

LiveWest Digital Inclusion project grants

(Round 1 – Autumn 2020)

LiveWest recognises the importance of its customers being able to get online and access digital services. We believe that not only is digital access essential in managing day to day living in the modern world, but also digital access can bring benefits in terms of social isolation, managing households, benefits and budgeting, and as a tool to support social inclusion and health & wellbeing.

LiveWest already provides assistance to individual customers in financial hardship to access hardware through our Crisis and Hardship Grants.

In addition to our support for individuals, LiveWest has committed £50,000 of funding available through two open funding application rounds (**Autumn 2020, Spring 2021**).

Timetable – Autumn Round 1

Round opens	5 October
Submission Closure date	13 November
Assessment and clarification period	16 – 27 November
Funding award	30 November
Release of funding	7 December

Timetable – Spring Round 2

Round opens	11 January
Submission Closure date	12 February
Assessment and clarification period	15- 26 Feb
Funding award	1 March
Release of funding	8 March

Through this funding we want to:

- Enhance the opportunities for LiveWest customers to access digital facilities in the community (including community facilities accessible to our customers as well as LiveWest schemes or services)
- Improve the digital skills of LiveWest customers in ways that are targeted and respond to identified needs
- Help people overcome connectivity barriers in ways that are effective and sustainable

What sort of projects will we support?

Our aim is to increase access to the on-line world for LiveWest customers and we have identified 3 key areas that we particularly want to deliver on – access, connectivity and skills.

How you deliver this will depend on the individual setting or community, but we expect bids to be specific to an area or client group rather than a generic offer that doesn't demonstrate an understanding of where the project will be delivered.

We have included some examples of types of projects, but we are keen to fund new and innovative approaches that fit in to our overall aim, so please don't feel constrained.

We don't want to dictate approaches but want applicants to explain how they have identified a need and solution for any local context.

It is vital that projects demonstrate how LiveWest customers will directly benefit, but projects don't have to exclusively benefit LiveWest customers.

It is also vital that projects demonstrate their deliverability and what steps have been taken to get the project to a point it will or can be delivered.

Access to online facilities or equipment – from IT suites to device loan schemes, we are keen to support programmes that help improve access to IT equipment. We recognise that for many facilities there may have been issues resulting from COVID-19 that mean reconfiguring, changing what they offer or that need upgrading. Examples might include;

- Adapting and reconfiguring communal spaces/environment, particularly in light of COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines.
- Communal facility equipment: *Upgrading facilities with new digital equipment and software*
- Community laptop loan schemes: *Loaning digital devices to individuals (including Wi-Fi data dongles)*

Connectivity – Even if you have a device the cost of getting connected can be a barrier so we are keen to support community or communal provision of Wi-Fi or networks or to support other innovative ways of providing affordable connectivity.

- Upgrading network infrastructure and hardware (including routers for communal schemes)
- Extending Wi-Fi coverage (improving internet coverage in current blackspots)
- Providing mobile internet hotspot devices (MIFI): *Covering the purchase of the router device/s, (we won't fund on-going monthly contract costs)*

Skills – we want to raise the skills of our customers, particularly as we move to more services being digital by default. Our experience is that generic training has very low levels of take up, so we are looking for provision that really demonstrates an understanding of the needs within a local community, scheme or area being targeted.

- Training courses;
 - External delivery of courses: for subjects such as budgeting, job searching, digital awareness and staying safe online), including virtual training sessions that will engage customers around a specific issue.
 - Set programmes targeting specific client groups
 - Digital Champions: providing support and training on the set up of equipment, basics of internet searching and accessing LiveWest online services.
- Testing new equipment opportunities (try before you buy schemes)

It is vital that projects demonstrate how LiveWest customers will directly benefit. If your project assumes engagement with specific customers, then you should demonstrate that there have been discussions to substantiate appetite or need.

How much is available?

There is a total pot of £50,000, this will be distributed through two calls of £25,000 each to enable quality bids to be developed where further thinking is needed. We anticipate giving at least five awards but will assess all bids based on the written justification. All costs must be clearly detailed and justified and applications that cannot justify the figure being requested will be declined.

Reporting requirements

All applicants will be expected to measure the impact of their work and will be asked to report on how the grant has specifically benefited LiveWest customers by collecting information which may include;

- The number of individuals accessing digital services; via access to communal equipment or accessing equipment through digital device loan schemes and what percentage of these individuals are LiveWest customers.
- The impact of increased digital skills for individuals.
 - *Improved employment and educational opportunities*
 - *Networking opportunities: participating in digital platforms (i.e. community Facebook pages) new opportunities for social engagement, reducing isolation*
 - *Improved financial wellbeing: increased financial inclusion*
 - *Improved confidence in accessing online services*
- Connectivity – *how individuals are now connecting to the internet on a regular basis as a result of this grant.*

How to apply

- Click to [apply for a digital inclusion grant](#).

Match funding

We welcome applications which are part of a larger bid and ask that you provide details of other applications which have been submitted, timeframe for decision on these applications and details of funding already secured.

Project start dates

Recognising the challenging circumstances, we are willing to support existing projects where they can demonstrate there is a specific funding need or gap. We will not fund retrospectively for work already undertaken.

All funding awards are made on a discretionary basis and an application does not guarantee funding will be given or that it will be given at the requested amount. All applications will be judged on a case by case basis.

Please email grant applications to: grants@livewest.co.uk