Digital Participation Challenge Fund Review

April 2017

1. Introduction

In recent years, new technology and the internet has radically altered how we choose to communicate, learn, shop, bank, engage in discussion, get our news and be entertained. For those who have the access, motivation and skills to get things done online, life is enhanced.

But still far too many people risk being left behind. In 2013, 20% of the adult population in Scotland never used the internet and 30% did not have basic digital skills. This was the lowest reported level of any country or region of the United Kingdom.

If this were just a case of missing out on a few distracting websites and celebrity tweets then we might think nothing more of it. The stakes are so much higher. Amongst other things, the internet helps people keep in touch, learn new things, save money, find work and stay healthy. For some people it's been a genuine life saver. These things matter to everyone, they should be for everyone.

Over the past three years, with the support of the Scottish Government, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) has been leading a national effort to promote digital participation and basic digital skills.

We have:

- Worked through the third sector to reach those individuals missing out on the benefits of being online in order to build their confidence and skills;
- Encouraged the third sector to better understand and develop the skills to take advantage of the opportunities presented by new technology and the internet; and
- Supported collaboration across the public, private and third sectors to address these issues.

The Digital Participation Challenge Fund has been a key resource to support this activity. I has provided small grants to increase digital confidence, capability and skills. With the support of the Scottish Government, European Structural Funds and BT, £748,108 has been invested in 84 projects across three funding rounds between 2014 and 2016.

This report reviews the outcomes achieved and lessons learned across those projects.

The report is structured as follows:

- In section 2 we set out the objectives of the Fund and a summary of the investments.

- Section 3 presents a high level overview of the outputs and outcomes achieved by the projects and four case studies which highlight their diversity.

- Sections 4 and 5 provide a more detailed analysis of the projects funded and lessons learned. This analysis was carried out independently by Rocket Science UK Ltd based on the monitoring and evaluation data provided by projects and qualitative feedback on lessons learned.

- Section 6 provides a brief summary of lessons learned from other projects and programmes across the UK in recent years aiming to tackle digital exclusion. A more detailed review of research, undertaken by University of the West of Scotland and SCVO, is available as a separate report.

- Section 7 outlines how the lessons from the three previous rounds covered in this report, as well as wider research, have informed the latest round of funding in 2017.

- Section 8 provides some conclusions and reflections on the Challenge Fund and future interventions needed to increase digital participation.

2. The Challenge Fund

Creating a fund to support local projects to increase digital participation was a key action outlined in the Scottish Government's *"Digital Participation: A National Framework for Local Action"* strategy, published in 2014. The fund's aim was to *"enable groups and organisations to digitise content, build digital networks and improve the digital skills of their members, so that they can continue to thrive in the digital world."*

SCVO, as part of its wider role in creating a national movement to increase digital participation, was asked to manage the funding process. Three open calls for applications were announced in winter 2014, spring 2015 and winter 2015. A fourth round of funding, now renamed as the Digital Participation Charter Fund, launched in winter 2016. A further 43 projects were funded, but are not covered here due to their newness.

The majority of investment to the Challenge Fund was from the Scottish Government Digital Participation team. SCVO secured additional contributions through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and BT.

Across the three funding rounds, projects had to meet the following criteria.

- Be focused on developing the basic digital skills of a third sector organisation's workforce or the people they're supporting.

- Six themes were identified as priorities for funding:

    - Older people
    - Disabled people
    - Ethnic minority groups
    - Remote and rural communities
    - People seeking benefits
    - Glasgow

- Award applications were to be for up to £10,000, although extensions were considered where a clear justification was provided.

To help us understand what the project has achieved and what lessons others can learn, successful projects were asked to:

- Gauge the basic digital skills of the individuals supported by completing a short questionnaire (using the Go ON UK framework).

- Provide regular progress updates to be shared openly online through dedicated project pages on SCVO's digital participation website.

The SCVO Digital team assessed the portfolio of applications and made recommendations to Digital Participation Leadership Group for final approval. The Leadership Group included representatives from Scottish Government, local authorities, third sector and the technology industry.

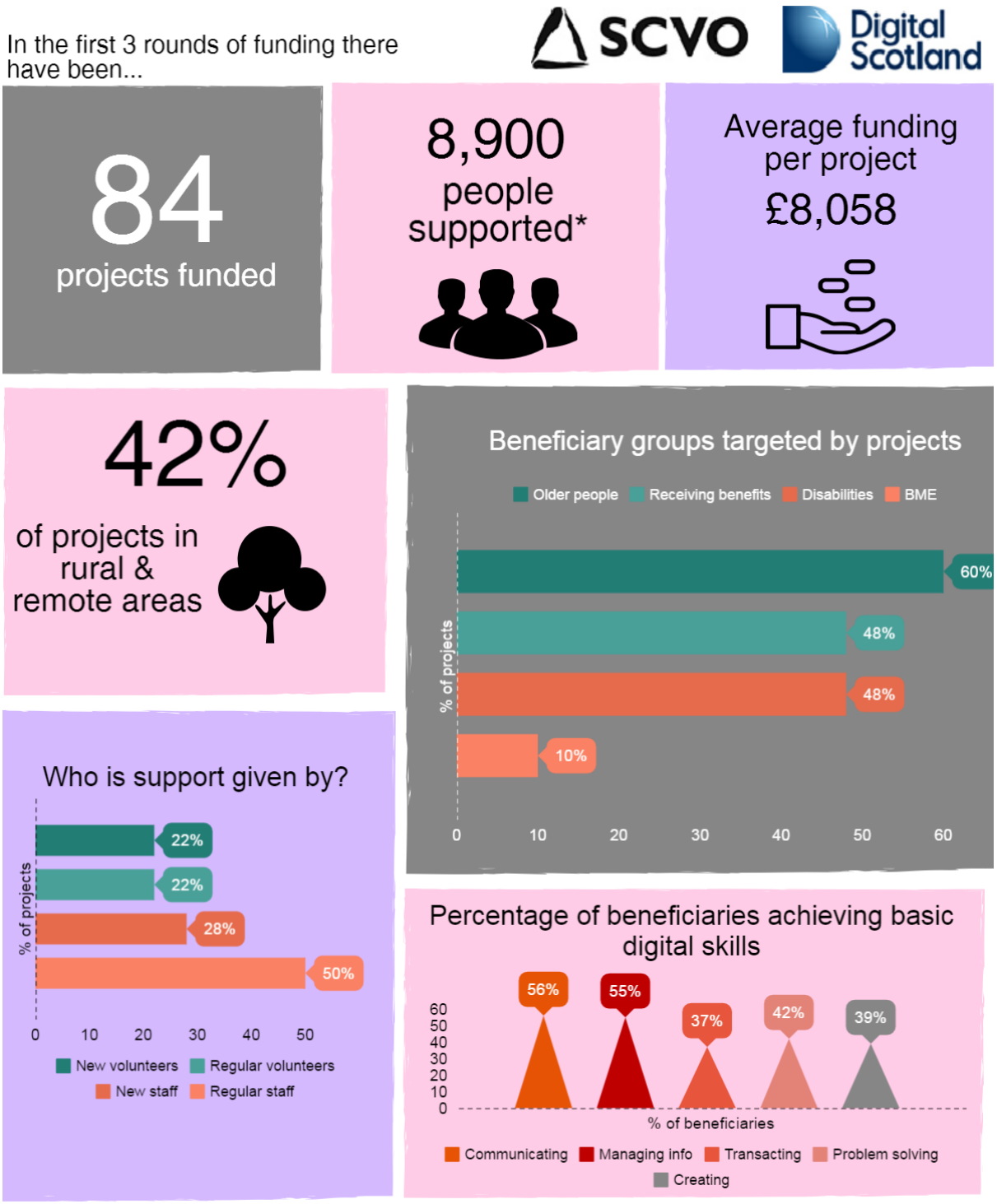
In total 84 projects were funded across three rounds, as shown in the table below.

	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Total
No. of projects funded	25	33	26	84
Largest Grant	£32,723.24	£45,000.00	£20,000.00	£45,000.00
Smallest Grant	£823.79	£323.00	£1,170.00	£323.00
Average Grant	£8,575.75	£9,491.85	£8,480.11	£8,906.04
Total Awarded	£214,393.87	£313,231.02	£220,482.80	£748,107.69

A list of the projects awarded funding is provided in Appendix 1. Full details of each project and individual self-evaluations are available online on their project pages at: http://digital.scvo.org.uk/projects/

3. Overview of Challenge Fund Rounds 1 – 3

3.1 Highlights



* Estimate based on responses from 70% of all projects funded

3.2 Brief case studies

The brief case studies from four Challenge Fund projects below highlight the different scale and scope of funded projects.

Saheliya

Saheliya supports and promotes the positive mental health and well-being of black, minority ethnic, asylum seeker, refugee and migrant women in Edinburgh and Glasgow. They worked intensively to support 36 women to develop their digital skills in order to search for and obtain work, avoid being sanctioned, pay bills and have greater social contact. The project offered the potential to complete a Microsoft Digital Literacy certification. The sustainability of the work was secured as two women trained as Digital Champions. They continue to work with a wide range of service users and have embedded promotion of basic digital skills into their day-to-day work.

Beith Community Trust

Beith Community Trust delivers a range of activities and services to support the community, targeted within one of North Ayrshire's regeneration priority areas. Clients were supported to enhance their employability programmes to include a specific focus on improving their basic digital skills. Over the course of the project 156 people accessed employability support, mainly on a 1-2-1 basis. Of those who presented with direct requests for digital skills support, 80% reported that they had more confidence working on line, 50% have moved into employment, 25% into volunteering and 25% are regularly talking to family via Skype.

Glasgow Life

Glasgow Life has trained and supported front-line staff to become digital champions to build the basic digital skills of those they work with. The first cohort of 40 staff included youth, community and play workers as well as ESOL and ALN tutors. This has resulted in those front-line staff having the skills and knowledge to embed relevant digital skills development into their daily work. This has exposed these learners, often for the first time, to the benefits of being online. There has also been a steady increase in demand for hardware (tablets, laptops, etc.) and better connectivity in community venues, demonstrating the sustainability of the outcomes.

Queens Cross Housing Association

An inter-generational social history project supported 72 young people and 80 older people to work together to develop digital skills, enhance trust and relationships and increase their communication and social capital. This has resulted in many of the older people continuing to develop their skills and increase their social interactions. WiFi has been installed in all communal areas of Queen's Cross Sheltered Housing complexes so that residents can continue to benefit from the internet. At a 40th Anniversary celebration tenants stories and memories were collected digitally for learners and tenants to enjoy and share.

4. Analysis of Challenge Fund Projects

This analysis is based on surveys sent in 2016/17 to all 84 funded projects. The overall response rate is 71%.

The response rate varies across funding rounds. It is 54% amongst projects in Round 1, going up to 64% in Round 2 and 100% in Round 3. Because of this increase over time there will be a bias in survey findings towards Round 3 characteristics. This is to be expected, as projects funded in earlier rounds were more likely to have finished and staff moved on. The typology of 'hyper-local' vs 'wider reach' (explained below) has been applied to all projects.

This section is divided into three sub-sections covering:

- Characteristics of the projects supported
- Project reach, in terms of numbers of people supported
- Project outcomes, in terms of digital skills gained.

4.1 Types of projects supported

Hyper-local projects and ones with a wider reach

We have classified projects as hyper-local or wider reach. 'Hyper-local' defined as those led by a single organisation, without strong links to other organisations, and/or happening in a single venue e.g. community hubs, particularly in remote and rural areas. 'Wider reach' include those led by a partnership or organisation which has strong referral links, and/or occurring in multiple venues. Examples include projects led by Glasgow Life, local authorities, housing associations or Scotland-wide charities.

We have classified 54% of projects as having a wider reach, and 46% as hyper-local. Rounds 1 and 2 have a higher proportion of wider reach projects, 56% and 61% respectively. Round 3 has a higher proportion of hyper-local projects, 58%.

Geography

The 84 projects are delivering all over Scotland. Through the SCVO survey 42% of projects self-identified as targeting beneficiaries in remote and rural areas and 30% are based in Glasgow.

Beneficiary groups

Projects self-identified as targeting beneficiary groups. These are not mutually exclusive, as many projects have a broad target audience. For example, a project targeting unemployed people may also target black and ethnic minority (BME) communities and young people.

Older people are the group most frequently targeted, 60% of projects completing the survey focussed here. This is followed by people on benefits – mainly unemployed people, people with disabilities, and BME people. Broadly, this matches the groups identified as more likely to have lower digital skills. Several projects target people for whom English is not their first language – such as recent immigrants – and this would also be included in the BME category in the survey.

Projects' aims for the people they support typically include: social inclusion, integration (for recent immigrants), financial inclusion, better employment opportunities; and greater confidence and wellbeing. In addition, several organisations were aiming to enhance current users' access to the organisation's services. Another project was aiming to do research to improve their current understanding of the barriers to digital access faced by participants, and how best to support them.

Beneficiary groups targeted	Numbers of projects				% of projects
	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Total	Total
Older people	15	21	14	50	60%
Receiving benefits	16	17	7	40	48%
Disabilities	14	19	7	40	48%
BME	0	1	7	8	10%
Staff	0	2	0	2	2%
Offenders	1	1	0	2	2%
Young people	4	0	0	4	5%
Other	1	2	0	3	4%

***Figure 1**. Numbers and percentages of projects targeting each of these beneficiary groups. [Source: Rocket Science analysis of SCVO survey responses].*

Dedicated/embedded delivery

Across the 3 Rounds of funding, 65% of projects delivered digital skills training as a dedicated project, whereas 25% of projects were embedding it in their other activity. This ratio does not change noticeably across the three funding Rounds, ranging from 62% of dedicated projects in Round 1 to 69% of dedicated projects in Round 3.

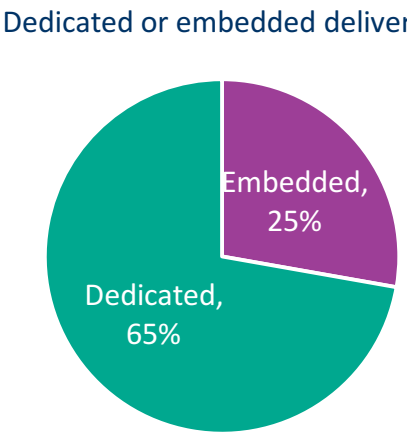


Figure 2*. Percentages of projects adopting an embedded or a dedicated approach. [Source: Rocket Science analysis of SCVO survey responses].*

Who supports participants?

Staff – both regular and new – had a role in supporting participants in 78% of projects, whereas 44% of projects involved volunteers in supporting participants. This breakdown – again not mutually exclusive, as many projects have had both staff and volunteers – is shown in Figure 3 overleaf.

Across all three Rounds, there are more regular than new staff, and equivalent proportions of new and regular volunteers. It would appear that Round 1 had higher proportions of volunteers than Rounds 2 and 3 – but this should be interpreted with caution given the lower response rates for Round 1.

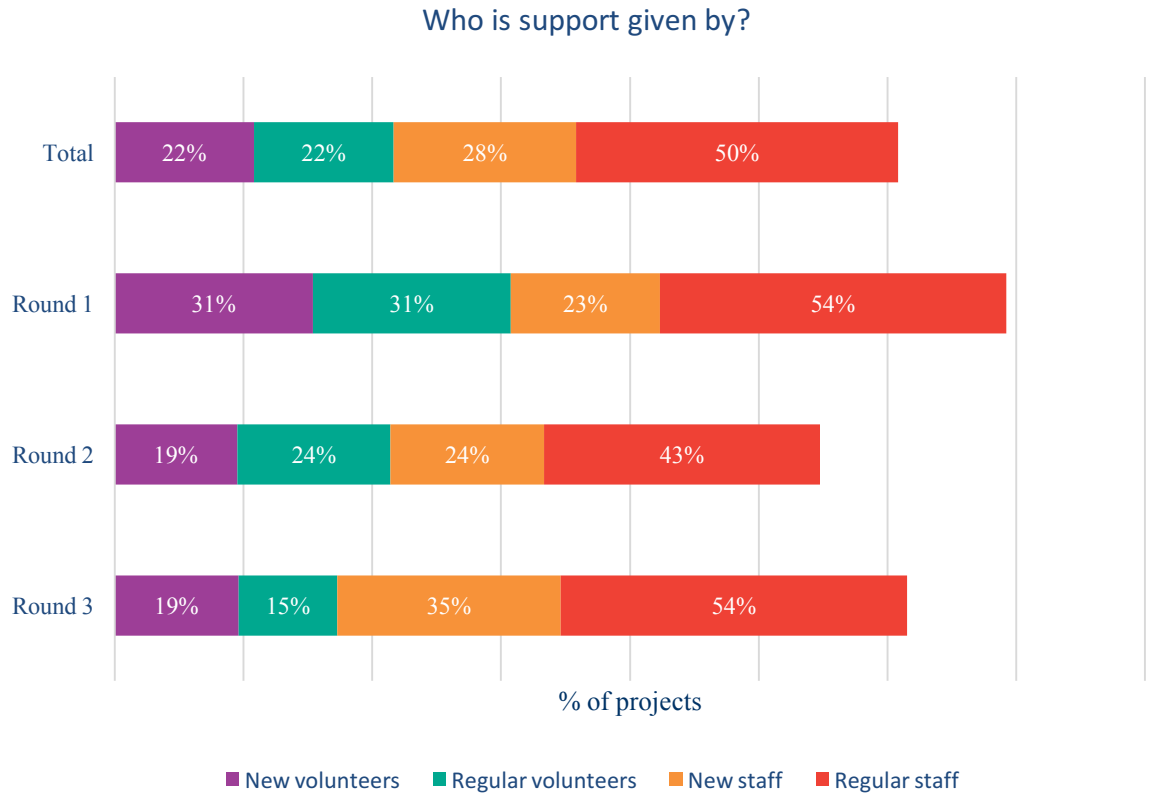


***Figure 3**. Numbers of projects reporting who supported participants. [Source: Rocket Science analysis of SCVO survey responses].*

2.2 Reach

Due to the open nature of project reporting (through the online project pages), robust data on final numbers of beneficiaries supported is only available for 69% of all projects supported. As with survey responses, the most complete data is for Round 3 projects where the response rate is 100%.

These 59 projects supported 6,264 beneficiaries. *The average number of beneficiaries is 106 per project. Extrapolating to all 84 projects leads to an estimate of c8,900 people supported across all projects.*

The average number of people supported per project is half the amount for Round 1 than for Rounds 2 and 3 – 55 compared to 124 and 117 respectively.

The difference between the numbers of people that projects anticipated they would support and the actual numbers supported varies greatly across rounds of funding, from a difference of over 2,800 in Round 1 to just 54 in Round 3.

Differences in reach by types of project

There are marked differences in the numbers of individuals supported by 'hyper-local and wider reach' projects (as might be expected). The average number of people supported by wider reach projects is 3 times the number supported by hyper-local projects – 150 compared to 47.

This may be partly explained by scale differences, reflected in the funding received. The average funding by wider reach projects is £4,000 more than the average funding received by hyper-local projects. On the other hand, outcomes – measured as the percentage of people supported to gain basic digital skills – is slightly higher for hyper-local projects than for wider reach ones. We look at this in the next sub-section.

The difference between the numbers of beneficiaries anticipated and actually engaged was higher amongst wider reach projects than for hyper-local projects. The former engaged 60% of the numbers originally anticipated, compared to 91% for the latter.

Reach is also affected by which beneficiary groups' projects are targeting. Those targeting benefit claimants support the highest numbers of individuals whilst those targeting older people support the lowest numbers.

Beneficiary group targeted	No. of projects reporting	Total people supported	Average supported per project
Older people	33	3,358	102
Receiving benefits	28	4,709	168
Disabilities	26	4,004	154

Figure 4*. Average number of people supported by projects, based on targeted beneficiary groups. [Source: Rocket Science analysis of SCVO survey responses].*

2.3 Outcomes

The five basic digital skills

58% of projects reported both the number of individuals supported and, of those, how many gained any of the five basic digital skills. Outcomes for these projects is shown in Figure 5 below.

Communication is the skill gained by the highest percentage of beneficiaries, 56%, followed by managing information, gained by 55%. Skills in digital transacting were gained by the smallest proportion of beneficiaries. The average number of skills learnt per individual is 2.3 across all rounds. The percentages of individuals gaining skills is higher for Rounds 1 and 3 than for Round 2.

We have used the percentages of individuals gaining skills in the sample of 58% of projects to extrapolate to all projects and to the estimated number of individuals supported. This is shown in

Figure **6** overleaf.

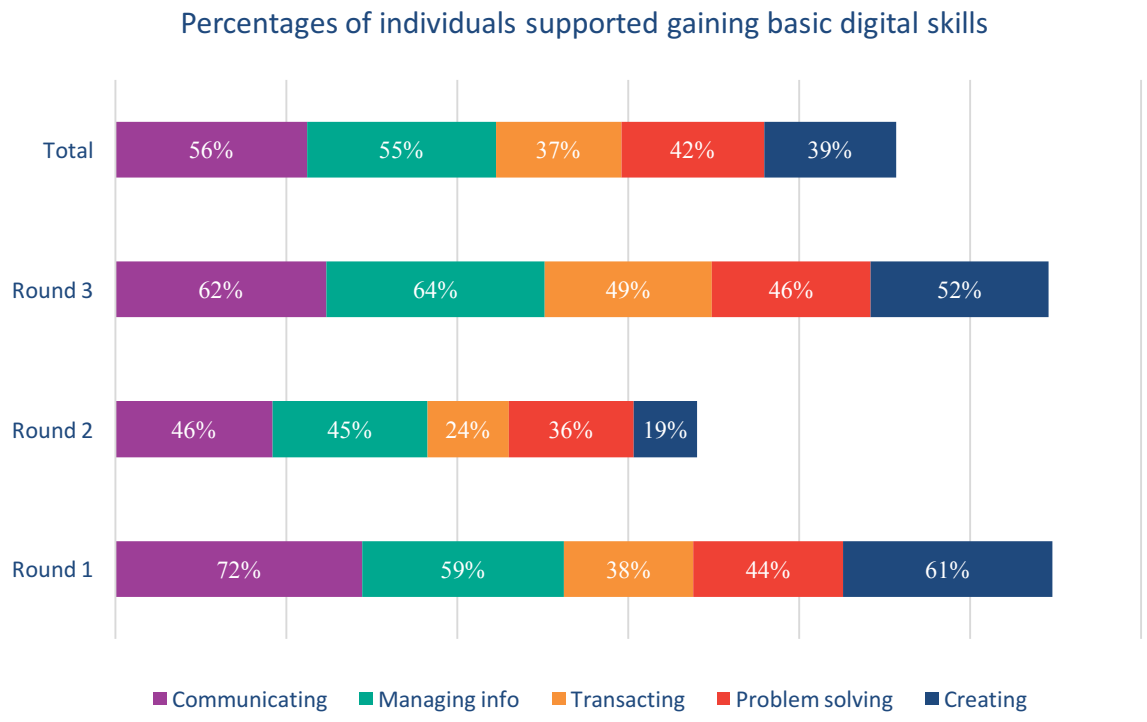


Figure 5. *Percentages of individuals supported achieving basic digital skills. This is based on a sample of 58% of all projects. [Source: Rocket Science analysis of SCVO survey responses].*

	Communicating	Managing info	Transacting	Problem solving	Creating
% of beneficiaries	56%	55%	37%	42%	39%
Estimated number of beneficiaries	4,986	4,917	3,267	3,721	3,434

***Figure 6**. Estimated number of beneficiaries gaining digital skills. Based on the percentages from 58% sample, and using the previously estimated total number of people supported.*

Outcomes by groups

Figure 7 below breaks down outcomes by the target beneficiary groups of projects. Caution should be taken when interpreting this Figure. Firstly, as explained earlier, projects may target more than one group, and so appear in more than one row. Secondly, the numbers of projects included in this sample vary greatly by target group. For example, there are only four projects that have been identified as targeting young people overall, of which only one is included in the sample. On the other hand, there are 50 projects supporting older people, out of which 24 have reported outcomes.

Therefore, patterns are only broadly indicative. But they do make intuitive sense. *Projects targeting older groups report the lowest percentage of outcomes, while projects targeting young people report the highest.* This is consistent with the literature which reports an important age gap in digital skills and in the ability to acquire them or feel confident using them.

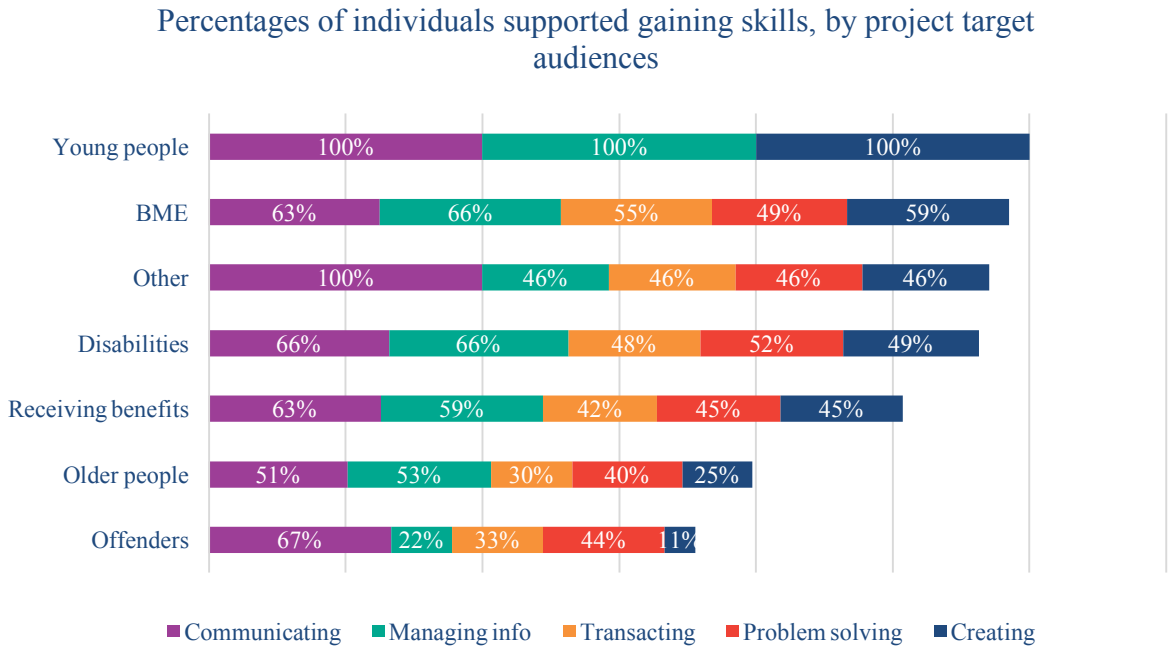


***Figure 7**. Percentages of beneficiaries achieving outcomes, based on project target audiences (not mutually exclusive). [Source: Rocket Science analysis of SCVO survey responses].*

Outcomes by types of project

Outcomes for hyper-local projects are slightly higher than for wider reach projects. This is interesting, given the difference previously observed in reach and amount of funding. It suggests that, not only is reach not associated with depth of outcomes, but there might even be a small trade-off. More analysis would be required to explore this possibility further.

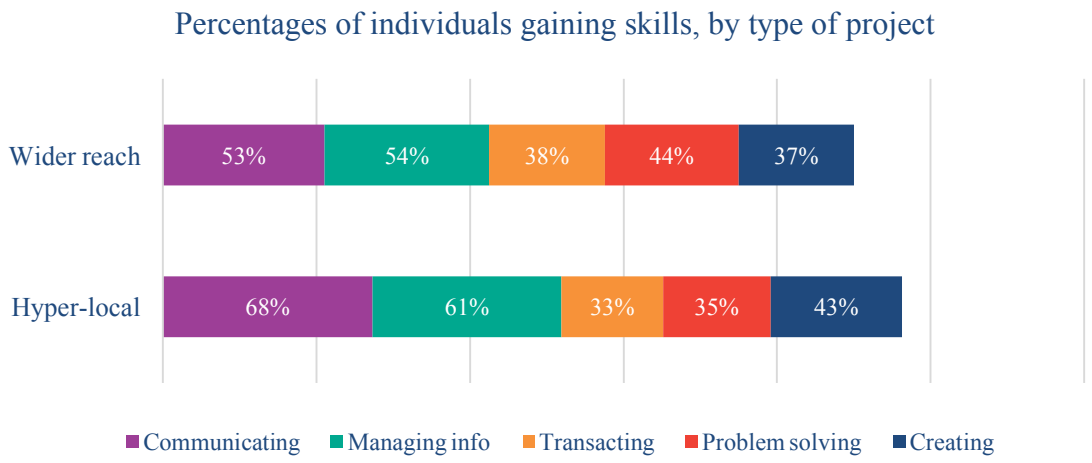


Figure 8*. Numbers of people gaining basic digital skills, based on type of project. [Source: Rocket Science analysis of SCVO survey responses].*

5. Lessons Learned by Projects

This section summarises the main messages emerging from projects' reflections on what challenges they faced, what worked well, and what could be done differently. This is based on the regular reporting provided by project through their online pages, as well as any additional feedback in the evaluation survey. It groups these messages into three broad areas:

- Engagement and reach
- Participants' barriers and support needs
- Length and style of delivery

5.1 Engagement and reach

Many projects reported challenges in ***engaging the right participants***, and ***maintaining attendance*** throughout the project. Marketing and promotion was the most common thing that projects said they would do differently.

Many projects which faced challenges around recruitment reflected on how to expand their avenues for promotion. One avenue they suggest is offering short information sessions in advance of the actual course. These can be evening talks, brief presentations at other organisations, etc. One group suggested pop-up events in coffee shops. Another group reflected: *"The initial promotion of the service was through the distribution of flyers to every household and newsletter articles did not prove to be effective. As the project progressed… [it] was promoted in other ways, i.e. attending partner services to deliver presentations and through word of mouth… from the offset this may have been a more appropriate way to engage with service users".*

Partnerships with other organisations and more formal referral routes are seen as fruitful ways of reaching the right people to support. In particular, referrals from Jobcentre Plus have been identified as the best way to reach unemployed people. ESOL classes have been suggested as an appropriate source of referrals for people also facing English language barriers.

For older people, it is seen as important that digital skills sessions are ***embedded within other activities*** they are already doing, such as through the University of the Third Age. A group who held both embedded and open workshops for older people reflected that: *"Coming along independently can be difficult for older people and the open workshops were not as well attended as we had hoped. So, contact with existing community groups targeted at older people was definitely a good idea."*

More targeted recruitment in terms of skills and characteristics is also important. In some cases, engaging enough people was not a problem, but projects felt they had not managed to engage the right people, or that there was too much variety in levels of skills to cater for everyone's needs: *"Initially it was felt important that there should be no barriers to any tenants who wished to take part in the course. As a result, there were a wide range of ages and abilities of tenants starting the course…The design of future courses should have a*

narrower scope, concentrating on particular groups; unemployed, retired, absolute beginners etc."

Another challenge for projects was that ***attendance was unpredictable*** – particularly for drop-in sessions. To some extent this was expected by projects given recognition of beneficiary groups, and other barriers faced. But it made it hard to plan services, for example staffing, or other support such as childcare during sessions. A solution that was given as a way to encourage continued participation is to give participants something they value at the end of the course – either a certificate that might help with finding employment, or something tangible, such as a video, calendar or photo album.

5.2 Participant barriers and support needs

In many cases, the projects have reported that, in addition to lack of digital inclusion, participants had other barriers that had to be addressed before or alongside the delivery of digital inclusion training. Practical barriers to participation were identified, such as childcare or transport issues. *The three most common barriers, however, were language, confidence, and motivation. As a result, the overwhelming feeling amongst projects is that one-to-one support, or support to a small group of people in similar situations, is necessary.*

Language barriers

Language barriers amongst participants for whom English is not their first language necessitate both bilingual workshops – i.e. led by trainers who can speak participants' first language – and close support – either one-to-one or in small groups. A project commented: *"Some language barriers were found to be more difficult than were imagined. Some basic computer terms needed to be explained before we could proceed, e.g. 'bookmark', because learners didn't understand the traditional term, the computer term was new to them."*

Confidence barriers

The literature identifies confidence as an important barrier to learning and using digital skills, and this is echoed by projects' responses. Participants will often already have low confidence prior to starting the course, which projects must reckon with: *"With the potential for this client group to experience decreased motivation and aspiration levels along with increased feelings of depression and isolation, raising their confidence levels through digital skill acquisition and successful task completion was essential if we were to achieve any long-term, sustainable success."*

On the other hand, it has been recognised that learning digital skills can be an empowering experience that has broader benefits, for example, amongst the older population: *"For many, going back into education was a quite empowering experience. Some of our participants initially believed that 'it's too late' for them to learn new skills, only to surprise themselves as to how quickly they grasped basic concepts of technology. The experience of learning something new and achieving goals was definitely a huge confidence booster."*

The first solution that is proposed is to meet people 'where they are at', both in their skills and their confidence. A project reflected that they would in the future embed basic digital

skills into their wider wellbeing and ESOL classes. This would then give the women supported the confidence to then progress to more specialist digital inclusion classes. Secondly, many projects stress the importance of ensuring that participants are at similar levels of skills and confidence when they start the training. This ensures that classes are pitched in the right way, but also creates *"a positive learning environment in which they could bounce ideas off each other without feelings of inferiority or embarrassment."* In order to do this, many projects shared the view that *"an initial assessment of learners' needs and existing skills is essential to setting the appropriate pace of learning for individual learners."*

Motivation barriers

Beyond lack of confidence, people might have little desire to acquire digital skills. In some cases, this is out of fear or mistrust of the internet. A project commented that some participants were *"very much afraid to utilise* [digital technology] *because of hearing stories of machines crashing, viruses being uploaded and the jargon people use has held them back from using IT before."* Another project commented that pop-up adverts were "*a constant source of angst and for many a generator of fear and uncertainty*" and that the discovery of how to use an Ad-Blocker was *"something akin to the unveiling of a true modern miracle worker"*.

The solution, projects found, was twofold. Firstly, explicitly to tackle worries about security with digital security training. Secondly, to highlight the usefulness of digital skills to those that are unconvinced.

1 to 1 or small groups necessary

A quarter of all groups *explicitly* identified one-to-one – preferably – or small group learning as the necessary approach to digital inclusion training for vulnerable or digitally excluded groups, from 'day one'.

Within this, different approaches have been used:

- One-to-one sessions combined with a group session
- One-to-one sessions initially, then progressing to a group session
- Group sessions plus one-to-one peer mentoring

Projects feel strongly about the need for one-to-one support. One commented: *"In the beginning we did classes of 3-4 volunteers but after discussions our tutor relayed back that our volunteers were reluctant to discuss their IT knowledge and abilities among their peers. We then reduced the classes to one to ones and found volunteers were more open when discussing their abilities and with their questions, and concentration levels were raised."*

5.3 Length and style of delivery

Length

Short training sessions (maximum 60min) are seen by many groups as being conducive to better concentration and engagement by participants.

However, there is no consensus about appropriate length for courses, and it seems it depends on the types of beneficiaries, the level of the course, and its aims and intensity. For example, one project said that *"the programme could have benefited from being delivered over a longer period of time. This is because young people with learning difficulties learn at different paces, they require patience, one to one…".* Yet, another project commented that *"a shorter course length would increase the possibility of tenants completing the course."*

Different intensities and lengths of support have implications for how much staff time and resources projects needed and acted as a limitation in terms of delivering the best for participants. For example, a group said that next time they would *"plan more staff resource over a longer timescale".*

Participant input

10 projects explicitly recognised the importance of ensuring participant input in the design and delivery of digital skills training. This helps to ensure that the delivery of the training is tailored to participants needs and preferences. Whilst this is easier within the context of one-to-one training, it can also be done in a small group level. For example, by:

- Delivering courses at the request of members (particularly in embedded training)
- Using self-assessment questionnaires
- Participants setting their own goals
- Self-guided learning – for example a project said, *"setting up groups and letting them guide their own learning worked best, they became really good support for one another and a lot of issues surrounding loneliness and health and wellbeing came up as a result of these sessions."*

Using familiar devices

The feeling amongst projects is that training should be orientated towards using participants' own devices, or ones that they can access more easily outside the training environment. One project commented that they would now *"not buy small laptops (impractical) and would instead buy tablets and / or smartphones as people are more likely to have these at home."* Another mentioned that *"some of the learners who attended the course already had tablets due to a family member purchasing one for them but they did not know how to use them".*

Tablets, in particular, were used in courses for a wide range of functions, including as a camera. Their bigger screens make them more accessible devices for older people or people with disabilities. An IT tutor reflected: *"I've been giving a short set of lessons using android tablets [at the centre]. I find the tablets to be quite user-friendly and the learners tend to pick up techniques quite quickly. Having tablets encourages my learners to interact with each other more than when laptops are used."*

Continued learning

It was recognised by projects that learning and confidence-building must be reinforced outside the formal training. In particularly successful projects, some participants asked for this themselves. This is more likely is there is an additional motivation, such as the continuation of personal and group projects:

"At the end of the course, six of the seven groups elected to continue to meet on an informal basis, to continue to carry out family and local history research. In addition, some learners were meeting to discuss setting up a more formal co-production group to carry on with their researches."

Other participants decided to volunteer as digital champions in future courses. Again, there may be additional motivations for doing this, such as social networks or improving employability.

Other projects have put mechanisms in place to ensure continued learning beyond the life of the project, such as directing participants to external both physical and online sources of support and learning, or using a co-production model: *"This model involves the group becoming a constituted group who run the group with support from [the organisation]. The group works towards a structure of learning that does not require a paid [organisation] Tutor such as peer learning, group projects and special guest speakers."*

6. Wider evidence

In order to inform future investment decisions, it is important to place the learning from the Challenge Fund in the wider context of research and learning from other projects and programmes. We therefore worked with the University of the West of Scotland to carry out a review of evidence around digital exclusion and the effectiveness of other interventions.

A full report is available separately, however a short summary of recent evidence is presented below, focused around the three key barriers to digital inclusion:

- Access / affordability
- Confidence and motivation
- Basic digital skills

6.1 Access / affordability

Online participation has exploded in the last decade, but this explosion has been uneven. In 2006, just 57% of British households were online, a figure that stood at 86% in 2016[1]. Access continues to increase year on year. The UK average for those not using the internet reduced from 11% in 2016, to 9% in 2017[2], with 81% of adults in Scotland now digitally skilled[3]. However, high averages can be misleading. The variability of access, both geographically and between different sections of society, is a cause for concern. This concern stems from the strong associations between lack of digital access/proficiency with computers, and indicators of deprivation. This link, as Douglas White notes, makes "*digital access…a critical social justice issue*"[4].

Those most vulnerable in society are also those least likely to be online, and are likely to gain most from digital access. Some of those least likely to be online are individuals with learning disabilities[5], the lowest incomes or those most socially excluded. The Citizen's Advice Bureaux found that "*one third of CAB clients find themselves excluded from the internet or computers*", with a large proportion requiring help with online benefit applications[6]. The strongest (and most statistically significant) predictors of a lack of digital access were: "*households without cars; households in social rented accommodation; households without children and lower income households*"[7]. This matters for two main reasons. Firstly, if digital exclusion is associated social exclusion, then the digital revolution is in danger of exacerbating current inequalities. Secondly, the nature of the benefits

1 *Bridging the digital divide*, CAB, Patrick Hogan, available at: http://www.cas.org.uk/system/files/publications/bridging_the_digital_divide_-_final.pdf
2 Consumer Digital Index 2017, Lloyds Banking Group, available at: http://www.lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index.asp
3 B*asic Digital Skills Report 2015*, Go ON UK, available at: https://www.thetechpartnership.com/globalassets/pdfs/research-2015/basicdigitalskillsukreport_oct15.pdf
4 *Digital Participation and Social Justice in Scotland*, Douglas White, Carnegie UK Trust, 2016, available at: http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/carnegieuktrust/wp-content/uploads/sites/64/2016/09/v3-2697-CUKT-Digital-Participation-s
5 *Health & Digital Report*, Good Things Foundation 2016. Available at: https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/research-publications/health-digital-evaluation-widening-digital-participation-programme
6 *Bridging the digital divide*, CAB, Patrick Hogan
7 *Digital Participation and Social Justice in Scotland*, Douglas White, Carnegie UK Trust, 2016

accrued from online participation mean that those who stand to gain most from being online are also those who are, at present, least likely to have internet access[8].

One of the most important advantages conferred by being online and being digitally proficient is that it can increase financial capability and resilience. Research by Lloyds Banking Group reveals that consumers save an average of £444 a year by using discount and comparison websites[9].

Digital access matters, alongside type of access. Smartphone access can be limiting or empowering depending on the reasons for use and access to other devices. Variability exists between different groups in terms of the most commonly used devices, and this correlates with their affordability. In general, most people access the internet on their PC/laptop (57%), followed by smartphones and tablets [10] . However, there is a great divide between smartphone users. Users can be split into two groups, the first of which is coined "*smartphone by choice*"[11], because they use smartphones out of preference. They tend to find smartphone use empowering and almost always have access to other devices such as a desktop/laptop at home[12]. The second group, "*smartphone by circumstance*" [13] , are limited to their device because of affordability, relying solely on their smartphone to carry out digital tasks. Not only is phone functionality generally reduced in this group, as a result of outdated models, but complex tasks are both difficult on a small screen and often costly in terms of data[14]. The result is that those in the latter group exhibit "*self-limiting behaviours*"[15], abandoning more complicated tasks in favour of using their phone exclusively for basic functions (e.g. accessing social media sites).

Access varies regionally across the UK, with a lower than average score for Scotland. The ONS estimates that 86% of British households [16] have some form of internet access. This figure is lower for Scotland at 82%. Disparity in access within Scotland is a concern. Only "*69% of households in the country's 20% most deprived areas reported having internet access, as opposed to 83% in the rest of Scotland*" [17]

6.2 Confidence and motivation

Though access is increasing and the corresponding offline community is reducing, those who are offline have little or no motivation to go online, with attitudes progressively hardening[18]. Currently 9% of the UK adult population is offline. This group are also the most reluctant to get online. In 2017, the single prominent reason for being offline was a "*lack of interest*"[19]. Many individuals who are offline feel that there is no value for them in digital participation (this is particularly true for older people). 73% of those offline believe you cannot save

8 Ibid
9 *Consumer Digital Index 2017*, Lloyds Banking Group
10 *Bridging the digital divide*, CAB, Patrick Hogan
11 *Ofcom, Smartphone by default internet users*, a qualitative research report conducted by ESRO for Ofcom, 2016, available at: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0028/62929/smarphone_by_default_2016.pdf
12 Ibid
13 Ibid
14 Ibid
15 Ibid
16 *Bridging the digital divide*, CAB, Patrick Hogan
17 Ibid
18 *Consumer Digital Index 2017*, Lloyds Banking Group
19 Ibid

money online[20]. For many people, whether they are online does not appear to be about access or confidence. Instead, the barrier is a negative perception of the internet, its purpose and what it can do for them. This suggests that getting people online will require schemes with a focus on changing mind-sets to digital technologies, rather than just providing free training. Demonstrating the benefits of online participation will be crucial if this group is not to be left further behind.

Many individuals who are online perceive their digital competence as much higher than it actually is. This false confidence is dependent on their device use and motivation for being online. For those in the "*smartphone by circumstance*" group, the choice to be online is often rooted in the desire to communicate with friends and family[21]. This is especially true for vulnerable groups such as those who are homeless or are recent migrants to the UK[22]. For these groups, smartphones offer an affordable and stable way of maintaining a social network. Individuals in this group falsely perceive that they are digitally competent, as they are only aware of the social aspect of online participation.

For those who possess smartphones and no other devices digital proficiency can be restricted. Not being familiar with other devices means complex digital functions are inaccessible or simply not known about, with many not understanding the full potential of their device. Whilst confidence in a range of very basic tasks is increased, smartphone use can actually lead to de-skilling in the use of other, more complex devices[23]. In addition, the informal nature of social interactions on smartphones has been found to act as a barrier to important tasks such as applying for jobs or filling in forms online. Many of those forced to use smartphones (as their main way of accessing the internet) felt that it was difficult to switch to formal communication on their device, since "*formal social etiquette and grammar conventions*" [24] did not apply on social media sites (with which they were most familiar). This was found to lead to a reduction in productivity as people were putting off more formal and complex tasks[25].

Confidence and motivation to be online is negatively associated with age. Digital proficiency is highest in the 18-24 age group, and drops off dramatically for those aged 45 and over[26]. It is lowest in those aged 65 and over.

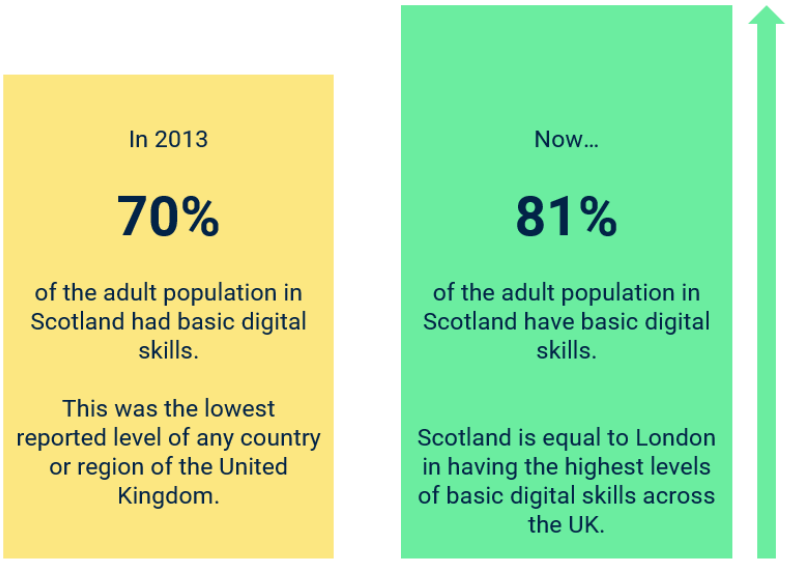
Personal "hooks" and the embedding of digital skills in wider non-digital programmes are essential to getting those hardest to reach, online. A tailored and individual approach is needed to change the attitudes of those least motivated to be online. One of the best ways of getting people online is through indirect subtle means, that is, through "hooks"[27]. An example of such a hook is linking digital access to hobbies that people are interested in; demonstrating that they can access networks of people with similar interests, hear about events, or even just access information about their favourite pursuits, online. With a push

20 Ibid
21 Ofcom, *Smartphone by default internet users*
22 Ibid
23 Ibid
24 Ibid
25 Ibid
26 B*asic Digital Skills Report 2015*, Go ON UK
27 *Digital Participation and Social Justice in Scotland*, Douglas White, Carnegie UK Trust, 2016

towards community care and self-management of health, another "hook" is showing digital proficiency to be important in the effective management of long-term health conditions[28].

6.3 Basic digital skills

Simply being able to use the internet does not ensure individuals can fully gain the economic and social benefits of being online. The Challenge Fund has used the Basic Digital Skills Framework[29] as the benchmark for assessing skill levels. Since 2013, there has been significant progress in Scotland in the population developing these skills.



However, as with internet access, digital skills levels vary across demographics and with age. In general, the "*level of digital capability significantly drops amongst those aged 45+*"[30]. Those aged 65 and over struggle more than others to create something new or to install apps[31]. Men are more likely to be competent in each skill than women (83 and 76% respectively)[32], whilst those who are unemployed are far less likely to possess digital skills than those who are employed[33]. The Basic Digital Skills level amongst ABC1s is higher than the national average at 87%, but is significantly lower amongst the C2DE social grades (65%)[34]. This implies an association between income and digital skills levels.

Additionally, there is variability in which these skills are generally possessed by people, suggesting a greater focus is needed on some digital skills than others. The most common skill is "*safely communicating*"[35], however many myths surrounding security are still prevalent, especially amongst those least digitally proficient. Those who are heavily reliant on smartphones particularly struggle with "*file management*", "*troubleshooting*" and

[28] *Health & Digital Report*, Good Things Foundation 2016

[29] digitalparticipation.scot/skill-up
[30] B*asic Digital Skills Report 2015*, Go ON UK
[31] Ibid
[32] Ibid
[33] Ibid
[34] *Consumer Digital Index 2017*, Lloyds Banking Group
[35] Ofcom, *Smartphone by default internet users*

"*typing*" [36], which are also some of the skills most needed when job hunting. Smartphones equally restrict transacting capabilities. As many websites are not mobile compatible, smartphone users tend to use downloadable apps[37]. This means that they are unable to compare prices, and this then constrains their ability to make "*informed decisions*" when it comes to buying/selling products[38]. Overall, the hardest skill to obtain appears to be "*problem solving*"[39].

[36] Ibid
[37] Ibid
[38] Ibid
[39] Ibid

7. Developing Round 4

Criteria

The Challenge Fund originally started with a broad aim to *"enable groups and organisations to digitise content, build digital networks and improve the digital skills of their members, so that they can continue to thrive in the digital world."* There was a thematic focus on older people, as well as a geographical focus on remote and rural areas as well as Glasgow City.

Between Rounds 1 and 3, the Challenge Fund became more explicit about the need to focus on developing confidence, motivation and basic digital skills.

Building on the learning from the projects described in section 5, as well as the emerging evidence outlined in section 6, the criteria for fourth round of funding were revised. Specifically, applicants were asked to recognise that:

- Those without basic digital skills are more likely to be older, on lower incomes and facing other forms of inequality. The focus of applications was therefore to be on what inequality was being addressed as part of the intervention, rather than simply considering digital skills development as the main outcome.

- Half of those that don't have basic digital skills want to acquire them. The other half can be convinced, but the key is finding a 'hook'. This needs to be about understanding how the internet can help support personal interests and passions of individuals. Applicants were asked to identify which 'half' they were focusing on (i.e. building confidence and motivation or digital skills).

- More low-income households now are accessing the internet by smartphones only, potentially without fixed line broadband connections. We were specifically looking to support a small number of projects which can generate further evidence on the extent to which mobile-only internet use can contribute to the development of basic digital skills.

- Those who remain digitally excluded are unlikely to engage in digital skills training of their own accord. Some of the most successful and sustainable interventions have been where digital skills motivation and support is embedded within core activity. We particularly sought to fund organisations working tackle poverty, social isolation and other forms of inequality to embed basic digital skill development work into their day-to-day activity with service users. Applicants were also had to indicate how this activity might be sustainable beyond the period of the funding.

173 applications were received in January 2017 and 43 projects were awarded funding totalling £357,121.57 in February 2017 through the renamed Digital Participation Charter Fund.

Improving processes

Some processes for successful applicants have been revised to enable us to better measure the strategic impact across the programme. While the open reporting through the online project pages worked well for many projects in previous rounds, leading to rich information about the activity and impact of their work being publicly available (including photographs, video and self-evaluation), some projects struggled to report in this format. This was due to a combination of staff turnover, confidence in using the online content management system (despite training) and a lack of capacity or understanding of the importance of reporting for a small number of projects.

Therefore, for successful fourth round applicants, we will:

- Use online 'survey' style quarterly monitoring returns, gathering both quantitative and qualitative evidence.

- Ask projects for a more detailed breakdown of outputs (numbers of individuals supported, barriers addressed, digital champions created and people reached through digital champions).

- Ask projects to describe secondary outcomes beyond digital skills development (e.g. reduced social isolation, securing a job).

- Maintain an online page for each project, but not require organisations to use the content management system. Instead we will centrally populate the pages using data from application forms and quarterly returns.

8. Conclusions

The Digital Participation Challenge Fund has supported individuals with some of the highest levels of need to benefit from the internet. Building basic digital skills through the projects has been transformational to many facing social isolation, poverty and other forms of inequality.

It is clear that while the digital divide has narrowed in recent years, it is now deeper. Those without basic digital skills are less likely to seek out help, and require more intensive support once they have the confidence and motivation to engage.

We have identified learning in how best to facilitate digital inclusion through future initiatives.

Increasing digital participation remains a key social justice issue, requiring a cross-sector response
While the investment of £750k has had a significant impact on those reached, it has only reached 1% of the adult population in Scotland who do not have basic digital skills. It is unlikely that public funds will be available to provide the direct financial support to reach the remaining 99%, so investment must be targeted appropriately to maximise its benefit. The increasing focus on embedding digital skills development in the day-to-day work of organisations engaging with the digitally excluded is key to achieving this.

Promoting digital inclusion amongst hard-to-reach populations requires a multi-faceted approach
All those supporting the development of basic digital skills need to recognise the multi-faceted and multi-factorial dimensions of digital exclusion if they are to effectively reach the hard to reach, 'final 10%' and sustain their digital participation.

It may be worthwhile considering prioritisation of the outcomes the Government are seeking to achieve in supporting digital participation. For example, should the focus be on working-age people in order to increase financial capability, employment and other economic outcomes, or on older people to reduce social isolation and loneliness?

Digital inclusion needs to be meaningful and consistent with users' overall needs and motivations
Programmes concerned with digital skills development must recognise the importance of relevance, interest and motivation if usage is to be encouraged and sustained.

Digital participation requires digital capital
Facilitating peer support, home access and embedded digital skills support is crucial if digital skill gains are to be enhanced and maintained across age ranges, disability and socio-economic status.

Digital champions are important
'Digital champion' models represent promising approaches to address digital disengagement when they strike the right balance between local, face-to-face and repeated delivery. However, they require ongoing funding and associated support in the early stages if activity is to be sustained beyond early successes.

Appendix

A1. List of Challenge Fund Projects

The table below presents all organisations funded in rounds 1 – 3 of the Digital Participation Challenge Fund. Full details about each project are available on their project page at: **http://digital.scvo.org.uk/projects**

Organisation name	Round	£ Awarded
Bethany Christian Trust	Round 1	£9,885.45
Capability Scotland	Round 1	£6,000.00
Comas	Round 1	£9,425.00
Coupar Angus Regeneration Trust	Round 1	£860.00
CVO East Ayrshire Ltd	Round 1	£9,700.00
Home-Start Majik	Round 1	£7,500.00
Homelands Trust - Fife	Round 1	£823.79
Lead Scotland	Round 1	£4,967.00
Link Group Ltd	Round 1	£32,723.24
Linthouse Monday Club	Round 1	£1,000.00
Midlothian Voluntary Action	Round 1	£14,200.00
Mydex CIC	Round 1	£15,750.00
Old Torry Community Centre	Round 1	£4,530.00
Opportunity Enhancement Trust	Round 1	£17,500.00
Ormlie Community Association	Round 1	£9,952.00
ProjectScotland	Round 1	£6,364.39
Queens Cross Housing Association	Round 1	£8,270.00
Scottish Council On Deafness	Round 1	£6,120.00
Spruce Carpets Ltd	Round 1	£1,600.00
Station House Media Unit (SHMU)	Round 1	£10,000.00
The Annexe Healthy Living Centre	Round 1	£4,525.00
The Greenhouse Shop Community Interest Company	Round 1	£5,636.00
The Libertie Project	Round 1	£19,206.23
Toryglen Community Base	Round 1	£4,707.77
Volunteer Centre Dundee	Round 1	£3,148.00
Argyll & Bute Third Sector Interface	Round 2	£14,522.00
Blackwood Foundation	Round 2	£15,000.00
Bonkle Computer Club	Round 2	£900.00
Castle Douglas Community IT Centre	Round 2	£8,659.00
Centre for Nordic Studies	Round 2	£15,091.00
Citizens Online	Round 2	£45,000.00
Co-Chomunn Na Pairc	Round 2	£1,350.00
Colonsay and Oransay Heritage Trust	Round 2	£4,850.00

Cranhill Development Trust	Round 2	£8,721.91
Deaf Connections	Round 2	£9,959.00
Dundee Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Research Group	Round 2	£13,250.00
FACT Forres Area Community Trust	Round 2	£6,440.03
Flourish House	Round 2	£7,556.00
Glasgow Life	Round 2	£7,970.49
Hebridean Connections	Round 2	£8,400.00
Leonard Cheshire	Round 2	£9,966.00
Merkinch Community Centre	Round 2	£6,985.00
Merkinch Partnership	Round 2	£13,650.00
Moray Council Libraries	Round 2	£9,816.00
Moray Firth media trust	Round 2	£16,532.66
Move On Limited	Round 2	£6,440.00
North Highland Language Centre	Round 2	£9,080.00
North West Training Centre	Round 2	£3,910.00
Partnerships For Wellbeing	Round 2	£6,000.00
Scottish Borders Council	Round 2	£4,163.00
Scottish Women's Aid	Round 2	£8,950.00
St Andrews Church of Scotland, Arbroath (Havilah Project)	Round 2	£323.00
Stromness Community Centre	Round 2	£2,206.00
The Ayrshire Community Trust	Round 2	£14,268.57
The Scottish Highlands And Islands And Morayshire Chinese Association	Round 2	£4,110.00
Thenue Housing Association Ltd	Round 2	£10,000.00
West Of Scotland Housing Association Ltd	Round 2	£9,901.36
Youthlink Scotland	Round 2	£9,260.00
Beith Community Development Trust	Round 3	£6,000.00
Cairngorms Learning Partnership	Round 3	£2,860.00
Community Safety Glasgow	Round 3	£20,000.00
Cre8te Opportunities Limited	Round 3	£9,552.00
Crookston Community Group	Round 3	£7,744.00
East Lothian Council	Round 3	£2,557.44
Falkirk Football Community Foundation	Round 3	£8,950.00
Fife Migrants Forum	Round 3	£10,879.00
G.R.A.C.E	Round 3	£9,200.00
Inverclyde Council	Round 3	£9,865.00
Inverclyde Council On Disability	Round 3	£9,656.00
LAMH Recycle Limited	Round 3	£8,857.00
Minority Ethnic Carers Of Older People Project	Round 3	£9,940.00
Newmains Community Trust Ltd	Round 3	£9,834.00
Quarriers	Round 3	£8,536.00
REACH Community Health Project	Round 3	£9,594.00

Rosemount Lifelong Learning	Round 3	£9,918.00
Scottish Crofting Federation	Round 3	£12,600.00
Southside Housing Association Ltd	Round 3	£10,000.00
Stornoway Old Peoples Welfare Association	Round 3	£1,420.00
Tap into IT Where You Are Ltd	Round 3	£1,170.00
The Falkirk Football Community Foundation	Round 3	£8,150.00
The Meeting Place	Round 3	£4,452.00
The Tower Digital Arts Centre	Round 3	£8,200.00
Upward Mobility	Round 3	£14,754.00
Volunteer Centre Glasgow	Round 3	£5,794.36