UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Digital Connectivity in Community Facilities Grants Programme – Liverpool City Region

Application Guidance Notes

Table of Contents		
Section	Subject	Page
A	Project Contact Details	2
B	About Your Organisation	2-3
C	About Your Project Proposal	3-6
D	Declaration	6-7
	Application Deadlines and Procedure	7
Annex 1	*Guidance on Eligible & Ineligible Expenditure*	8-9
Annex 2	*If Your Application is Successful*	10-12

V2 FINAL - Jun 2023

A – Project Contact Details

Please accurately complete your organisation's contact details, as these will be used to get in touch with you with any queries or information about the progress of your application. Please ensure that you provide a postcode.

The contact name/ details given in questions **A2-A5** should be the main person responsible for submitting the application. Contact details in **A6-A8** should be for an alternative contact.

B - About Your Organisation

This section is to provide us with some background information on what your organisation already does, what size it is and who already benefits from your organisation.

B2. WHO IS INVOLVED: By 'paid staff' we mean full time equivalent (FTE) members of staff so an organisation with 4 half time staff would put '2 FTE'.

B3. ORGANISATION STATUS: We will check publicly available information about companies, CICs and registered charities and may seek similar public information about unincorporated bodies. Please ensure you provide the relevant registration number in **B4**.

B6. SUBSIDY CONTROL: To be eligible: organisations cannot have received public funding subsidies totalling more than £315,000 in last 3 financial years (including the value of this Grant applied for).

Previous subsidy recipients should have received notification from the funding body that provided the subsidy, but if you are unsure whether you have received public funding subsidies please seek professional advice.

- Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) exemption for small subsidies (prev. known as 'De Minimis') applies to this Grants scheme: £315k cap.
- 3 financial years means elapsed part of current financial year (starting 1st April last year) & the 2 preceding financial years.
- £315k includes any aid given under the EU State Aid De Minimis regulations and small subsidies given as small amounts of financial assistance under UK–EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement after 31/12/20 but before this section of the new Act came into force.

More information is available [here](#).

B7. PREVIOUS WITHDRAWAL OF FUNDING: If you have answered yes to this question, this does not mean that you are not eligible to apply but **the Grants Team may request further information**.

B8. TURNOVER: Confirm your organisation's turnover for the last financial year.
To be eligible to apply, your organisation's turnover must have been **less than or equal to £1.5 million in the last financial year**.

By 'last financial year' we mean the last publicly available accounts, which would preferably be for a financial year ending less than 12 months from the date of your application.

N.B. The figure provided in B8 must match the relevant figures in the accounts submitted with your application.
If your turnover was higher than £1.5 million in the last financial year, do not proceed with your application as it will be deemed ineligible and will not be assessed.

If your organisation has only just been in operation for 12 months and you do not have 'published' accounts available yet, **please contact the Grants Team for advice**.

B9. INSURANCE AND KEY POLICIES: Where you do not currently have the required insurance covers or listed organisational policies in place, it is a Condition of Grant that the required insurance and/or policies are in place before the project will be funded.

Where possible (though we can make no guarantees), the Grants Team will endeavour to support any successful applicants to develop required policies where these are not already in place at the time of applying. This will either be through direct assistance, or by referral to your local VCFSE infrastructure support organisation, such as the local CVS.

C - About Your Project Proposal

The details you provide in this section will be used as the basis for your grant offer.

C2. PROJECT BUDGET: The amount you can apply for is between **£2,500 - £10,000,**

This is inclusive of any VAT charged on purchases made, which is not recoverable by your organisation – see later.

Please provide a budget with a detailed breakdown of your expenditure for this project. There is space on the budget template for 10 lines of expenditure, if you plan to purchase more than 10 different types of equipment please group similar items together (for example, office furniture could be grouped together on one line – but you would need to describe the number and types of furniture to be purchased – "3 desks and 3 chairs").

Please ensure this section is as accurate as possible, as this information will be used to create the grant offer letters for successful applicants; and will be used for future reconciliation of expenditure against up-front grant payments made.

Please be realistic with your budget proposal to avoid any underspend at the end of your project. The answers you give will be used to assess the **reasonableness of proposed costs and the value for money** offered by your project. High costs or unusual purchases will be queried and you may, as a result, be offered a grant that is lower than the amount you originally requested.

There will be a requirement to provide us with evidence of your expenditure. This will also be an opportunity for you to address any issues or changes that might have arisen. If, following approval of the Grant, anything significantly changes regarding your agreed budget, you will need to contact the Grants Team for advice.

Grants are NOT for staff costs, organisational overheads, purchasing equipment for staff/ volunteers, or equipment to be lent out to individuals.

A full breakdown of eligible and in ineligible expenditure is listed below in <u>Annex 1</u>. Further details of specific Q&As relating to eligible and ineligible expenditure are provided in the FAQs document.

C3.PROCUREMENT:

As this is public funding, any expenditure must comply with **National Procurement Rules**. If you are unsure how your project can comply with these rules please seek professional advice.

As a minimum we expect you to collect 3 or more quotes, for the proposed purchase of collections of similar items, whose total value exceeds £2,499. You need to tick to confirm that you have collected 3 quotes, **or that you will** collect 3 quotes for any expenditure that is £2,500 or more. In addition to formal quotes, a screen shot of a price offered from an online supplier can be considered a quote for the purposes of this exercise.

C4. VALUE FOR MONEY:

Please use this section to tell us why you have chosen to purchase what you have listed and why what you have listed represents good value for money. Although it is not always necessary to go with the cheapest quote, where a higher price quotation has been chosen over a lower one, this needs to be justified in your application. However, we would expect that where comparative quotes have been sought for items with exactly the same specification, the best price would be chosen.

As well as telling us how your proposal represents good value for money, please also use this section to tell us how what you have listed is fit for purpose. For example, have you considered who will use the equipment, what they will use the equipment for and how the equipment you have chosen meets this demand.

For more guidance on things to consider when answering this question, please refer to the resources from the funding workshop, which have been uploaded to our website.
[max 250 words]

C5. IDENTIFYING NEED FOR YOUR PROJECT: Please outline the steps that you have taken to identify the need for your project. Have you conducted any consultation or do you have any usage figures which you can tell us about in this section?

We have created an <u>online map of existing places where people can go to 'get online'</u> which includes venues that were funded in Round 1. Use this to see what other facilities already exist in the area you are applying for, particularly where applying to create new facilities. In addition, the LCR CA have provided a spreadsheet to support the application process, which includes Ward data about digital exclusion and multiple deprivation for every borough, which is available to download from our website.

Funding cannot be used to create new facilities that duplicate or displace existing provision, so it is important that you are able to demonstrate in this section that <u>either</u>: (1) there isn't any existing provision in close proximity to the facility you are proposing to create; <u>or</u> (2) existing provision is insufficient to meet demand in the local area, or unsuitable to meet the needs of the community(s) or particular demographic group(s) your proposal relates to.

If you are **applying for funding to upgrade outdated or poor quality digital kit and/or improve poor Broadband** connections in existing facilities, **you need to be able to demonstrate** why the upgrade is necessary (e.g. evidence of the current poor quality, such as how old it is, known faults, technical information, user feedback/ satisfaction data).

If you are **applying for additional digital kit to increase capacity** to meet demand, **you need to provide evidence** of this demand and why/how you are currently unable to fulfil it.

If you are **planning to purchase specialist equipment** – please use this section to explain exactly what it is, what it will be used for, who will use it and why it is needed. **[max 250 words]**

C6. WHERE YOUR PROJECT WILL TAKE PLACE: The Digital Connectivity Grant is being funded under the 'Communities and Place' Investment Priority of the UKSPF. **Please provide the address, including postcode and ward, of where the equipment will primarily be available for people to access** (i.e. on an average week, where will it be for the majority of the time). We recognise that some portable computer equipment could be used in multiple locations, however the equipment should be made regularly available for public use in one primary site owned (or leased/rented) by your organisation, for which you have the necessary insurance and policies in place (listed in section B9) in place.

C7. NUMBER OF EXISITNG USERS:
If you are applying to set up a new facility, please leave blank or enter 'zero'.
If you are applying to upgrade or increase the capacity of an existing facility, please tell us how many people use the facility in an average week. If you haven't routinely recorded how many people use your facility up until now, you will have needed to collect at least one weeks' worth of data in preparation for/ support of this application.

PROJECT OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES

C8. IMPACT – WHO, HOW, WHERE: Please use this section to tell us what impact your project will have. How will the equipment be used and who it will benefit?

What will be the impact of the project for you as an organisation?
- Who (tell us about what you do and how it will positively impact this)
- How (e.g. increased footfall/ service users, opportunities for volunteers)

What will be the impact of the project on individuals?
- Who (e.g. a specific demographic group, people from a particular neighborhood etc.?)
- How (as well as providing a place for digital connectivity will there be any wider outcomes? E.g. confidence/ digital skills/ social inclusion/ employment.

What will the impact of the project be on the wider community?
- Who (where are you based, communities served)

Please try to attribute impact to the specific expenditure of your project, for example if you are using the funding to purchase improved 'superfast' broadband, what impact will that have on your organisation and the individuals who access your service?
[max 500 words]

C9. NUMBER OF NEW USERS AS A RESULT:

If you are upgrading equipment in an existing facility you might not anticipate any new users, but if you do, please tell us, on average, how many <u>additional</u> people will access the facility per week as a result of your project.

If you are planning to increase the capacity of your existing facility, or you are planning to set up a new facility, please tell us how many <u>new/ additional</u> people will access the facility <u>per week</u> as a result of your project. This figure will be used when we assess the value for money for your project. Please be realistic with your answer, we will cross-reference your answer to the information you provide in section **C11** (to assess whether the proposed number of new/additional users is realistically achievable/ commensurate with the publicity you propose to undertake and the opening hours of the facility); and will also compare it against numbers proposed in other applications we receive.

C10. MEASURING AND RECORDING IMPACT: See **Appendix 2**. These are minimum requirements required of all successful Grant Recipients. Also add any further impact monitoring/ measurement you will undertake.
[max 250 words]

C11. PUBLICITY: Please use this section to tell us how you are going to publicise your project/ computer facilities.

In particular, if you are setting up a new facility or increasing the capacity of an existing facility, what are you going to do to let people know about the facility and encourage them to use it? How are you going to tailor your publicity to your specific target audience? (Consider things like whether social media alone would work if your target audience is people who aren't currently digitally connected).
[max 250 words]

C12. ACCESSIBILITY OF YOUR FACILITY: When will your computer facility be open for people to use (specific days and hours)?

Will there be any time limits on how long people can access your computer facility?

If you are targeting a specific audience/ demographic group, what will you do to ensure that your facility is suitable for their specific needs?
[max 250 words]

D – Declaration

In order to ensure proper accountability and ownership of the application, the declaration statement needs to be confirmed by both the person submitting the application (our main contact) and also a member of your Management Committee/Board of Trustees. This should normally be someone in an unpaid role, except in the case of CIC Directors.

D1.4) DOUBLE FUNDING: Grants awarded must not be used for **double funding** projects. Where it is found that a Grant has double funded a project, the funding award will be cancelled and all funds must be repaid.

Application Deadline and Submission Procedure

The application form and supporting documents (see FAQs document, section 7) should be submitted by email, by the stated deadline, to: ukspfgrants@volamerseyside.org.uk.

Any applications received after the stated date/time deadline will not be considered.

Do not alter this application form template, which must be submitted in **MS Word file type.**

Details on the assessment and decision making process can be found in section 11 of the FAQs document.

Annex 1: Guidance on Eligible & Ineligible Expenditure

<u>Eligible</u> Costs

Cost/ expenditure type	Comment
Broadband connectivity	Installation and ongoing contract costs (**2 years max**.) Evidence of ongoing contract payments required – monitoring frequency TBC. Minimum of 30 MBPS speed required to meet UKSPF funding requirements, but you will want/need higher than this.
Computer devices	E.g. PCs, laptops, android tablets, Chromebooks Consideration should be given to the following: - Most appropriate devices to meet evidenced need. - Mixture of different devices – this may help to maximise budget and delivery capacity.
Necessary software/ licenses	E.g. MS Windows, MS Office, anti-virus software, assistive or adaptive technology to aid accessibility for people with disabilities. **(This list is not exhaustive)** - The need for any other specialist or bespoke software above that required to make devices operable and cyber-secure must be clearly justified in your application. - Where software licenses have optional time periods for which they can be purchased up-front (after which there is a renewal cost), the maximum period that can be purchased up-front through the grant is **3 years**.
Necessary ancillary accessories and equipment	E.g. Wi-Fi Access Points/ boosters, monitors, keyboards, mice, headsets, printers, laptop bags, tablet covers, laptop/ tablet desk security locks, secure storage lockers, charging cabinets. **(This list is not exhaustive)** - Must be proportionate – e.g. to value of grant, number of computer devices being funded, facility size. - The need for any other specialist or bespoke ancillary accessories or equipment must be clearly justified in your application.
<u>Supplier</u> configuration and installation costs	<u>Reasonable</u> supplier costs of configurating devices (installing operating systems &/or software) and/or installing devices on-site (e.g. cabling). – Installation costs only eligible where no internal (in-house) expertise/ capacity exists within the applicant organisation. - Reason for costs must clearly justified in your application.
IT suite furniture	Must be proportionate to the number of computer devices, size of the facility & nature of grant being awarded. E.g. if setting up a completely new drop-in facility, it is reasonable to expect that furniture would be required. For applications focused on upgrading existing facilities, the need for new furniture must be clearly justified in your application.

Ineligible Costs

Cost/ expenditure type	Comment
Previous expenditure/ purchases made	Any purchase made/ expenditure incurred prior to the Grant Award date is ineligible.
Ongoing IT maintenance/ support contracts	Applicants may wish to consider such support contracts to fulfil ongoing IT support needs, or already have them in place, but these are not fundable through the grant.
Capital building works	E.g. building adaptions to increase IT room space.
Staff costs	None whatsoever permitted, whether to source, install or otherwise configure equipment, ongoing maintenance, management, or costs associated with assisting service users, whether to resource staffing of drop-in sessions, delivery of IT training, or anything else.
Organisational overheads, including insurance	None of any nature permitted, whether relating to staff, utilities, insurance, or other organisational overhead costs.
Training/ activity delivery (to service users) costs	Costs associated with delivery of digital skills training, or other activities using IT facility are ineligible.
Training costs (staff/ volunteers)	Costs associated with staff/ volunteer training of any type are ineligible, including training in the use of new devices, or software.
Volunteer related costs	None of any type are eligible.

Further details of specific Q&As from the briefing events relating to eligible/ ineligible expenditure are provided in the FAQs document.

Value Added Tax

VAT which is recoverable, by whatever means, is ineligible, even if it is not actually recovered by the final beneficiary or individual recipient. Irrecoverable VAT can be claimed as an eligible cost, provided the cost/claim can be substantiated by appropriate evidence from the organisation's auditors or accountants, should this be requested by the Grants Team, the LCR Combined Authority, or external auditors of the UKSPF.

If you are unsure about your organisation's VAT status, please seek professional advice.

Annex 2: If Your Application is Successful: Required Monitoring Documentation, Support & Payment

What we will require from you:

The monitoring requirements for this Grant programme are intended to be proportionate to the value, nature and purpose of the Grant and are not intended to be onerous.

Required Information	Required Evidence	When required?	Reporting deadline
1. Baseline of typical no. of current **weekly** users of digital facility (prior to creation/ improvement to facility).	Number, plus brief summary of how calculated.	Prior to facility being created/ improved. *Review/amend figure from application, if necessary.*	Following Grant Agreement sign-off, <u>prior to payment being made</u>.
2. Photographs.	Before and after shots of the facility.	Prior to and post creation/ improvement of facility.	**Before**: following GA sign-off, <u>prior to grant payment</u>. **After**: within 1 month of new equipment in situ.
3. Confirmation/ details of improved broadband speed (<u>where funded</u>).	Evidence of BB speeds prior to and post installation/ upgrade. *Best achieved through screen-shots of 'before' and 'after' speed tests.*	Prior to and post installation/ activation of new/ improved BB line.	**Before**: following GA sign-off, <u>prior to grant payment</u>. **After:** within 1 month of installation/ activation.

Notes:

a. Use https://fast.com/, or any other reputable online speed checker tool to check broadband speed.

b. UKSPF funding requirement (and therefore Condition of Grant) that new or improved broadband services purchased offer speeds of at least 30 'megabits per second' (Mbps) and, where relevant, are faster than the 'Mbps' speed of the existing broadband line in use.

VOLA

Required Information	Required Evidence	When required?	Reporting deadline
Site visit.	Confirmation of equipment in situ.	**Equipment must be in situ within 3 months of receipt of Grant payment.**	N/A – VOLA to arrange within 3 months.
Evidence of purchases made/ expenditure incurred.	Breakdown of expenditure & redacted bank statements.	ASAP after all purchases made.	On request - ASAP after all purchases made.
Ongoing broadband contract costs - evidence of payment.	*Save other evidence (quotes, invoices, receipts) for audit sample.*	Quarterly	Ongoing, within 1 week of Quarter-end.
No. of users in typical week, post creation/ improvement of facility.	Number + anonymised attendance register/ signing-in sheet data. *VOLA does not require copies of signing-in sheets, but must be kept in event of future audit.*	Record attendance data each time facility is open. *Within first 6-months, select comparable week to that of 'before' benchmark data.*	6-months post creation/ improvements. (May be requested earlier.)
Brief written summary of how the Grant was used and impact on your organisation and users.	Brief written report - no additional evidence required. *Link back to proposed impact from application.*	6-months post creation/ improvement of facility.	6-months post Grant payment.
Case study(s) - focus on the facility &/or individual user(s).	Written, recorded, or filmed case study(s).	As appropriate.	*(Optional)* On request.

* Successful Grant Recipients will also be required to agree to participate in the central project evaluation.

V2 FINAL - Jun 2023

How will the grant be paid?

Grant funding will be paid **in advance**, via BACS transfer, to the nominated bank account.

The advance payment, of 100% of your agreed project budget will be made once VOLA, as Grant Awarding Body, has received: signed acceptance of the grant offer and Terms & Conditions of Grant; confirmation of successful completion of specific conditions of grant; and all other required monitoring documentation, as detailed in this guidance.

PLEASE NOTE:

As a condition of Grant, successful applicants will be required to spend the grant to purchase the agreed equipment within 3 months of receiving the grant. The only 2 exceptions to this condition are detailed in the FAQs document, section 5.

Any unspent grant funds after this 3 month period may need to be repaid, in line with the terms and conditions of your Grant Agreement.

Where it is found that activity has not taken place (expenditure incurred) within the required time limit, or expenditure is materially different to that proposed in the application form, VOLA reserves the right to seek repayments grant monies in full, or in part, in line with the terms and conditions of your Grant Agreement.