



Department for
Communities and
Local Government



Department
for Work &
Pensions

The Digital Deal

The Challenge Fund Prospectus

Archived

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The Digital Deal Challenge Fund

1. What is the Digital Deal?

The Digital Deal is a matched funding initiative that seeks to encourage and stimulate social housing providers to undertake digital development work with their residents in order to generate savings and efficiencies in the future.

The Government is committed to making its transactional services *Digital by Default* and is committed to helping ensure that everyone can share the benefits on offer through increasing digital capability. Current research indicates specific demographics where action is required to encourage digital inclusion, capability, and the take-up of digital technology - residents in social housing are one of those demographic groups.

The intention is that the Digital Deal will encourage social housing providers to work with their tenants to share the benefits of being digitally enabled.

For tenants it means improved skills, access to digital services, and the chance to feel empowered and included in a world of discovery and exploration online. Social housing providers could reduce their running costs, improve communications with their tenants, and become more responsive as work progresses. Government will benefit because tenants will be able to access its digital services as transactions and information become *Digital by Default*.

The Digital Deal has been created in order to stimulate and support social housing providers to think about and develop *Digital by Default* services where possible. It offers funding to social housing providers (on a matched funding basis) and, where appropriate their partners, to help deliver effective digital solutions. Funds can be used for investment into more accessible online services for customers, and enable provision of feedback mechanisms and forums for collaboration and innovation within the provider's housing community. The digital elements can be developed alongside and ultimately perhaps in place of current paper or telephony-based channels where desirable.

It is important that any organisations applying for Digital Deal Challenge Funding understand and embrace the idea that Digital Deal is about a change process within the organisation and for tenants, rather than a technology project.

The Digital Deal incorporates two main aspects to support social housing providers:

A **Toolkit** made available via the Digital Housing Hub <http://digitalhousinghub.ning.com/> which provides social housing providers with a range of approaches including: good practice; information; and examples of resources. The toolkit will also provide information

and guidance regarding the type of organisations (e.g. training providers) that housing providers may wish to consider using when developing and delivering their digital services.

The **Challenge Fund** will make some 'pump priming' funding available to a number of social housing providers via a Challenge Fund. The intention is to enable these organisations to combine funding with their own resources/match funding to invest in digital development/services for their residents. Through this 'up-front' investment, successful bidders will be able to demonstrate real cost-savings in the delivery of their own and Government's services to residents. Residents should see benefits in access to and the quality of their community interactions, digital skills and capability of using online services.

The Digital Deal has been developed through a partnership of organisations - DWP, DCLG - supported by BDUK, Go On UK, Government Digital Services, Online Centres Foundation (OCF), Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), Local Government Association, Scottish Government and the Welsh Government.

2. Why should my organisation be interested in the Digital Deal?

Lots of other social housing providers and their residents/tenants have already benefited from introducing digital/online approaches to their day-to-day work and lives. To better understand the likely benefits to your organisation and your residents/tenants, please read this document http://www.housing-technology.com/downloads/HousingTechnology_DigitalbyDefault2012_FINAL.pdf

You can also use the Digital Housing Hub <http://digitalhousinghub.ning.com/> to share ideas and discuss the feasibility of potential schemes. In this way **all** social housing providers can share the learning from the Digital Deal; thereby avoiding duplication, making the same expensive mistakes and increasing awareness of the benefits on offer to your organisation by increasing digital capability. The Digital Housing Hub includes information about what other organisations have done to introduce digital strategies and make some of the changes necessary for their organisations and tenants to address a future that is *Digital by Default*.

3. Which organisations can apply for the Challenge Fund?

The Challenge Fund is open to social housing providers operating in the United Kingdom. Consortia may apply as long as each consortium includes a social housing provider. It is expected that the housing provider leads the consortium, manages the Challenge Fund funding and will be responsible for delivery of the project. As an example, a consortium

may include two or more neighbouring social housing providers or a specialist service provider such as a local training organisation.

4. What are the main criteria that applications will be judged by?

The key criteria are:

Value for money - the application needs to demonstrate that:

- a) the social housing provider will generate genuine medium and long-term efficiency savings (as an organisation and/or in terms of the services it provides to residents) by undertaking the digital development work proposed;
- b) the social housing provider is making a contribution towards the costs of the proposed work through match-funding; and
- c) a significant proportion of the residents involved will be positively affected by the proposed work; the project is based on best practice and can link to, but should not duplicate, digital inclusion efforts within the same locale.

Motivation, Skills and Capability - the application needs to demonstrate that:

- a) A significant proportion of the residents involved will build their digital skills and capability to use online services through the digital development work proposed; and
- b) Skills development and motivation is an integral part of the proposed work and will contribute to demand stimulation for online services and help alleviate social exclusion issues.

Social outcomes - the application needs to demonstrate that:

- a) A range of positive social outcomes will be achieved through the proposed digital development work. This could be evidenced by 'before and after' surveys/feedback forums/consultations, etc regarding increase in online use and awareness of digital benefits amongst residents; and
- b) The project should lead to a measured increase in acceptance of how technology and digital engagement can significantly enhance the quality of life for many residents; and
- c) Digital technology will be used to assist tenants to engage more effectively with local services provided by their landlords.

Activities could include e.g. supporting people by providing tutorials in setting up email including tips on avoiding spam and using skype; photo-sharing; hobbies; accessing film, music libraries, catch-up TV; social media; fraud awareness; security for your payments and personal details; shopping and money saving tips, etc.

Feasibility - the application must demonstrate that:

- a) It can deliver on its ambition within the budget and timescales agreed for the project;
- b) The project plan is viable and, while we are looking for innovation, must be based on best practice e.g. using principles from successful pilots or proven solutions; and
- c) Initiatives are scaleable and have potential to be replicated in other geographical areas.

5. Before I apply, how can I get an idea of what other social housing providers have been doing in terms of digital development work?

Two of the best ways to do this are:

- a) Read the various case studies and examples included in the report http://www.housing-technology.com/downloads/HousingTechnology_DigitalbyDefault2012_FINAL.pdf
- b) Become a member of the Digital Housing Hub and access the toolkit of case studies, information and good practice available there. To do this, please go to <http://digitalhousinghub.ring.com/>

6. How much money is available through the Challenge Fund?

Initially, £400,000 is available through the Challenge Fund, which, when combined with an equivalent amount of match funding from successful social housing providers/consortia applications, generates £800,000. Additional funds are being sought from other public and private sector organisations to increase the overall size of the Digital Deal Challenge Fund.

7. How much can organisations apply for from the Challenge Fund?

There is no minimum amount for organisations wishing to apply but we are looking for around ten initiatives at an average individual amount per initiative of around £40,000.

8. What can the Challenge Fund money be spent on?

The Challenge Fund money can be spent on a range of components that contribute directly to the digital development work proposed in the application. It is expected that money will be spent on action on the three main axes of: Skills & Confidence; Motivation & Awareness; and Access. In addition, it is expected that:

a) Capital items (e.g. laptops, tablet PCs, printers, etc.) should not be the main focus of the application and that any technology purchased needs to be supported by skills development and methods to stimulate demand for online services; and

b) Wherever possible, free or low-cost online tools/services should be utilised as part of the proposed digital development work (e.g. free/open source web accessibility tools, anti-virus/security software, procurement services, etc please see the **Toolkit** for suggestions).

9. Examples of items that Challenge Fund funding can be spent on

Revenue

Staff costs; expenses; utility costs; network running costs; mobile costs; Wi-fi dongle pay-as-you-go upgrade costs or monthly contract charges; software licence costs; training; leasing costs of equipment (e.g. photocopiers); purchase of consumable items; costs of implementing recycling schemes for computers, smart phones or other hardware that is no longer needed but could potentially be reused by tenants after personal data is erased.

Capital

Desktop PCs and/or associated servers; laptops; tablet PCs; printers (if bought for use with residents); accessibility equipment e.g. large keyboards, trackballs, etc.; cabling; digital cameras; headphones/speakers; USB sticks; internet access (for outreach only if purchased as part of a package); Wi-fi dongles (initial purchase only; ongoing dongle costs should be treated as revenue); security for IT equipment to be used by residents and where this is essential (e.g. an insurance requirement to have a lockable cabinet for laptops).

N.B. For all these items, the need for this equipment must be demonstrated in the application.

These lists are not exhaustive but provide guidance on the type of items that may be funded at reasonable cost.

10. Does the organisation that applies have to contribute financially?

As part of the intention of Digital Deal is for social housing providers to be able to make cost-savings through the use of online services, the expectation is that the organisation that applies will contribute match funding (or more) towards the costs of the proposed digital development work. For example, if an organisation/consortium applies for £10,000 from the Challenge Fund then the organisation/consortium will be expected to contribute a further £10,000 in match-funding. This contribution can be in the form of a financial contribution to the costs or in kind (e.g. through staff time dedicated to the work involved, use of promotional material to support the work, etc.)

11. How many projects will be funded from the Challenge Fund?

We expect to fund around 10 projects depending on bid amounts so applicants need not limit their ambitions but do need to be realistic and scrupulous about costings and feasibility.

12. Will small-scale social housing providers still be eligible to apply?

Yes, the intention is for the Challenge Fund to be available to social housing providers of all sizes and in a range of locations. The important thing is for the organisation that applies to meet the criteria for the application. Small social housing providers can still do this, even though they may work with fewer residents than some other organisations.

13. When do organisations need to apply?

Organisations wishing to apply for the Challenge Fund need to apply between **4th April 2013** and **12 noon on 3rd June 2013**.

Applications received after this date and time will not be assessed.

14. Is this the only opportunity to apply or will more Challenge Fund money be made available at a later date?

Our expectation is that this will be the only opportunity to apply for the Challenge Fund in 2013-14. Beyond that, we cannot confirm whether or not further funding will be made available.

15. How do organisations apply?

Applications need to be submitted online. Organisations can find out more about the application by visiting and registering on the Digital Housing Hub

<http://digitalhousinghub.ning.com/>

Applicants will then be redirected from the Digital Housing Hub to a page on www.ukonlinecentres.com where they will register and be able to access and submit the online application. Applicants will be able to save sections of their applications as they are completed. A downloadable/printable copy of the application questions will be available on this site so that applicants can ask colleagues to review these/contribute answers, ideas, etc.

16. Who will make the decisions about which applications will be successful?

All applications will be assessed by a team of assessors that will include individuals with experience of social housing and/or digital inclusion.

17. What happens after an organisation has applied?

Once an organisation has applied, the organisation will receive confirmation of submission/receipt of the application.

Once the assessment process has been completed, applicants will receive confirmation of the outcome by email. This email will be sent to the main contact on the application.

18. Timeline

- Challenge Fund prospectus and application form available: **4th April 2013.**
- Final deadline for applications: **12 noon on 3rd June 2013.**
- Assessment and moderation of applications completed by: **1st July 2013.**
- Announcement of successful applications: **29th July 2013.**

- Feedback available for unsuccessful applicants, together with follow-on support opportunities: **from 1st August 2013.**
- Projects commence: **2nd September 2013.**
- Project external monitoring, including visits: from **September 2013 to May 2014.**
- Projects completed: **May 2014.**

19. What happens to organisations that apply but are unsuccessful in obtaining Challenge Funding?

Obviously, as we cannot fund an unlimited amount of projects, we expect there to be a lot of competition for the funding available. We are very keen to see organisations progress with their plans for digital development work, even if Challenge funding is not available to them so organisations that apply but do not receive funding will be offered:

- feedback on their application;
- via the Digital Housing Hub, the opportunity to access (non-financial) support to implement at least parts of their planned digital development work.

This feedback and support will be managed by Online Centres Foundation (OCF) staff.

20. If our organisation is successful in obtaining some Challenge Funding, when will the Challenge Funding be paid?

Funding will be paid in three parts. 25% of the funding will be paid in August 2013 ready for projects to start in September. A further 50% of the funding will be paid in January 2014, subject to successful progress on the project and receipt of a progress review report. The remaining 25% of funding will be paid in May 2014, based on successful completion of the outcomes of the project, completing the evaluation of the project and submission of the final report on the project.

21. If our organisation is successful in obtaining some Challenge Funding, how will our project be monitored?

It is important that all organisations that have been successful in obtaining Challenge Funding monitor their own projects effectively and implement what they have said they will do in their Challenge Fund application.

Stated milestones and outcomes should be met and tangible benefits for residents should be demonstrated and reported on.

External monitoring will be carried out by staff from Online Centres Foundation (OCF). Those involved have had experience in supporting and monitoring a range of digital inclusion projects as well as working with social housing providers.

22. When should projects supported by the Challenge Fund be completed?

All projects must be completed and reported on by May 2014. However, it is expected that many organisations will continue activities and to monitor the impact of these activities beyond this date. This is very important as the funders are seeking to support activities that are sustainable beyond the length of the funded project and this need to be demonstrated in the Challenge Fund application.

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