

# UK Shared Prosperity Fund

## Digital Connectivity for Community Facilities

### Grants Programme – Liverpool City Region

#### Application Guidance Notes

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## 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 provides us with some background information on what your organisation 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(s) 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 recipients of public funding subsidies 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 the elapsed part of the current financial year (starting 1<sup>st</sup> April last) & 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. INCOME:** Confirm your organisation's total income for its last financial year.  
**To be eligible, this must not have exceeded £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 income exceeded £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 cover or the 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, 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 your local CVS.

## C - About Your Project

**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 different in each borough - see accompanying [FAQs document, section 4](#).

**The amount applied for is inclusive of any VAT charged on purchases made, which is not recoverable by your organisation – see accompanying [FAQs document \(pg 10\)](#).**

Please provide a budget with a detailed breakdown of your expenditure. There is space on the budget template for 12 lines of expenditure. If this is not enough, please group similar items together and describe what they are, including number and types. For example, office furniture could be grouped together on one line – described as "3 desks and 3 chairs".

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 the grant payment made.

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

**A detailed breakdown of eligible and ineligible expenditure is listed in the accompanying [FAQs document, section 6](#).**

### C3. PROCUREMENT:

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

**As a minimum you are expected to obtain a minimum of 3 quotes for purchases over the value of £2,499.** This threshold applies to the total cost of collections of similar items, not each individual item. **You need to tick to confirm that you have collected 3 quotes, or that you will collect 3 quotes for any expenditure of £2,500 or more.** In addition to

formal quotes, a screen shot of a price from an online supplier can be considered a quote for the purposes of this exercise.

#### **C4. VALUE FOR MONEY & FITNESS FOR PURPOSE [max 250 words]:**

Please use this section to tell us why you have chosen to purchase what you have listed and how/why it 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 propose to purchase is fit for purpose. For example, have you considered who will use the equipment, where it will be used, what they will use it 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 workshops, which have been uploaded to our [website](#).

**We strongly recommend seeking advice from an IT professional on the types of equipment to purchase and network improvements that need to be made. This will be invaluable in helping you plan your project, ensuring that you implement the best technical solutions and purchase the most suitable equipment (that will save you money in the long run); ultimately helping you to submit a stronger application.**

#### **C5. IDENTIFYING NEED FOR YOUR IT PROJECT [max 250 words]:**

Please outline the steps that you have taken to identify the need for your IT facility. Have you conducted any consultation with service users &/or others, or do you have any usage figures that you can tell us about?

We have created an [online map of existing places where people can go to 'get online'](#) which includes venues that were funded in previous funding rounds. 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 LCRCA has provided a spreadsheet to support the application process, which includes Ward-level 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 either: (1) there isn't any existing provision in close proximity to the facility you are proposing to create; or (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 equipment 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, broadband speed test results).

If you are **applying for additional digital equipment to increase capacity** to meet demand, **you need to provide evidence** of this demand and why 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.

#### **C6. WHERE YOUR PROJECT WILL TAKE PLACE:**

Provide the **address, postcode and ward of the facility 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 for outreach activity 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.

#### **C7. NUMBER OF EXISTING USERS OF YOUR IT FACILITIES:**

If you are applying to set up a new facility, please enter 'zero'.

If you are applying to upgrade or increase the capacity of an existing IT facility, please tell us **how many people currently use the IT facility in a typical week**. If you haven't routinely recorded how many people use your facility up until now, you will need to collect at least one week's worth of data in preparation for/ support of this application.

### **PROJECT OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES**

#### **C8. IMPACT – WHO, HOW, WHERE [max 500 words]:**

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 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 on individuals?

- Who? (E.g. a specific demographic group, 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 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?

#### **C9. NUMBER OF NEW USERS AS A RESULT:**

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

If you are planning to increase the capacity of your existing IT facility, or you are planning to set up a new facility, please tell us how many new/additional people you expect will access the facility in a typical week as a result of your project. This figure will be used when we assess the value for money of your project.

Be realistic with your answer, which we will cross-reference to the information you provide in section **C11 & C12** (to assess whether the proposed number of new/additional users is realistically achievable/ commensurate with the facility's opening hours and the publicity you propose to undertake). We will also compare it against numbers proposed in other applications received.

#### **C10. MEASURING AND RECORDING IMPACT [max 250 words]:**

See **Annex 1**, which lists minimum requirements of all successful Grant Recipients and confirm in your application that you understand what they are and will abide by them. Also add any further impact monitoring/ measurement you will undertake.

#### **C11. PUBLICITY [max 250 words]:**

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 IT 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).

#### **C12. ACCESSIBILITY OF YOUR FACILITY [max 250 words]:**

When will your computer facility be open for people to use (specific days and times)?

Will there be any time limits on how long people can access the 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?

### **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/ Directors. This should normally be someone in an unpaid role, except in the case of CIC Directors.

**D1.5) 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

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

**Any applications received after the stated 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: If Your Application is Successful: Required Monitoring Documentation & Evidence

### What we will require from you:

Monitoring requirements 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 is Grant Recipient required to do this?	Deadline for reporting to VOLA
1. Baseline of typical number of current <b>weekly</b> IT users of digital facility (prior to creation of/ improvement to facility).	Number, plus brief summary of how calculated.	Measure usage prior to facility being created/ improved. <i>Review &amp; confirm/ amend figure from application</i>	<b>Prior to payment of grant.</b>
2. Photographs	'Before' and 'after' shots of digital facility, including equipment in place.	Prior to and post creation/ improvement of facility.	<b>'Before' shots: Prior to payment of grant.</b>  <b>'After' shots:</b> within 1 month of new equipment being in situ – <b>31 March 2026 latest</b>
3. Confirmation (including details) of improved broadband speed ( <u>where funded</u> )	Evidence of connectivity speeds prior to and post broadband line installation/ upgrade. <i>Screen-shots of 'before' and 'after' speed tests. Screen-shots must include the date/time displayed in the bottom right hand corner of your computer screen.</i>	Prior to and post installation/ activation of new/ improved broadband connection.	<b>Current ('pre-improvement') speed: Prior to payment of grant.</b>  <b>'Post-improvement' speed:</b> within 1 month of installation/ activation – <b>31 March 2026 latest</b>
<b>Notes:</b> a. Use <a href="https://fast.com/">https://fast.com/</a> , <a href="https://www.speedtest.net/">https://www.speedtest.net/</a> , or any other reputable online speed checker tool to measure your broadband speed. b. <b>UKSPF funding requirement/ Grant Condition that broadband services purchased through the Grant provide minimum speeds of 30 Megabits per second (Mbps) and, where relevant, are faster than the Mbps speed of the existing broadband line in use.</b>			



Required Information	Required Evidence	When is Grant Recipient required to do this?	Deadline for reporting to VOLA
VOLA site visit.	Physical confirmation of equipment in situ.	<b>Equipment must be in situ within 2 months of receipt of Grant payment, or by 13 Feb 2026 latest (whichever earliest)</b>	N/A - VOLA to arrange.
Evidence of purchases made/ expenditure incurred.	Breakdown of expenditure, plus invoices & receipts. <i>Quotes &amp; bank statements (showing payments made) must also be saved for future audit.</i>	ASAP after all purchases made & by <b>31 March 2026 latest</b>	On request - ASAP after all purchases made.
Ongoing broadband contract costs - evidence of payment.		At VOLA's request	No set deadline – will be requested periodically.
Typical weekly number of IT users, post creation/ improvement of facility.	VOLA just requires the number. <i>Number provided must be based on recorded attendance data. Signing-in sheets (or equiv.) must be kept in event of future audit.</i>	Collect/ record attendance data each time facility is open. <i>Select comparable week, as far as possible, to that of 'before' benchmark data.</i>	<b>31 March 2026 latest</b>
Brief written summary of how the Grant was used and the impact it has had on your organisation and users.	Brief written report required. <i>Link back to proposed impact set out in application.</i>		<b>31 March 2026 latest</b>
Case study(s) focusing on either the facility and/or individual user(s).	Written, recorded, or filmed case study(s).	As appropriate.	With impact report.

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

## How will the grant be paid?

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

One 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 Letter/ Funding Agreement and all other required documentation as detailed in this guidance.

### PLEASE NOTE:

**As a condition of Grant, successful applicants will be required to spend the grant, with the agreed equipment in place and in use within 2 months of receiving the grant, or by 13<sup>th</sup> February 2026 latest (whichever date is earliest).**

The only exception to this condition relates to ongoing broadband contract payments, as detailed in the [FAQs document, section 5](#).

Any unspent grant funds after this date 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.