UK Shared Prosperity Fund

'Digital Connectivity in Community Facilities'

Grants Programme

Round 7 Briefings – 1st & 2nd October 2025

Please can you **display your name and organisation** so we can take a record of who is in attendance.
We will be recording this presentation to post online for those who are unable to attend today.
If you don't want to be recorded please switch off your camera.

Purpose of the fund, applicant eligibility, eligible expenditure, the application process & rules

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VOLA Consortium

Agenda

1. Background to the fund
2. Purpose and scale of the fund & target areas
3. Previous funding awards
4. Applicant eligibility
5. Subsidy Control *(previously State Aid)*
6. Procurement compliance and Value for Money
7. Eligible and ineligible expenditure
8. Application process and timescales
9. Application form – required info & evidence
10. Monitoring & evaluation
11. Q&A

1. Background to the fund

- **UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)**

UK-SPF Investment Priority	1. Communities and Place
Delivery Strand	CP3 - Supporting the voluntary and community sector, including digital and financial inclusion
UK-SPF Intervention	Digital connectivity for local community facilities

Key funding targets

- Number of organisations receiving grants

- Number of facilities created or improved

- Increased users of facilities

- Premises with improved digital connectivity

2. __Purpose of the fund__

Overall purpose – to support VCFSE sector organisations to**:**

- **Create new, public-facing IT facilities in areas where currently no, or sparse provision**

- **Improve and/or expand existing public-facing IT facilities, by:**

  - Improving broadband connectivity and/or upgrading outdated or poor quality computers/ digital equipment, where it can be evidenced as being poor.

  - Increasing capacity: by purchasing additional digital devices and/or upgrading broadband connectivity, where current facilities are insufficient to meet demand

Can be either 'open-access' to the general public, or targeted at specific client groups

Cannot fund general improvements to an organisation's IT infrastructure
Cannot fund direct delivery costs of digital skills training, or any other activities.

2. Scale of the fund & target areas

Final funding round - £90,000 remaining – targeted at specific areas

Borough	Eligible Target Areas	Total Available Funding	Maximum Individual Grant Award	Minimum No. of Grant Awards
Halton	• Castlefields • Murdishaw • Palacefields • Windmill Hill	£7,911	**£7,911**	**1**
Knowsley	• Kirkby – Northwood, Tower Hill, West Vale • Page Moss • Stockbridge Village • Huyton - St Michael's	£5,633	**£5,633**	**1**
Liverpool	• Anfield • Clubmoor • Garston • Knotty Ash/ Dovecot • Newsham Park area • Norris Green • Orrell Park • Tuebrook • Walton	£20,957	**£5,250**	**4**

2. Scale of the fund & target areas

Borough	Eligible Target Areas	Total Available Funding	Maximum Individual Grant Award	Minimum No. of Grant Awards
Sefton	• Ford/ Litherland • Netherton (West) – St Oswald LSOA areas E01007091 & E01007092 • Seaforth • Southport	£19,790	**£6,600**	3
St Helens	• Borough-wide	£27,611	**£9,200**	3
Wirral	• Moreton • New Brighton • Prenton (West) • Woodchurch	£8,304	**£8,304**	1

3. Previous funding awards

- **Rounds 1-6: 202 grants awarded to 178 organisations, covering 190 different sites**
- **Average Grant value: £7,184**

Borough	Investment Made	Total Grants	Facility Funded >1 time	Individual Facilities Created/ Improved
Halton	£108,353	13		13
Knowsley	£153,726	22		22
Liverpool	£511,286	75	-6	69
Sefton	£244,891	35	-3	32
St Helens	£140,225	19		19
Wirral	£292,668	38	-3	35
Total	**£1,451,149**	**202**	**-12**	**190**

3. Previous funding awards (Rounds 1-5)

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Activity/Focus	Count	%	Target Group	Count	%
Addiction Recovery	3	2%	Autism/ASD - Ch & YP	2	1%
Adventure (Scouts, Cadets, etc.)	1	1%	Autism/ASD - adults	2	1%
Advice (e.g. CAB)	**5**	**3%**	Blind/ visual impairment	1	1%
Advice/Training/ Emp. Support	**6**	**4%**	Care/ care leavers	1	1%
Community Centre	**43**	**27%**	Carers	2	1%
Community Centre (Faith-led)	**13**	**8%**	**Children & Young People**	**30**	**19%**
Creative Arts	5	3%	Deaf/ hearing impairment	2	1%
Disability	**14**	**9%**	**Diverse Ethnic Backgrounds**	**15**	**9%**
Domestic Violence	3	2%	LGBTQ+	1	1%
Education	**15**	**9%**	Men	2	1%
Family Support	2	1%	Older people	4	2%
Farm	1	1%	Refugees/asylum seekers	2	1%
Health & Wellbeing	3	2%	Veterans	2	1%
Homeless	2	1%	Women	5	3%
Horticulture	1	1%	Women, DEBs	2	1%
IT	2	1%	Young mums	1	1%
Mental Health	**10**	**6%**	**Work with anyone**	**87**	**54%**
Multi-purpose	**19**	**12%**	**Total**	**161**	**100%**
Offenders/ex-offenders	1	1%			
Sport	**6**	**4%**			
Youth Club	4	2%			
DWP Youth Hub	2	1%			
Total	**161**	**100%**			

35% of grants awarded to Community Centres/ Hubs – for open-access digital facilities

Lots of others with wide ranging remits & specialisms

4. Applicant Eligibility Criteria (1)

All of the following need to be met:

1. Grass-roots, VCFSE (not-for-profit) organisations with operational (public access) base in the Liverpool City Region

2. Annual turnover not exceeding £1.5 million

   (as per last publicly available accounts, preferably for financial year ending <12 months from date of application.)

3. Organisation has been in operation for a minimum of 12 months

4. Organisation has a Governing Document/Constitution *(we may need to review this, esp. CICs & CLGs)*

5. Organisation has an independent bank account for payment of the grant

6. Grant must be used to fund facilities based in the Liverpool City Region

   Organisations must be a 'going concern, with evidence of a recent financial track record

Previously funded organisations are not eligible to apply

4. <u>VCFSE sector definition</u>

Organisations run on a not-for-profit basis, including:

1. Constituted Voluntary / Community Group
2. Social Enterprise (not-for-profit)
3. Registered Charity
4. Charitable Incorporated Organisation
5. Community Interest Company (CIC) *
6. Company Limited by Guarantee

*** CICs Limited by SHARES** should contact the Grants Team prior to submitting an application.*

- Unsure about your organisation status or have queries around your constitution/ governing document? Contact the Grants Team for further guidance prior to submitting your application.

4. Ineligible Organisations

Cannot not fund organisations whose governing documents allow profits or dividends to be shared among share holders, directors, members and/or employees.

Other ineligible organisations:

- Individuals (not representing a group), or groups that consist of one family
- Statutory bodies / public authorities, i.e. Local Authorities, NHS, etc.
- Housing Associations
- Private Companies Ltd by Shares
- Grant making bodies applying for funding to redistribute to individuals or groups
- Political groups
- Previously funded organisations

5. Subsidy Control (prev. known as 'State Aid')

- **To be eligible: organisations cannot have received public funding subsidies totalling more than £315,000 in last 3 financial years** *(current year + 2 preceding)***:**
  - Including proposed value of grant being applied for.
- Confirmation required on application form.
- Previous subsidy recipients should have received notification from funding body that provided the subsidy.

Legal background

- Minimal Financial Assistance (MFA) exemption for small subsidies (prev. known as 'De Minimis') applies: £315k cap.
  - 3 financial years means elapsed part of current financial year (starting 1 April last) & 2 preceding financial yrs.
  - £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.

6. Procurement compliance and Value for Money

- Don't just go to the first 'high street' retailer or supplier that comes up on Google!
- **3 quotes required for purchases of any collection of similar items totaling £2,500+ (including VAT) – condition of grant**

Why?

- Shopping round/ seeking comparative quotes gets better deals and drives value for money
- **Public funding, so must comply with National Procurement Rules**
- National Procurement Rules are complex!
- **3 quotes = simplest and safest approach**
- Quotes can include online price comparisons
- Save evidence of quotes obtained, including screenshots, if online price comparison

*** Note: this does not constitute professional/ legal procurement advice***

7. Eligible Costs

Cost/ expenditure type	Eligible?	Comment
Broadband connectivity (min. 30 MBPS speed required – see later)	✓	Installation costs and ongoing contract (**2 years max**.) Evidence of ongoing payments required.
Computer devices (e.g. PCs, laptops, tablets)	✓	Consider: - Most appropriate devices to meet evidenced need. - Mixture of different types- maximise capacity & budget.
Necessary software/ licenses, e.g. MS Windows, MS Office, anti-virus	✓	No bespoke/ specialist applications permitted, unless clearly justified (e.g. assistive or adaptive technology) (**3 yrs max, if ongoing annual subscription**)
Necessary ancillary accessories & equipment, e.g. routers, Wi-Fi Access Points/ boosters, monitors, keyboards, mice, headsets, printers, laptop bags, tablet covers, desk/ security locks, storage/charging lockers	✓	Must be proportionate – e.g. to value of grant, no. of computer devices being funded, facility size.
Supplier configuration and installation costs *Appropriate configuration & installation by a suitable person is a condition of grant.*	✓	Reasonable supplier costs of configurating devices (e.g. installing software) and/or installing (e.g. cabling) – only where no internal expertise/capacity to do.
IT office furniture	✓	Need must be clearly justified & proportionate to no. of computer devices, facility size & nature of grant being awarded (e.g. clearly necessary for new facility).

7. Ineligible Costs

Cost/ expenditure type	Eligible?	Comment
Ongoing IT maintenance/ support contract costs	X	Applicants may wish to consider such support contracts to fulfil ongoing IT support needs, or already have them in place, but not fundable through the grant.
Capital building works	X	E.g. building adaptions to increase IT room space.
Staff costs	X	None whatsoever permitted, whether to source, install or otherwise configure equipment, ongoing maintenance, management, or costs associated with assisting users.
Organisational overheads, including insurance	X	None of any nature permitted, whether relating to staff, utilities, insurance, or other organisational overheads.
Training/ activity delivery costs (service users)	X	Costs associated with subsequent delivery of training or other activities relating to the IT facility ineligible.
Training costs (staff/ volunteers)	X	Costs associated with training staff in use of new devices, software, etc. ineligible
Volunteer related costs	X	
Projects/ costs aimed purely at recreational activities	X	Equipment or software
Equipment to lend out to participants	X	
Computers or other equipment for staff/ volunteers	X	

Outreach delivery - need primary venue that equipment will be based/ used at for majority of time

8. Application process and timescales

Milestone	Sept	Oct			Nov	Dec
Application window launched	**Mon 29th**					
Q&A Deadline		**Wed 15th**				
Application Deadline (5pm)			**Fri 24th**			
Due diligence checks & follow-up				**By 31st**		
Applications assessed, moderated & decisions made					**3rd – 20th**	
Applicants informed (successful/ unsuccessful) – including conditions & queries to be resolved					**21st**	
Grant Agreements issued & grants paid						**When pre-grant conditions met**

8. Application process and timescales

- **Application form & supporting documents available on website (https://volamerseyside.org.uk/ukspf)**

  - Application form (Word document)

  - Application guidance

  - FAQs

  - Ward data (Digital Exclusion and IMD)

  - Slides & videos of briefing sessions

- **Questions and completed applications (with requested supported documents) to be emailed to: ukspfgrants@volamerseyside.org.uk**

9. Application form – required info & evidence

- Supporting documents required with application

- Insurance and key policies required

- Value For Money & fitness for purpose

- Demonstrate need

- Project outputs and outcomes (impact)

- Publicity

- Opening times and accessibility

9. Application: Supporting Documents Required

Published set of accounts for your last financial year

Exceptions: e.g. if your organisation:

- Is exempt from requirements (e.g. charities with <£10k turnover, which are not also Cos Ltd by Guarantee).

- Has only just been in operation for 12 months and no accounts are available yet.

Contact Grants Team prior to submitting application to check that the form of accounts you propose to submit will be acceptable

Annual Report, covering your recent activities and achievements

- E.g. Charity Annual Report, CIC34 Report, or Directors Report and Accounts (providing there is a substantial paragraph on activity and achievements during the year) would all suffice.

If none of the above are available (regardless of whether you are legally obliged to have one):

- Submit brief report (500 words max) covering activities and achievements in past 12 months.

9. Application form – Insurance and key policies required

B9 | **Does your organisation have the following?**

Insurance:

- Public Liability, Employers Liability, Contents - that covers full replacement value of any assets funded

Policies:

- Risk Assessment / H&S Policies

- Internet Security Policy

- Data Protection Policy

- Safeguarding Policy(s) – which include(s) reference to online safeguarding of children and young people &/or vulnerable adults (as appropriate)

- Commitment to Environmental Sustainability – including how you will dispose of waste electrical or electronic equipment

If not currently in place, option to confirm they will be in place before project is funded (Condition of Grant)

9. Application form – Fitness for purpose & Value for Money

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| **C4** | Explain the process you have &/or will undertake to ensure that what you purchase is "fit for purpose" and provides good value for money: (Max 250 words) |

Fit for purpose

- People, Purpose, Place – see 'technical tips' briefing slides - **explain in simple terms** who will use the equipment, where and what they will use it for, and how the equipment chosen meets this demand
- Have you taken advice? If so, say so – strengthens your argument!

Strong recommendation: seek advice from an IT professional.

Value for Money

- If you have got 3 quotes or undertaken online price comparisons, say so!
- National procurement rules: purchases £2,500+ = minimum 3 quotes & keep evidence (must comply)
  - If online price comparisons, need to save screen shots

  Cheapest option not always necessarily the best!
  - Consider suitability, specification, durability, etc.
  - If more expensive options chosen, need to keep written justification regarding decision taken

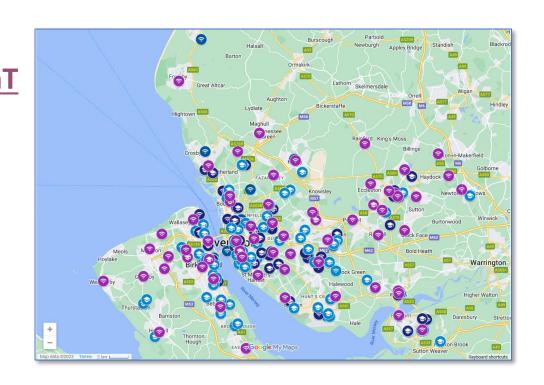# 9. Application form – demonstrate need

| C5 | How have you identified the need for your IT project? (Max 250 words) |

https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=14nT7JPQXFjgq_J6HDD-gJon6OqBJPc0&ll=53.4968082762516%2C-3.0626573715340033&z=10
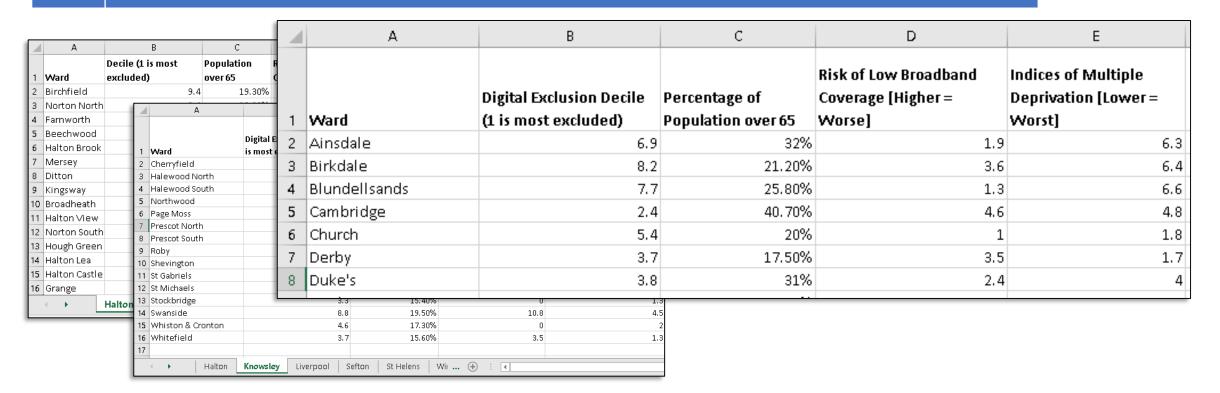
Use this map to see what else is already in your area.

9. Application form – demonstrate need

C5 | **How have you identified the need for your IT project? (Max 250 words)**

We won't know unless you tell us: Why is your project needed? Who will your project Serve (specific group(s), or general community)? Why do they need support?

9. Application form – demonstrate need

C5	**How have you identified the need for your IT project? (Max 250 words)**

COMPLETELY NEW FACILITY: "Creation of new, public-facing IT (computer) facilities in communities where there is currently no, or sparse provision; particularly in areas of high digital exclusion and deprivation"

We won't know unless you tell us: *How you know there is a need for your proposed computer facilities - use data and map provided, local intelligence, service user feedback (if none, take straw poll). What are the needs of your particular community?*

UPGRADE: Improving broadband connectivity and/or upgrading outdated or poor quality computers/ digital equipment, where it can be evidenced as being poor

We won't know unless you tell us: *Why & how you know it needs upgrading. E.g. How old is you current equipment? Known faults? Is current broadband speed slow (state)? Any user feedback? (If not, take straw poll) Is it currently being used (Question C7)?*

INCREASE CAPACITY: by purchasing additional digital devices and/or upgrading broadband connectivity, where current facilities are insufficient to meet demand

We won't know unless you tell us: *How you know there is demand for more equipment. Provide numbers (people/ users and computers now, compared to what is needed). Any user feedback (straw poll)*

9. Application form – Project outputs and outcomes

C8 — **Please tell us what impact your IT project will have, who will benefit and how? (Max 500 words)**

- Impact for you as an organisation:
  - Who (tell us about what you do and how it will positively impact this)
  - How (footfall/ service users, volunteers?)
- Impact for individuals:
  - Who (specific demographic groups?)
  - How (wider impact – DI/ confidence/ digital skills/ social inclusion/ employment, etc?)
- Impact on the wider community:
  - Who (where are you based, communities served)
  - How (community resource – wider impact for the community)

C10 — **How will you measure/record the impact of your IT project? (Max 250 words)**CI

- Links to Question C9 – *also see section 10 of presentation.*

9. Application form – publicity

C11	**How will you publicise your computer facilities and ensure that people know about them, when they are open and how to access them? (Max 250 words)**

- What are you going to do to ensure people know your facility is available for them to use?
  - Note, social media alone may not be sufficient.

- Is publicity going to be tailored to specific target groups? If so, how?

- Particularly important for brand new and expanding facilities.

9. Application form – opening times and accessibility

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C12	When will your computer facility be open for people to use (specific days & 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, tell us: - who will access the equipment - what will you do to ensure that your facility is suitable for their specific needs (Max 250 words)CI

- How you have considered the ways that your will facility will be accessed by your target audience.

- What are the proposed opening times? Will they be convenient for your target group?

- Will the facilities be free to access?

- Will your target audience need any specialist equipment, building modifications?

10. <u>Monitoring Requirements</u>

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Required Information	Required Evidence	When required?	Reporting deadline
1. Baseline of typical no. of current **<u>weekly</u>** users of digital facility (prior to creation/ improvement to facility).	Number, plus brief summary of how calculated.	Prior to facility being created/ improved. *Review & confirm/ amend figure from application*	**<u>Prior to payment of grant.</u>**
2. Photographs.	Before and after shots of the facility.	Prior to and post creation/ improvement of facility.	**'Before' shots**: **<u>Prior to payment of grant.</u>** ʹ**After' shots**: within 1 month of new equipment in situ **31 March 2026 latest**
3. Confirmation/ details of improved broadband speed (<u>where funded</u>).	Evidence of BB speed prior to & post installation/ upgrade. *Screen-shots of 'before' and 'after' speed tests.*	Prior to and post installation/ activation of new/ improved BB line.	**Current ('pre-improvement') speed**: **<u>Prior to payment of grant.</u>** **'Post-improvement' speed**: within 1 month of installation/ activation **31 March 2026 latest**
Notes: a. Use https://fast.com/, https://www.speedtest.net/, *or any other reputable online speed check tool.* b. UKSPF funding requirement/ Grant Condition that broadband services purchased through the Grant offer minimum speeds of 30 Megabits per second (Mbps) and, where relevant, are faster than the Mbps speed of the existing broadband line in use.			

10. Monitoring Requirements

Required Information	Required Evidence	When required?	Reporting deadline
Site visit.	Confirmation of equipment in situ.	**Equipment must be in situ within 2 months of receipt of Grant payment, or by 13 Feb-26 latest (whichever earliest)**	N/A - VOLA to arrange **March 2026**.
Evidence of purchases made/ expenditure incurred.	Breakdown of expenditure, plus invoices & receipts.	ASAP after all purchases made & **by 31 Match 2026 latest**	On request - ASAP after all purchases made.
Ongoing broadband contract costs.	*Quotes & bank statements (showing payments made) must also be saved for future audit.*	At VOLA's request	No set deadline – will be requested periodically.
Typical weekly number of users, post creation/ improvement of facility.	VOLA just requires the number. *Number provided must be based on recorded attendance data. Signing-in sheets (or equiv.) must be kept in event of future audit.*	Record attendance data each time facility is open. *Select comparable week, as far as possible, to that of 'before' benchmark data.*	**31 March 2026 latest**
Details of how the Grant was used and its impact on your organisation and users.	Brief written report. *Link back to proposed impact set out in application.*		**31 March 2026 latest**
Case study(s) - focus on the facility &/or individual user(s).	Written, recorded, or filmed case study(s).	As appropriate.	With impact report.

10. <u>Evaluation</u>

- Participation in the central evaluation (to be undertaken by VOLA &/or the LCRCA) is a Condition of Grant.

- Grant Recipients will support the process by default through the monitoring info provided.

- Impact report and case studies important!

- Requests may be made for additional info, such as interviews with the evaluation team.

- Process will be designed to be as 'light touch' as possible and will not place an unduly onerous obligation on Grant Recipients.

⚠️ **Technical 'hints & tips' briefing: Friday 3rd October, 11.00am-12.15pm**

Zoom link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88543358088?pwd=81o3xXs71cWFsm4iTpHf3W3eoAHCFy.1

Book your place: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/1738578377729?aff=oddtdtcreator

Questions?

Thank you and good luck!

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