



## UKSPF: Digital Connectivity in Community Facilities Grants Programme (LCR)

### FAQs: Round 7, September/October 2025

**Application deadline: 5pm, Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

**[ukspfgrants@volamerseyside.org.uk](mailto:ukspfgrants@volamerseyside.org.uk)**

1. What is the Grants programme focussed on?
2. What kinds of organisations can apply for these grants?
3. Who can benefit from the grants?
4. What geographical areas are eligible for funding in Round 7 and how much money is available?
5. When will the grant be paid & when does it need to be spent by?
6. What can & cannot be funded?
7. How do we apply and what documents do we need to submit?
8. What is VOLA?
9. Is there any support or advice available to help us apply?
10. Can organisations apply for more than one grant?
11. How will decisions be made?
12. How soon will we find out the result?
13. What can we do if we are unsuccessful?
14. What will we need to do if we are successful?
15. How will the grant be paid?
16. **Any other questions?** Please get in touch with the Grants Team at [ukspfgrants@volamerseyside.org.uk](mailto:ukspfgrants@volamerseyside.org.uk). **Deadline for questions: Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025, 5pm.** We will aim to respond within 3 working days.

## 1. What is the Grants programme focused on?

The Liverpool City Region 'Digital connectivity for local community facilities' grants programme is funded through the 'Communities and Place' Investment Priority of the [Liverpool City Region Combined Authority \(LCRCA\) UK Shared Prosperity Fund](#).

[VOLA Consortium](#) has been contracted by the LCRA to manage this Grants Programme to enable local **Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector organisations** to apply for funding to improve their digital connectivity and develop facilities that support LCRCA Digital Inclusion priorities.

### Purpose of the fund:

#### Development of public-use computer facilities, including:

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  - Improving broadband connectivity and/or upgrading outdated or poor quality computers/ digital equipment, where it can be evidenced as being poor.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

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

The grant fund is **not** about improving an organisation's general IT infrastructure, or providing funding to pay for the costs of providing digital skills training or any other activities.

*Note: previous flexibilities concerning general digital connectivity improvements to community buildings (without the need for developing 'public-use' computer facilities) are no longer available for this final funding round.*

[Back to Top](#)

## 2. What kinds of organisations can apply for these grants?

### Organisational/ legal status

- a. This funding can only be awarded to grass-roots VCFSE sector organisations, run on a not-for-profit basis, with operational (public access) base in the Liverpool City Region. This includes constituted community and voluntary groups, Charities & Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs), Community Interest Companies (CICs), social enterprises and Companies Limited By Guarantee run on a not-for-profit basis.

We may examine public information about Registered Charities, CIOs, CICs, and Companies Ltd by Guarantee which apply. **Private Companies Limited by Shares cannot apply.**

**Community Interest Companies (CICs) Limited by SHARES should contact the Grants team prior to submitting an application.**

- b. Your organisation must have a Governing Document/Constitution, which we may need to review.

**We will not fund organisations whose governing documents allow profits or dividends to be shared among directors and employees.** In the case of Companies Limited by Guarantee or Community Interest Companies (CICs) your governing document should **make it clear** that any surplus is reinvested to support the aims of the organisation or other social purposes, and any assets are transferred for public benefit in the event of dissolution.

**If you are unsure about your organisation status or have queries around your constitution or governing document please contact the Grants Team for further guidance prior to submitting your application.**

### Other eligibility criteria

- c. Only organisations that have an annual turnover (income) equal to or less than £1.5 million can apply.

- As per the last publicly available accounts, preferably for financial year ending less than 12 months from date of application, if these are available.

- d. To be eligible, your organisation/group should have been in existence for at least 12 months.

- **We will need a published set of accounts for your last financial year** and will also need to see an **Annual Report** covering your recent activities and achievements.

- e. Your organisation must have an independent bank account for payment of the grant.

- f. The grant must be used to fund premises based in the Liverpool City Region.

**Previously funded organisations are not eligible to apply.**

## **Ineligible organisations include:**

- Private Companies Ltd by Shares
- Individuals (not representing a group), or groups that consist of one family
  - This includes organisations whose Board of Directors/ Trustees are made up entirely of related family members.
- Statutory bodies / public authorities, i.e. Local Authorities, NHS, etc.
- Housing Associations
- Organisations distributing profits to members or shareholders
- Grant making bodies applying for funding to redistribute to individuals or groups
- Political groups

## **Additional applicant eligibility-related Q&As from previous rounds**

Question	Answer
Could the funding be granted to organisations that aren't open every day (e.g. only open 2-3 days per week)?	<b>Yes.</b> There are no specific restrictions on the opening times of facilities funded by the grants. <b>However</b> , applicants are reminded that it is a competitive process and grants will be awarded based on the relative strength of the evidenced need and proposed impact asserted in competing applications.
Do the computer facilities have to be open access to the general public, or can grants be made for facilities that are restricted to an organisation's service users, or a specific demographic group?	Organisations working with specific clients or demographic groups are eligible to apply. Computer facilities do not need to be 'open-access' for the general public.
Is match funding required to be able to apply?	<b>No</b> – applicant eligibility and funding decisions made are not dependent on any other match funding source – whether already in place or currently being applied for.
Can one organisation apply on behalf of another?  <i>Context: should smaller organisations be encouraged to apply on their own, or would it be better for a larger/ more experienced organisation to apply on their behalf?</i>	<b>No</b> , organisations need to apply individually. If successful, they would retain ownership of the equipment purchased through the grant and would be directly responsible for the Terms and Conditions of Grant.  However, it would be perfectly acceptable for another organisation to help them with their application.
Our organisation has not got any accounts/ had any financial turnover for several years as it has not been actively operating, but is still technically active on Companies House. Are we eligible to apply?	<b>No</b> – organisations of this nature are ineligible. We can only fund organisations that are a 'going concern', that are currently operational, with clear evidence of a recent operational and financial track record, i.e. as per publicly available accounts for the last financial year ( <i>or see section 7 for exceptions/ alternatives</i> ). Companies House/ Charity Commission registration is not sufficient in itself to be eligible to apply.

[Back to Top](#)

### 3. Who can benefit from the grants?

Eligible organisations (as in section 2) are themselves the primary grant beneficiaries. End-user beneficiaries must primarily be residents of the Liverpool City Region, but there are no restrictions on other people using these facilities. In terms of members of the public that accesses the facilities funded through the grants, there are no defined criteria or restrictions.

[Back to Top](#)

### 4. What geographical areas are eligible for funding in Round 7 and how much money is available?

Borough funding allocations and eligible target areas as follows:

Borough	Eligible Target Areas	Total Available Funding	Maximum Individual Grant Award	Minimum No. of Grant Awards
Halton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Castlefields</li> <li>• Murdishaw</li> <li>• Palacefields</li> <li>• Windmill Hill</li> </ul>	£7,911	£7,911	1
Knowsley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kirkby – Northwood, Tower Hill, West Vale</li> <li>• Page Moss</li> <li>• Stockbridge Village</li> <li>• Huyton - St Michael's</li> </ul>	£5,633	£5,633	1
Liverpool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anfield</li> <li>• Clubmoor</li> <li>• Garston</li> <li>• Knotty Ash/ Dovecot</li> <li>• Newsham Park area</li> <li>• Norris Green</li> <li>• Orrell Park</li> <li>• Tuebrook</li> <li>• Walton</li> </ul>	£20,957	£5,250	4
Sefton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ford/ Litherland</li> <li>• Netherton (West) – St Oswald LSOA areas E01007091 &amp; E01007092</li> <li>• Seaforth</li> <li>• Southport</li> </ul>	£19,790	£6,600	3
St Helens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borough-wide</li> </ul>	£27,611	£9,200	3
Wirral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moreton</li> <li>• New Brighton</li> <li>• Prenton (West)</li> <li>• Woodchurch</li> </ul>	£8,304	£8,304	1

[Back to Top](#)

## 5. When will the grant be paid & when does it need to be spent by?

Successful applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application by 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025. We aim to issue Grant Agreements and make payments as soon as possible after this - timescales are likely to vary per applicant, depending on how quickly any pre-grant conditions are met (see section 14).

### Deadline for spending the grant

As a **condition of grant**:

- Successful applicants will be expected to spend the grant, with equipment in place and in use **by 13<sup>th</sup> February 2026 at the latest**.
- Any unspent grant funds after this date may need to be repaid, in line with the terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement.

The only exception to this expenditure deadline is:

- Where funding is provided for a new/ upgraded broadband line, which incurs an ongoing monthly charge, in which circumstances, expenditure on recurring contract costs can be up to the duration it is funded for (up to a maximum of 24 months).

However, expenditure of all other agreed costs funded through the grant need to take place by the 13<sup>th</sup> February 2026 deadline.

Should exceptional circumstances arise that could not have been foreseen on entering in to the Grant Agreement that are likely to affect the ability to meet this deadline, Grant Recipients should contact the VOLA Grants team at the earliest opportunity.

### Future grants rounds

This is the final funding round of this UKSPF grants programme.

[Back to Top](#)

## 6. What can and cannot be funded?

### ELIGIBLE COSTS

Eligible expenditure	Comment
<b>Broadband connectivity</b>	<p>Installation and ongoing contract costs (<b>2 years max</b>).</p> <p>Minimum speed of 30 Megabits per second (Mbps) required to meet UKSPF funding requirements.</p> <p><i>(Note: 30 Mbps isn't fast - you will want/need faster than this.)</i></p> <p><b>Note: we can only fund the cost of a new broadband line, or improved (faster) broadband connection, not the ongoing cost of an existing contract/ package. We also cannot fund early exit penalties charged by current providers.</b></p>



<b>Computer devices</b>	<p>PCs, laptops, tablets, iPads?</p> <p>Different devices are better suited to different circumstances, environments and user needs. Careful consideration should be given to purchasing the most appropriate devices. E.g. who is going to be using the computers? What are they going to use them for? Are they going to be fixed in an IT suite, or do they need to be portable? Do you have restricted space?</p>
<b>Necessary software</b>	<p>E.g. MS Windows, MS Office, anti-virus/ internet security software, assistive or adaptive technology to aid accessibility for people with disabilities. <b>(This list is not exhaustive)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where options exist to pay up-front for multi-annual software licenses (after which there is a renewal cost), the maximum period the grant can pay for is <b>3 years</b>, which must be purchased up-front – it cannot be used to pay for ongoing annual renewal costs.</li> </ul> <p>The need for any <b>specialist software</b> beyond that required to make devices operable and cyber-secure <b>must be clearly justified</b> in your application.</p>
<b>Necessary ancillary accessories and equipment</b>	<p>E.g. Routers, Wi-Fi Access Points, Wi-Fi boosters, monitors, keyboards, mice, headsets, printers, laptop bags, tablet covers, laptop/ tablet desk security locks, secure storage/ charging cabinets. <b>(This list is not exhaustive)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Must be proportionate – e.g. to value of grant, number of computer devices being funded, facility size.</li> <li>- The need for any <b>specialist ancillary accessories or equipment</b> <b>must be clearly justified</b> in your application.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note: Implementation of Web Content Filtering (WCF) controls (e.g. through a WCF router) is a condition of grant.</b></p>
<b>IT Supplier installation and configuration costs</b>	<p>Technical support costs for network infrastructure improvements (e.g. network cabling, configuration of broadband routers, Wi-Fi solutions), installation and configuration of computer devices (e.g. installing operating system, software, setting user permissions).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Costs must be reasonable and are only eligible where an applicant organisation lacks internal expertise to undertake this work.</li> <li>- Cost &amp; extent of work must be clearly stated in your application.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note: Appropriate configuration &amp; installation by a suitably qualified/ experienced person is a condition of grant.</b></p>
<b>IT suite furniture</b>	<p>Must be proportionate to the number of computer devices, size of the facility &amp; nature of grant being awarded.</p> <p>E.g. if setting up a completely new drop-in facility, it is perfectly 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.</p>



### Additional, specific questions raised in previous funding rounds

Question	Answer
Can funding be used to buy specialist software (i.e. graphics/ sound software)?	<p>This is <b>not ineligible by default; however</b>, applicants would need to justify the cost by clearly articulating evidence of need and intended impact. For example, if the intended impact supports the genuine development of learning and skills.</p> <p><b>Software for purely recreational activities will not be funded.</b></p>
<p>Can funding be used to buy a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- TV?</li> <li>- Digital projector/screen?</li> <li>- Whiteboard</li> <li>- Interactive Digital Display Screen?</li> </ul>	<p>These are <b>not ineligible by default; however</b>, applicants would need to justify the cost by clearly articulating evidence of need and intended impact. For example, if the intended impact supports the genuine development of learning and skills.</p> <p><b>Equipment aimed purely at recreational activities will not be funded.</b></p> <p>- Cost/ number requested must not account for a disproportionate amount of the total grant value applied for.</p> <p><b>Note: applications for these kinds of items in isolation (i.e. not included as part of a wider application aimed at improving digital connectivity) will not be considered.</b></p>
Can you apply for equipment that will be used for outreach activities (i.e. taken to other venues) rather than at a fixed location?	<p><b>Yes - however</b>, applicants need to identify a primary venue at which the equipment would be used for the majority of the time.</p> <p>Applicants intending to use funded equipment for outreach delivery need to state the locations of the intended outreach venues in their application and assert why those venues/ locations need their outreach support.</p> <p>Funding cannot be used to fund facilities or outreach provision that duplicates or displaces existing provision.</p>
Can funding be used to buy secure storage units for laptops/ tablets (including charging storage units)?	<p><b>Yes</b> – costs must be justified and proportionate to the nature of grant being awarded, number of computer devices, size of the facility, etc.</p> <p>Assurance of the ongoing security of assets purchased through the grant is essential. Both the physical and organisational measures employed to ensure the security of funded equipment must be explained in your application.</p>
Can funding be used to just purchase broadband improvements, and no other equipment?	<p><b>Yes</b> – also see yellow note in above ‘Broadband connectivity’ section.</p>



## **INELIGIBLE COSTS**

Ineligible costs	Comment
<b>Previous expenditure/ purchases made</b>	Any purchase made/ expenditure incurred prior to the Grant Award date is ineligible.
<b>Ongoing IT maintenance/ support costs</b>	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.
<b>Capital building works</b>	E.g. building adaptations.
<b>Staff costs</b>	None whatsoever permitted, including staff time to source, configure, or install equipment, ongoing maintenance, management, or ongoing staff costs associated with assisting service users, whether to resource staffing of drop-in sessions, delivery of IT training, or anything else.
<b>Organisational overheads</b>	None of any nature permitted, whether relating to staff, utilities, insurance, or other organisational overhead costs.
<b>Delivery of training/ activities to service users</b>	Costs associated with delivery of digital skills training, or other activities are ineligible – including costs for external contractors engaged to deliver training.
<b>Staff/ volunteer training costs</b>	Costs associated with staff/ volunteer training of any type are ineligible, including training in the use of new devices, or software.
<b>Volunteer related costs</b>	None of any type are eligible.
<b>Equipment installed in venues not owned or leased by the Grant applicant</b>	This also includes venues/rooms that you only hire periodically on an ad hoc basis, which is also ineligible.
<b>Equipment to lend out to participants</b>	
<b>Computers or other equipment for staff/ volunteers</b>	

**Grants cannot be used for projects that displace and/or duplicate existing Digital facilities.** The need for your project must be clearly justified in your application.

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 deprivation for every borough, which is available to download from our [website](#).

**For further information on demonstrating need, refer to [Application Guidance Notes \(C5\)](#).**

## 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.

[Back to Top](#)

## 7. How do we apply and what documents do we need to submit?

Please email your completed application (using the form provided, unaltered), **plus** required supporting documentation, to: [ukspfgrants@volamerseyside.org.uk](mailto:ukspfgrants@volamerseyside.org.uk) by the stated deadline.

### **Required supporting documentation:**

#### **1. Published set of accounts for your last financial year**

- In order to protect public funds, independent inspection, verification or auditing of your accounts (appropriate to your constitutional status and level of turnover) is required.
- If you consider your group should be exempt from such requirements (e.g. in the case of charities with a turnover of less than £10,000 which are not Companies Limited by Guarantee), OR your organisation has only just been in operation for 12 months and you do not have accounts available yet, you should contact the Grants Team in advance of submitting your application to check that the form of accounts you propose to submit will be acceptable.

#### **2. Annual Report**, covering your recent activities and achievements.

- We need to see your most recent Annual Report to get some broader context of the work of your organisation, its activities and achievements. A Charity Annual Report, Community Interest Company CIC34 Report, or Directors Report and Accounts (providing there is a substantial paragraph on activity and achievements during the year) would all suffice. If you do not already have such a document, regardless of whether you are legally obliged to have one, we require you to submit a brief report (500 words max) covering your activities and achievements in the past twelve months.

[Back to Top](#)

## 8. What is VOLA?

VOLA is a consortium of Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector (VCFSE) service providers operating in Liverpool City Region.

The consortium exists, primarily, to provide a formal structure for supporting the VCFSE sector in the provision of skills and employment support across the city region; promoting, organising and facilitating cooperation and partnership working between VCFSE organisations.

Over the last 10 years, VOLA has done a great deal of work in the Digital Inclusion arena. Working closely with the LCR Combined Authority (LCRCA), we both deliver Digital Inclusion services and work strategically to promote and help to address the Digital Inclusion agenda.

VOLA has been appointed by the LCRCA to manage this Grants programme.

Separately to this application process, if you would like to apply to become a member, please visit the membership section of our [website](#).

For clarity, an organisation's VOLA membership status has no bearing whatsoever on eligibility for, or funding decisions made in relation to this Grants programme.

[Back to Top](#)

## 9. Is there any support or advice available to help us apply?

Online briefing workshops are delivered prior to launching the application window. If you are unable to attend, you can access the slides [here](#).

- The '[Technical Tips](#)' [slide deck](#) is particularly useful, alongside this FAQs document and the [Application Guidance Notes](#).

You may wish to speak to a local infrastructure support agency, such as a Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), or another partner organisation that might be able to assist. The Grants Team at VOLA can only offer brief, factual advice on the application process in response to questions raised at the briefing sessions, or via the published email address, and cannot comment on the validity or quality of your proposals/ application.

[Back to Top](#)

## 10. Can organisations apply for more than one grant?

**No.** Eligible organisations can only apply for one grant. Multiple applications from the same organisation, or single applications covering more than one venue will not be accepted.

**Previously funded organisations are not eligible to apply.**

Previously unsuccessful applicants are eligible to apply, so long as they meet the eligibility criteria.

[Back to Top](#)

## 11. How will decisions be made about which projects to fund?

After the closure of each application window, the Grants Team at VOLA will check applications for completeness, (including all required supporting documentation), undertake eligibility checks and necessary due diligence. They may need to contact applicants where eligibility cannot be clearly confirmed, or information, or required documentation is missing. All eligible and complete applications will then be allocated to the assessment team, which comprises a multi-agency VCFSE sector partnership of experienced grant assessors.

**Assessors use a systematic process to score all applications**, taking account of stated evidence of need; proposed impact; compliance and value for money; and the nature and track record of the applicant organisation. Each application is assessed by a minimum of two assessors. Following this, the assessment panel meets to discuss applications and reach consensus on recommendations to make to the Project Steering Group, including which applications should be funded, for how much, and on what conditions.

The Project Steering Group (PSG) then meets to consider these recommendations and make final decisions, taking into consideration availability of other nearby facilities. The PSG involves a range of key stakeholders from across the city region, including senior officers from the LCR Combined Authority, Local Authorities and borough-based Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS's), or equivalent.

[Back to Top](#)

## 12. How soon will we find out the result?

Applicants will be informed of the outcome of their application **by 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025**.

[Back to Top](#)

## 13. What can we do if we are unsuccessful?

You will receive an email from us notifying you of the outcome of your application, which will include brief general feedback on why your application has been unsuccessful. Due to the expected high volume of applications, we regret that we are **unable to enter into detailed individual discussions**.

If you are unhappy about any aspect of the process, please discuss it first with the Grants Team at VOLA. If the matter cannot be resolved in this way, VOLA has a formal complaints procedure. In the unlikely event of a formal complaint, these should be emailed to:

[ukspfgrants@volamerseyside.org.uk](mailto:ukspfgrants@volamerseyside.org.uk)

[Back to Top](#)

## 14. What will we need to do if we are successful?

We aim to issue Grant Agreements and make payments as soon as possible after informing successful applicants. Before your grant is paid, you must:

1. Sign and return your Grant Agreement.
2. Confirm that any pre-payment conditions of grant have been met, providing evidence where requested.
3. Submit required pre-grant monitoring information (this is minimal & straightforward).

Payment timescales will vary per applicant, dependant on how quickly the above information is provided.

**Note:**

- Grant Agreements must be signed by an appropriate person with the authority to agree to the terms and conditions of the Grant Award on behalf of your organisation.
- You can start spending on your project from the date you sign your Grant Agreement.
- The Grants Team will follow up with you to discuss your project, confirm monitoring requirements, provide guidance and any necessary templates. Continued support will be available throughout the duration of your project.

**For further details regarding monitoring requirements, see [Annex 1 of the Application Guidance Notes](#).**

**Insurance and key policies**

Where successful applicants have indicated in their application that, at the time of applying, they do not have the required insurance and/or organisational policies in place, it will be a **condition of grant** that these are in place before the project will be funded and any payments made. We will need written confirmation that any outstanding issues have been addressed and we may request copies of relevant documentation to confirm this.

Subject to capacity, 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.

[Back to Top](#)

**15. 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.

[Back to Top](#)