply, and appropriately build on, their learning in order to strengthen their work for the benefit of their beneficiaries, even if 'evidence' of this is unavailable until some way down the line.

Finally, breaking the fund into discrete phases (as has already happened with the introduction of the Explore programme) could further embed learning by creating regular pause points for funded partners (and the programme) to reflect on progress, learning and how to move forward. For example, an organisation initially applies to the Explore Fund in order to better understand the needs of their service users and what this means for their digital offer. It may then apply for the Build programme to develop the prototype or idea. The Build process would again provide an opportunity to reflect on learning and explore how to sustain the work (e.g. a digital sustainability fund).

3. Enhance the sustainability of outcomes

There are ways in which Tech for Good could enhance project sustainability beyond the course of the programme.

Specific support to help sustain/embed culture change: Funding can be a *'real catalyst for taking on social tech'* (field expert). However, if the wider organisational culture and senior leadership team don't support social tech, this can act as a blocker to sustaining digital. The 'social tech champions' need support to engage with senior management to sustain change and keep the

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[14] Moran, R. with Buckley, E. and Jenkins, R. (2019) *Driving continuous learning as a grant maker: Evidence Review,* London: Comic Relief and IVAR

momentum. Incorporating an explicit aspect of the programme that nurtures a digital culture may build on the progress of the programme and remove pressures facing 'digital champions' within funded organisations.

Extending the length of the grant and increasing flexibility about timescales of stages of the programme: Both Tech for Good organisations and field experts discussed extending the programme from a nine-month programme to a 12-month programme to allow organisations to flex, especially within the context of overwhelmed and overstretched organisations. This could allow for increased support in the later stages of the programme to explore future funding opportunities and existing and overlapping tools, and to signpost to future training courses.

Closing well – equip organisations with pathways and connections for future support: We heard about the pipeline of funding that ideally surrounds organisations going through digital development: *'there needs to be players at different stages taking risk – that creates a more balanced ecosystem of players that know their place and play their role well'* (field expert). Can the Tech for Good team support organisations to know where there may be a funding window so organisations can decide where to invest energy and resource in applying? Can the Tech for Good team further support funded partners to consider the most appropriate model to resource tech developed during the programme? The Tech for Good Hub could act as a place to share learning on how to sustain tech and as a market place for existing tech solutions. For many organisations, the programme *'fizzled out'* (funded partner) and they were unable to think about scaling up more widely without access to funding opportunities. Setting organisations up to be able to develop, grow and sustain their products was a key message from this evaluation: there was a call for *'setting us on course'* (funded partner).

4. For consideration later: Explore how to lightly integrate social tech and share learning across the wider funding portfolio

The success of the programme and the work it funds suggests it may one day be fruitful to begin looking at lightly integrating social tech into Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Comic Relief's wider funding portfolios. Exploring possible ways to share the learning and expertise from Tech for Good across other funding streams may be of value, and will ensure it sustains beyond any shifts to the programme structure.

Promoting and facilitating social tech approaches across Comic Relief and Paul Hamlyn Foundation could be an effective evolution of the programme for the funders to consider in the future. If organisations are doing user research and programme design well, the use of tech will often be used as part of a solution or intervention. Welcoming these opportunities, and supporting organisations to draw these out in their application and programme set-up, could be valuable. There is evidence in our findings that a 'standalone' social tech funding stream perpetuates the idea of tech as an add-on or something that only 'techy' people do.

Supporting social tech across wider grant portfolios may also help facilitate better thematic learning. For example, someone developing an app to help young people's mental health could benefit from being in a cohort with other organisations working in the mental health field. And, in turn, organisations perhaps currently unable to see the role that social tech could play in their programmes could benefit from seeing relevant tech interventions.

In conclusion

The findings indicate that the Tech for Good programme has made a significant contribution to funded organisations by prioritising space and time to experiment with digital and to learn new approaches to service delivery. The value that the *process* of being involved in this programme brings was obvious throughout the evaluation. The programme has developed the confidence of many organisations in digital and in exploring ways of working to meet the needs of the communities they serve. The programme occupies a distinctive place in the wider social tech ecosystem: *'Tech for good has developed in the UK thanks to the impetus from the Tech for Good programme'* (field expert). There is an opportunity to build on this reputation and progress. Now in its fourth year of funding, has the wider sector caught up and is now an opportunity for the programme to lead again?

Appendices

Appendix 1. List of participating organisations

Alexandra Rose Charity
AVA (Against Violence & Abuse)
Bipolar UK
BongoHive Technology & Innovation Hub (Zambia)
CAST (Centre for the Acceleration of Social Technology)
Comic Relief
DeafKidz International
Depaul UK
eQuality Time
ESSEC Business School
Good Tech Lab
Hope Support Services
National Ugly Mugs
Nominet
On Our Radar
Paul Hamlyn Foundation
Playphysio
RnR Organisation
Ruils
Samaritans
Social Tech Trust
stem4
Tempo Time Credits
The Mix
The Well
Think Social Tech
We Are Reply
WellChild
WESC Foundation
Women's Aid
Working with Joe

Appendix 2. Additional support needs

Throughout our discussions both with funded partners and field experts, some additional support needs/topics were identified, namely:

- Digital marketing: How to get your product known?
- Digital sustainability: What needs to be considered when thinking about the sustainability and ongoing development of digital products?
- Understanding what is possible with tech
- What may 'success' look like regarding the development of digital products?
- Evidencing the outcomes and impact of digital development

Appendix 3. Questions the Tech for Good team might want to ask funded partners through the programme

In order to identify what some of the realistic outcomes could be in the short to medium term, we have identified a set of indicators that could be used to evidence these. For example:

- Does the organisation have a clearer sense of the role that digital plays in their future delivery/strategy?
- Has the organisation re-learnt the value of user testing and the various different ways they can go about this process?
- Can the organisation make a clear distinction between using digital to improve their infrastructure and architecture, and using digital and new technologies to deliver their programmes better?
- Has the organisation developed their skills in digital design, and do they have clear methodologies for involving their users effectively in the design process?
- Has the organisation developed specific safeguarding policies and skills that work in the digital age?
- Is the organisation aware of other new technology products being developed by similar charities? Are they looking to adapt and develop them for their programmes if they are suitable?
- Is the organisation looking to work with other organisations to test, iterate and improve their social tech product and see if it gets a big reach beyond their organisational walls (where appropriate)?
- (Where appropriate,) does the organisation have a sustainability plan in place for their digital product?

Appendix 4. Areas of focus for the evaluation

Who is the Tech for Good programme for?

- What attracted organisations to the programme?
- What are the barriers and enablers to applying to the Tech for Good programme?
- What does an organisation's journey look like from 'we have an idea' through to 'we are putting in an application to the Tech for Good programme'?
- What does it mean to be tech ready, including why organisations applied to the programme; readiness to embrace change within their organisations; the support required to ensure or develop readiness; and considering the range of organisations in the cohort.

Structure and Support

- What does organisational change look like in the context of the programme?
- What are the support needs (including individual coaching interactions), and outcomes, associated with different phases in the tech development journey?
- What do grantees feel about the benefits of collaborating in relation to social tech specifically?

Outcomes for individual grantees

- In what ways does the programme enable and balance 'learning' and 'increased organisational capacity' alongside beneficiary outcomes?
- What is the longer-term impact of the programme on grantees? What happens after the funding ends?
- What kinds of support or funding could contribute to sustaining digital journeys?

Role of the Tech for Good programme in the wider ecosystem

- Does the programme want to support organisations interested in developing digital services, or is its role to stimulate exploration of digital?
- How can the Tech for Good team amplify or give a platform to learning in order to increase the reach of the programme?
- What role can the Tech for Good programme play in relation to the health and accessibility of the digital support market for not-for-profits?